

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Friday, 12 February 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors Dewi Owens, Arwel Roberts, Joe Welch and Ann Davies.

Representing Religious Denominations

Ms A. Ballantyne, Reverend B. Huw Jones and Ms S. Harris.

ALSO PRESENT

Challenge Advisor for GwE (PL) and Committee Administrator (CIW).

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection. The Chair invited Members of SACRE to reflect on the loss of loved ones and close relatives who were sadly missed.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mr. Simon Cameron, Mr. Dominic Oakes and Bill Tasker.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held on the 21st October, 2015 (previously circulated) were submitted.

1. Apologies:- The Challenge Advisor for GwE (CA) informed Members that a letter of thanks had been sent to Mr Gavin Craigen for his input to the Committee.

12. Date of next Meeting:- The CA explained that due to health problems suffered by the respective member of the teaching staff the meeting was being held in

Ruthin and not Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen as previously agreed. Alternative school venues had been sought but had not been available. However, positive links with a number of High Schools had been established.

Members were informed that letters of congratulation had been sent to schools involved in the Estyn process, stating the positive comments received as part of the reports.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on the 21st October, 2015 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Challenge Advisor GwE (CA) submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided an analysis of Estyn Inspections Reports published in the Autumn term, in relation to the provision of Religious Education, SMSC and collective worship, in three schools between November, 2014 and January, 2015.

Inspections had been carried out at St Asaph Church in Wales Voluntary-Controlled Infant School, St Asaph, Ysgol Bro Dyfrdwy, Cynwyd and Ysgol Hiraddug CP School, Dyserth, and details pertaining to each of the respective schools had been incorporated in the report and were summarised by the CA.

The CA provided Members with a brief resume of the findings relating to each school, and the positive comments and outcomes were noted by Members. The CA explained that the comments received had been brief and he made particular reference to the following:-

Positive Comments - Current Performance indicated that staff provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, social, moral and cultural education (Hiraddug).

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Wellbeing:-

- They develop a good understanding of their role in the local community through strong links with the cathedral and visits to the local hospice. (St Asaph V.P.).
- Pupils organise activities to raise money for a number of charities which had a positive effect on pupils' awareness of the needs of others. A successful coffee afternoon held to raise money for the Nepal appeal. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- Younger pupils had developed a valuable understanding of respect, care and concern for others, in the school and wider world (Hiraddug).

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Learning experiences:-

- Visits from local businesses, links with the cathedral and extra curricular activities enrich pupils' learning well. (St Asaph V.P.)

- Good understanding of global citizenship through involvement in European Day and a project of support for a child in Borneo. (St Asaph V.P.)
- Good range of various and interesting experiences across the school, which met all the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education effectively. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- Wide range of valuable opportunities provided to raise pupils' awareness of global citizenship through thematic work, and links with other countries such as Lesotho. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- Provision for promoting good behaviour and developing pupils' social and emotional skills is effective. Regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes through regular whole-school assemblies and other activities in the local community. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- Interesting links with India and China helped pupils develop valuable knowledge and understanding of other cultures and customs, which enriched the caring and respectful ethos of the school. (Hiraddug)

Care, support and guidance:-

- Staff develop pupils' spiritual, cultural, moral and social development well. Visitors and visits out of school provided worthwhile experiences to assist in pupils' social and cultural development. (St Asaph V.P.)
- Regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes through regular whole-school assemblies and other activities in the local community. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- Highly beneficial opportunities provided for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's strong international links developed pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding effectively. The high quality provision for personal and social education in the Foundation Phase lead to pupils developing a strong understanding of the values of honesty, fairness and respect for others. (Hiraddug)

