

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held by video conference on Tuesday, 15 October 2024 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors Ellie Chard (Chair), Ann Davies, Delyth Jones and Emrys Wynne

Representing Religious Denominations

Colette Owen

Representing Teacher Associations

Leah Crimes

ALSO PRESENT

RE Adviser (PL), Principal Education Manager (JB) and Committee Administrators (KEJ & RTJ [Zoom Host])

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes' silent reflection.

1 APOLOGIES

Jennie Downes, Sarah Griffiths, Dominic Oakes and Susan Williams

Councillor Emrys Wynne would be slightly late to the meeting.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Ellie Chard declared a personal interest in the meeting's business because she was a school governor at Ysgol Tir Morfa and Christchurch School.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held on 26 June 2024 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 10: Item 6 RE Hubs – The RE Adviser stated that he would provide further information on this matter at the end of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 26 June 2024 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 DENBIGHSHIRE SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

The RE Adviser presented the third published edition of the Denbighshire and Conwy Summer 2024 newsletter, REach (previously circulated) which supported the work of Denbighshire and Conwy's SAC/REs.

Members were guided through the newsletter which included the following articles –

- What was new in Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) with reference to the suite of Professional Learning modules on RVE in the new curriculum which had been designed to develop understanding and support teachers
- Right to Withdraw – there was no right to withdraw a pupil from RVE but parents with children receiving the current Religious Education (e.g., 10 and 11 in September 2024) continued to have the right to withdraw their child from RE
- National and Regional Training Resources – links had been provided to access national sessions focusing on progression in the Areas of Learning and Experience and GwE training materials
- the support provided by WASACRE to member SAC/REs which included Advocacy and Representation; Advice and Support; Networks; Relationships and Partnerships; Empowering Voices; Trusted Resources and On the Pulse
- the WASACRE Conference 2024 included key note sessions which could be accessed via WASACRE's website along with pre-conference online seminars.

The RE Adviser drew attention to WASACRE's work as a national body and steps by Conwy County Borough Council to create a leaflet to promote a greater understanding and awareness of their SACRE's work. Members confirmed they would like Denbighshire to take a similar approach in order to raise awareness and improve schools' understanding of SACRE's role. In terms of articles for the newsletter there was some discussion on how best to encourage schools to contribute and members agreed to raise the matter in the schools they were associated with. Leah Crimes indicated that her school would like to contribute, and she would also raise the issue at the next schools cluster meeting. The Principal Education Manager confirmed that a request for articles could be made at the weekly meetings with Headteachers. The RE Adviser asked that views also be sought as to what teachers would like to see in future newsletters. Members were pleased with the proactive approach and steps to promote SACRE's work.

RESOLVED that the Denbighshire Summer 2024 Newsletter be received.

6 RELIGION, VALUE AND ETHICS (RVE), A SECONDARY PERSPECTIVE - SARAH GRIFFITHS (HEAD OF RVE, YSGOL DINAS BRAN)

The RE Adviser submitted apologies from Sarah Griffiths, Head of RVE at Ysgol Dinas Bran who unfortunately had been unable to attend to deliver the presentation. Members sent their best wishes to Sarah for a speedy recovery.

RESOLVED that the presentation be deferred to the next meeting of SACRE.

7 ESTYN INSPECTION UPDATE

The RE Adviser explained that Estyn inspection guidance for schools inspected from September 2024 – 2030 had been published during the summer and he informed members of the changes to the inspection framework.

Documents explaining what and how Estyn inspected could be accessed on the Estyn website and the following links were provided –

Welsh [Sut rydym yn arolygu Ysgolion a gynhelir ac UC Dau 0.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)
English - [How We Inspect - 2024 maintained schools and PRUs \(gov.wales\)](#)

Welsh - [Beth rydym yn ei arolygu - Ysgolion a gynhelir ac UC Dau \(gov.wales\)](#)
English - [What We Inspect - 2024 Maintained Schools and PRUs \(gov.wales\)](#)

Inspections were governed by the Education Act 2005 and Section 28 detailed a number of areas inspectors must report on which included the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils (SMSC). Some schools had a religious character teaching denominational RE and in those schools denominational RE and the content of collective worship were inspected separately under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005 and were not included in Section 28 inspections. The Church in Wales was currently developing their framework which had not yet been enacted in schools. Colette Owen reported that the Roman Catholic framework had been operational for around twelve months and was being tweaked as things changed and to better match with Estyn inspections given that the framework covered both England and Wales. There was now a rolling programme of Section 50 inspections similar to Estyn whereas previously if a school had an Estyn inspection it would automatically generate a Section 50 inspection.

