

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, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl on Wednesday, 22 October 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors Margaret McCarroll, Arwel Roberts and Joe Welch

Representing Religious Denominations

Mr. Simon Cameron, Ms Mary Ludenbach and Ms S Harris

Representing Teacher Associations

Ms. Ali Ballantyne

ALSO PRESENT

Systems Leader for GwE (PL) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

POINT OF NOTICE

In the absence of the Chair – Reverend Martin Evans-Jones, the Vice Chair – Councillor Arwel Roberts presided over the meeting.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

1 APOLOGIES

Reverend Martin Evans-Jones (Chair), Gavin Craigen, Cate Harmsworth, Dominic Oakes, Tania Ap Sion together with Councillors Ann Davies and Dewi Owens

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

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 16 June 2014 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 7 – Working with Religious Communities – The Systems Leader for GwE advised that an update would be provided later on the agenda.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 16 June 2014 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) presented the draft Annual Report for Denbighshire SACRE 2013/14 (previously circulated) for approval which provided details of SACRE's activities during the previous academic year including advice given to the local education authority together with other local and national matters.

The SL reminded members that the annual report was a historical document and he sought approval of the report, subject to any amendments, as an accurate account for distribution to those recipients listed within the report. He asked members to consider removing the Diocese of Bangor from the list of official recipients because it served no particular purpose in the area which was covered by the Dioceses of St. Asaph and Wrexham. Members agreed with the suggestion that an email link to the report be sent to the Diocese of Bangor instead.

Members discussed the outstanding vacancies on SACRE and the SL reported upon efforts being made to fill those positions. The Chair noted the vacancy for a representative from the Union of Welsh Independents (of which he was affiliated) and he agreed to provide the SL with the relevant contact details with a view to filling that particular position. Ms. Mary Ludenbach queried the absence of examination data for Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School in terms of 2013 GCSE and A Level Results in Religious Studies. It was established that there was an issue over the provision of data for the school in RE when accessing Fischer Family Trust information which was the likely reason for the omission. The SL agreed to speak with Ms. Ludenbach outside of the meeting with a view to ensuring the inclusion of the relevant examination data within SACRE's Annual Report before its distribution.

Members were content to receive the report as a true record of SACRE's work subject to the amendments as discussed.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *subject to the above mentioned amendments the Annual Report of Denbighshire SACRE for 2013 – 2014 be approved as an accurate account of SACRE's work, and*
- (b) *the Local Education Authority be requested to arrange translation, printing and distribution of the report to all schools and colleges in Denbighshire and other recipients as required by law and as identified in the report.*

6 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) submitted a report (previously circulated) analysing the results of the recent Estyn inspections in terms of RE provision and collective worship in four schools between March and May 2014. Inspections had been carried out at Rhyl High School; Ysgol Bro Fammau, Llanferres and Llarmon-yn-Ial; Ysgol y Castell, Rhuddlan and Ysgol Caer Drewyn, Clawdd Poncen. [The SL apologised that data for Borthyn VC Primary School had been omitted and he confirmed that the information would be included in the next report as part of the Spring agenda.]

The SL provided members with a brief resume of the findings relating to each school and members were pleased to note the positive comments and outcomes. It was particularly pleasing to note the close links between schools and local churches. The Chair advised that he was a Governor at Ysgol y Castell and was surprised to note that no reference had been made to that school's positive links with the local church. He felt that the report reflected very well on all of the schools inspected. The SL advised that the one area marked for development in Rhyl High School indicated that pupils' understanding of global citizenship was less developed which may or may not reference RE.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *a letter be sent to the schools inspected informing them that their Inspection Report had been considered, congratulating them on the good features identified, and*
- (c) *the Local Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.*

7 ESTYN REPORT 'ESDGC PROGRESS IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP'

The Systems Lead for GwE (SL) presented Estyn's report published in July 2014 (previously circulated) which focused on education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

The SL provided some context to the report explaining that promotion of ESDGC was a key objective of the Welsh Government who aimed to encourage schools to provide opportunities for teachers and pupils to consider those issues. It described the progress schools had made since the last report in 2006 and the SL discussed with members a number of the findings relating to RE as follows –

- a significance difference between the 2006 and 2014 reports was the improvement in global citizenship which was now on a par with sustainable development in terms of understanding and awareness
- the report found that pupils in schools with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils generally had a better understanding of the effect of discrimination and prejudice on individuals than pupils in other schools. It also found that few pupils

at key stages 3 and 4 had a good understanding of identify and culture, including complex concepts such as the link between culture, faith and individual value systems and beliefs. The SL reported upon a Key Stage 3 text book he was writing with Gavin Craigen examining this point and belief systems. Members noted the responsibility of RE departments in this regard, including linking belief systems, which was undertaken well. It was also noted that for North Wales in particular there was a lack of ethnic minority pupils but it was suggested that links could be made with other schools with a greater ethnic mix in order to explore that diversity. SACRE agreed that a recommendation be made in that regard to Denbighshire's Head of Education