Learning Environment:-

- A very inclusive community where staff treated all pupils equally, fairly and with respect. Staff promote diversity and equal opportunities successfully and ensured that all pupils had equal access to every aspect of school life. The school's caring ethos encouraged pupils to have respect and tolerance for others. (St Asaph V.P.)
- A close and welcoming community that created an inclusive ethos with a range of policies and procedures in place to promote equality and celebrate diversity. (Bro Dyfrdwy)
- The school placed a clear emphasis on recognising and celebrating diversity and promotes equal opportunities well. (Hiraddug)

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Partnership working:-

- Links with the cathedral, the local community and external agencies make an effective contribution to the quality of the school's provision. (St Asaph V.P.). The CA confirmed that there had been little comment by Estyn in respect of interaction and collaboration with faith communities during the cycle in question. Confirmation was provided that the Church in Wales did not provide Section 52 Reports.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor J.A. Davies regarding St Asaph VP Infants School having identified about 27% of pupils as having additional learning needs, the CA confirmed that the Wales average was about 25% (the figure actually being around 20%). He made reference to the process adopted for the assessment of pupils, with regard to the utilisation of available data, and provided details of the process pertaining to the ALN Register.

In reply to a question from the Chair, the CA explained that Key Questions 2 related to the school environment and pupils experiences and learning, and Key Question 3 related to leadership and the securing of partnerships.

A question was presented by Councillor J.A. Davies regarding the implementation of the Bullying Policy. It was explained by the CA that the issue of bullying could be addressed under Care support and guidance, reference being made to regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes through regular whole-school assemblies and other activities in the local community, with particular emphasises being made on experiences realised within the school and the approach adopted by the respective schools to address the problem.

Concerns were raised by Councillor D. Owens regarding the need for consistency regarding the provision of information provided in respect of each individual school. The CA agreed to examine the concerns raised with regard to the reporting process.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the report be received and its contents noted.*

6 EXAMINATION RESULTS 2015

The CA submitted the Summary of Examination Results 2013-14 Report (previously circulated) which included details of:-

- GCSE Religious Studies – Full Courses.

The CA highlighted the data provided in respect of:-

- Prestatyn High School - Large number of pupils entered for Full Course.
- Dinas Bran Llangollen – 25% reduction due to possible time allocation. Contact made with Line Manager.
- Rhyl High School – Members agreed that SACRE visit the new school when operational.

- Ysgol Brynhyfryd – Suffered number reduction but still above national average figure.
- Blessed Edward Jones, Rhyl - Looking for further improvement through utilisation of shared resources.

Members agreed that the CA send letters of congratulations from SACRE to Rhyl High School, Prestatyn High School and St Brig, Denbigh acknowledging their respective achievements.

The CA provided a comparison of figures for All Wales in respect of Full and Short Course figures during the past twelve months. Confirmation that although Short Course provision had been eliminated in England it would be continued in Wales.

- GCSE Religious Studies – Short Courses.

The CA highlighted the data provided in respect of the Short Courses. Concerns were expressed in relation to:-

- Rhyl High School - figures of 4.4%.
- The Chair commended collaborative working between schools.

- GCSE Religious Studies – A - Level.

The following issues were highlighted in respect of:-

- It was acknowledged that A Level figures were predominantly lower.
- The effect of the Welsh Baccalaureate in terms of the option blocks was highlighted.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the low numbers recorded, and the reasons for the decline.
- The impact of the non-provision of A Level courses in Rhyl College had been significant.

All Religious Studies.

- Table 1:- GCSE Results 2015: All Religious Studies.
- Table 2:- GCSE Results 2014: All Religious Studies.
- Table 3:- GCSE Results 2015: All Religious Education Short Courses.
- Table 4:- GCSE Results 2014: All Religious Education Short Courses.
- Table 5:- GCSE Advanced Level Results 2015: All Religious Studies.
- Table 6:- GCSE Advanced Level Results 2014: All Religious Studies.

During the ensuing discussion it was agreed that the CA inform the Lead Member for Education of the concerns expressed by Members regarding the reduction in numbers, and a request be made for action and assistance to address the problems highlighted.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above, the the Summary of Examination Results 2013-14.