Main changes to the Estyn inspection framework were discussed as follows –

- there would be no pattern as to when schools would be inspected compared to the previous six year cycle. Following a main inspection an interim inspection had been introduced to report on the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the main inspection. The three week lead time for inspection notifications had also been reduced to two weeks
- historically inspections had comprised of school/lesson observations and there was a change in focus to more pupil engagement and a pupil centred approach
- the reports were currently proving difficult to interpret from a SMSC, RE and collective worship aspect with previous reporting mainly focusing on the inspection area of wellbeing, care, support and guidance. However, the more reports were published the easier it would be to glean the necessary information. As in previous inspection guidance, comments would not be included for those schools meeting RE or RVE requirements, and reference

would only be made where those statutory requirements were not being met/areas for development or in particular areas of good practice

- the three areas of inspection would focus on (1) teaching and learning, (2) wellbeing, care, support and guidance, and (3) leading and improving and the reports would be a narrative of the inspectors' experience in the school and members were encouraged to view Estyn's website and the new inspection reports as they appeared as they were very different to previous reports
- inspection teams comprised lead inspectors together with a practitioner involved as a peer inspector who could be head teachers or senior leaders within a school who had undertaken the necessary training.

The Chair noted that if areas of inspection were as expected there would be no comment made in the report with only areas for development or good practice shared. She welcomed the use of peer inspectors and was pleased that school leaders such as Leah Crimes were involved in the process and Ms Crimes reported on her own experience in that regard and praised the training and professional development opportunity. As a former head teacher Councillor Delyth Jones also referred to her past experience of Estyn inspections and benefits in terms of training and gaining an understanding of the process and opportunity to visit other schools to share best practice and benchmark and measure your own school.

Members were also pleased to note the pupil centred approach and Estyn's move to be more personable and involved in the school improvement process rather than just an external verifier of school improvement. Leah Crimes felt that approach had been borne out at a recent inspection at her school and she was aware of other colleagues in Denbighshire and Conwy having similar experiences.

The Chair thanked the RE Adviser for explaining the changes to the inspection framework following publication of Estyn's inspection guidance.

RESOLVED that the verbal update from the RE Adviser on the changes to the inspection framework be noted.

8 SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 24

The RE Adviser presented the draft Annual Report for Denbighshire SACRE 2023 – 24 (previously circulated) for approval which identified and recorded the work of the SACRE for the year from September 2023 – July 2024.

Members were reminded that the annual report was a historic document and approval of the report was sought, subject to any accuracy points. To make the report more useful to schools, numerous links had been included to resources and support and there was a large section on RE/RVE and the Agreed Syllabus.

The RE Adviser guided members through the report, elaborating on particular areas in some detail, and provided an overview of the contents which covered –

- the role of SACRE had been included in the foreword which would be amended to refer to SAC/RE to reflect the two bodies running in parallel and updated to include reference to RVE

- the contents headings had been determined some time ago by the Welsh Government (WG) and WASACRE had undertaken a review of annual reports and made some recommendations to WG with the outcome yet unknown
- advice given to the local authority included reference to the newly Agreed Syllabus for RVE (Curriculum for Wales 2022) and previous Agreed Syllabus for RE (Curriculum for Wales 2008) applicable for secondary schools
- examination reports were no longer released, and members were unable to discuss comparative data; links to various Estyn reports had been provided
- Learning and Teaching – a wealth of reference material and links from a range of sources had been provided and were further elaborated on at the meeting; the RE Quality Mark had been highlighted. With regard to the playlists on Hwb, a Governors Playlist would soon be released and the RE Adviser reported on his work with Bangor University through GwE training PCSE/PGSE students and close working with the Welsh National Centre for RE
- Collective Worship – the difficulty in monitoring provision via Estyn reports was highlighted following updated inspection guidance with no expectation to report on whether a school met the statutory duty and general absence of SMSC comments; training and guidance links had been provided. There had been no determinations to SACRE for schools wanting to change collective worship/RVE
- other matters included reference to the newsletter and RVE network, new Estyn inspection framework and resources to supporting the framework for RE and work of WASCARE and conference material
- appendices included the composition of SACRE ('Collette' to be amended to 'Colette'), meeting dates and organisations receiving the report.