- the report had also found that in schools where ESDGC was well established or where there was a high percentage of pupils from an ethnic minority background, almost all Foundation Phase pupils were able to recognise the potential impact of discrimination and prejudice on individuals. However in schools where this was not the case, few pupils understood that concept at that early stage. It was not expected that pupils in the Foundation Phase would understand that cultural values and religious beliefs shape the way people live but the issues were discussed – this understanding develops as pupils progressed through Key Stage 2
- reference had been made in the report to few pupils in secondary schools having a strong understanding of more complex concepts such as the link between culture, faith and individual value systems and beliefs. This was disappointing to note because the RE community had worked hard to promote those issues
- Ms. Ali Ballantyne drew attention to the leadership, management and support for ESDGC and the findings that where training had not been a priority, teachers lacked confidence in teaching the more complex concepts and most schools visited would benefit from further training in specific aspects of ESDGC. She felt that this issue was common across the county and was keen for training to be progressed at county level. The SL advised that this finding was at odds with Estyn's Report on RE in secondary schools (published in June 2013) which found that non-specialists teaching RE in secondary schools did not have a negative impact on standards in most schools
- members noted that, where a school had written its own policy with teachers having a direct input into its content (rather than adapting a policy provided by the local authority), there was a positive impact on standards and pupils' understanding of the key elements of ESDGC – this was an important point to be applied to all policies – for RE policies to be effective they should be written from the individual school's point of view rather than imposed and that message could be taken back to schools by members

In concluding the debate members were interested to see schools' responses to the report and discussed the practicalities of ensuring that the recommendations were implemented within schools, including the co-ordinators role within that process. Reference was also made to Governing Bodies and the SL confirmed it would be good practice for a member of the governing body to have particular responsibility for ESDGC. In terms of training it was likely that provision would become part of GwE's responsibility in future.

RESOLVED that, subject to members' comments above, the report be received.

8 RE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) provided a verbal update on the project to support schools working with their local religious communities advising that a relatively low response had been received from schools in response to the request for case studies. Consequently the deadline for responses had been extended and the SL had written a proforma with suggestions and ideas to be circulated to schools in order to encourage more inspiring responses.

Members speculated that the current pressures and demands on schools was the likely reason for the poor response. Members discussed ways of ensuring that the relevant individuals within schools were approached in order to elicit the best responses. Practical actions included –

- circulating a copy of the proforma to all SACRE members to feedback to their schools
- sending the proforma directly to schools for the attention of the RE Co-ordinators to ensure the request was received by the appropriate person
- the possibility of offering an incentive to schools to respond
- addressing members of the governing body to raise awareness

The Chair highlighted the length of time since any specific training had been provided and felt the best way forward would be to arrange a specific half day session for all RE Co-ordinators. Members discussed the possibility of arranging such a session and it was noted that the SL would not be permitted to undertake this task as part of his current role. Mr. Simon Cameron offered to take on that responsibility, advising of his role as Schools Officer for the Diocese of St. Asaph and similar sessions he had organised in that capacity, highlighting the value of such an event. He was happy to extend his brief to community schools if needed. The SL felt that GwE would allow him to attend the session if Mr. Cameron was prepared to take on the responsibility of organising the event and he highlighted the benefits of a collaborative approach. He also reported upon recent discussions in light of the new consortia arrangements which suggested that SACREs needed to be more proactive and less reliant on their support officers. The Chair added that Denbighshire's Head of Education would likely want to be involved in this initiative. He thanked both the SL and Mr. Cameron for their commitment and it was –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) the verbal update on the RE and Local Communities project be noted, and*
- (b) the Systems Leader for GwE and Mr. Simon Cameron meet outside of the meeting to discuss the practicalities of arranging a session for RE Co-ordinators.*

9 WASACRE

(a) Minutes of WASACRE – 2 July 2014

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) held in Powys on 2 July 2014 (previously circulated) were submitted for members' information.

The Systems Lead for GwE (SL) reported upon a presentation by the National Advisory Panel for RE on SACREs and current consortia arrangements which was followed by a workshop with SACREs on their work and response to six set questions – most of which had been discussed during today's meeting. The findings of the workshop activity would be published.

RESOLVED that minutes of WASACRE held on 2 July 2014 be received.

(b) WASACRE meeting – 26 November 2014

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) advised that the next WASACRE meeting would be held on 26 November 2014 in Pontypool and he would be attending on behalf of Denbighshire SACRE. He also sought confirmation of two other representatives to attend. Mr. Simon Cameron advised that he would be willing to attend. Ms. Ali Ballantyne expressed an interest but advised that it would be difficult because supply cover would need to be arranged.

RESOLVED that Mr. Simon Cameron and Philip Lord (Systems Leader for GwE) attend the next WASACRE meeting on 26 November, 2014.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE was scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Friday 13 February 2015 in the Council Chamber, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn.

In closing the meeting the Chair thanked the Systems Leader for GwE for his hard work in supporting SACRE.

The meeting concluded at 11.10 a.m.