The Chair thanked the RE Adviser for the report and members confirmed that, subject to any minor amendments discussed at the meeting, the report be ratified as a true account of SACRE's work. Whilst acknowledging that the current Council policy allowed for draft reports to be in English only until approved, Councillor Emrys Wynne asked whether the draft could be made available bilingually in the future given that SACRE was a public meeting, and the draft report would only be subject to minor amendments. The Principal Education Manager confirmed the annual report could be translated in draft form going forward.

The RE Adviser responded to a question regarding the availability of specialist RE teachers advising that various teacher training institutions across Wales had been allocated a specific number of RVE teachers at secondary to recruit and that quota had been filled for both English and Welsh Language provision. However, there was a wider issue given that the way schools were restructuring their Key Stage 4 provision meant that not as many RE teachers were required. In terms of professional development for primary, there had been an ever-decreasing number of hours allocated for RVE over the last few years.

RESOLVED that –

- the Annual Report of Denbighshire SACRE for 2023 – 2024 be approved as an accurate account of SACRE's work, and*
- the Local Education Authority be requested to arrange for the report to be translated into Welsh and made available to all schools and colleges in*

Denbighshire and other recipients as required by law and as identified in the report.

9 WASACRE

- **WASACRE Conference – 13 June 2024**

A brief verbal update was provided about the WASACRE Conference held on 13 June 2024 which included an in-person conference day at Wrexham University and series of online seminars. It had been an excellent day with keynote speeches from Professor Graham Donaldson, Lynne Neagle, MS and also the Bishop of Llandaff together with presentations from schools. The WASACRE Executive AGM had been held at the end of the conference day.

Unfortunately, Jennie Downes had been unable to attend the SACRE meeting but had provided brief notes on the last WASACRE Executive meeting on 2 October 2024. The RE Adviser shared those notes with members, as summarised below –

- there was a new specification from WJEC regarding the new GCSEs available for first teaching in September 2027 and WASACRE would be providing a response to the draft approval criteria by the deadline of 23 October 2024
- discussions regarding SAC/RE Annual Reports in terms of future content and what was needed in response to the educational landscape of Wales
- the Governor Playlist would soon be released on Hwb, noting there was already a comprehensive set of playlists to support professional development on Hwb
- the WASACRE Conference had much positive feedback and emerging practice welcomed; the online seminars had been well received and were published on the WASACRE website along with videos of the keynote speakers
- there had been a discussion around what to take forward following the Conference and to make support and guidance more accessible for schools, particularly in terms of RVE, especially secondary non-specialists.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be received.

- **WASACRE Meeting – 14 November 2024**

The next WASACRE meeting would be held online at 10.30am on 14 November 2024. The RE Adviser confirmed that he would be attending and also sought confirmation of up to three other representatives to attend. Unfortunately, the Chair advised that she was unable to attend on that occasion.

RESOLVED that, in addition to the RE Adviser, Councillor Emrys Wynne and Leah Crimes attend the next WASACRE meeting on 14 November 2024.

- **RE Hubs**

The RE Adviser explained that Jennifer Harding-Richards (Swansea SACRE) was the lead for the RE Hubs Project in Wales. The RE Hubs project was dedicated to supporting teachers and practitioners in RE and RVE across England and Wales and good practice and support could be accessed from their website. There was

some concern across Wales there would be confusion with the Hwb and WASACRE would prefer schools to look to the Hwb and approach SAC/REs on such matters. However, schools currently required much support and had been naturally migrating towards the Hub and RE Today were providing some training for schools across Wales organised by Bangor University and Swansea SACRE on 19 November 2024. The Chair agreed that it would be useful to make Denbighshire schools aware of the course which could be booked through RE Today.

RESOLVED that the verbal report be received.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Future meetings of Denbighshire SACRE had been scheduled as follows –

- Spring 2025 – 10am 14 February 2025
- Summer 2025 – 10am 4 June 2025
- Autumn 2025 – 10am 2 October 2025

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am.