7 WASACRE QUESTIONNAIRE TO SCHOOLS

The Challenge Advisor GwE (CA) referred to the review on the impact of the Welsh Baccalaureate on Religious Education. He explained that WASACRE had sent a survey to all schools to assess their responses regarding the impact of the Welsh Baccalaureate, particular reference being made to the influence on the GCSE timetable which reduced the availability of short courses in Denbighshire.

Members were informed by the CA that the responses received, from Head teachers and Heads of Department, had indicated that there had not been a detrimental effect on Religious Education across Denbighshire, Wrexham, Flintshire and Conwy in terms of GCSE.

It was confirmed that by the CA that the completed surveys would be passed to WASACRE.

RESOLVED - *that the report be received and the position noted.*

8 CURRICULUM FOR LIFE

The Challenge Advisor GwE (CA) explained that Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills, had agreed to accept all of the recommendations from Professor Donaldson review of the curriculum. A document 'Curriculum for life' had been written to lay the plans for how the new curriculum would be developed.

A PowerPoint presentation was provided by the CA, which outlined the development of the new Curriculum for Wales as proposed by the Curriculum for life document, and the following salient areas within the presentation were highlighted by the CA:-

- Qualified for Life – A Curriculum for Wales and for Life.
- Progression Outline.
- Ministerial Forward.
- Professor Donaldson - Forward.
- Eight Essential Blocks – Embedding the Four Purposes.
- Creating a New Curriculum – (Pioneer Network).
- Extending and Promoting Learners Experiences.
- Enabling the Welsh Language to Thrive.
- Developing a new Assessment and Evaluation Framework.
- Build Capacity of all Practitioners and Learners.
- Future Development of the Pioneer Network - Phases 1, 2 and 3.
- Timescales – Curriculum Design and Workforce Development through Pioneer Schools – Potential Model.

The following responses were provided to questions and issues raised by Members:-

- The CA agreed the list of pioneer schools, which was available on the Welsh Government website, could be presented to a future SACRE meeting. It was

also agreed that schools included on the list be invited to attend SACRE meetings.

- Members were informed that teacher training days would be available for members of the teaching staff.

Following further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED - that the report be received and its contents noted.

9 UPDATE ON SACRE AND SCHOOL TO SCHOOL COLLABORATION

The Challenge Advisor GwE (CA) provided an update on the proposal to support school to school collaborative groups. He explained that schools in Denbighshire, Wrexham, Flintshire and Conwy had been asked if they wished to participate in school to school collaborative groups focusing on Religious Education and Collective Worship, with a view to promoting teacher representation through the school to school collaboration. The CA explained that schools had been given up until Friday, 13th February, 2016 to register, with approximately eight Denbighshire schools having expressed an interest.

The aim of the initiative had been to provide teachers with the opportunity to meet and interact, and possibly address the lack of teaching representation on SACRE. The Group acknowledged the difficulties experienced by teachers in attending meetings, and it was explained that it was intended to hold more SACRE meetings in schools.

RESOLVED - that the report be received and its contents noted.

10 WASACRE

(a) Minutes of WASACRE – 25th November, 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) held in Neath Port Talbot on the 25th November, 2015 (previously circulated) were submitted for Members' information.

The CA invited Members attention to Pages 4 and 5 of the Wales Association of SACREs minutes, which highlighted major changes to the GCSE: WJEC in respect of Religious Studies. A summary of the impact of the revised specifications was provided for Members by the CA.

RESOLVED – that, subject to noting the above, minutes of WASACRE held on the 25th November, 2015 be received.

(b) Attendance at WASACRE meeting - 8th March, 2016

The Chair agreed to liaise with the CA regarding his possible attendance at the next WASACRE meeting, to be held at Haverford West on the 8th March, 2016.

(c) Denbighshire SACRE to host the spring meeting of WASACRE on the 23rd June, 2016.

Confirmation was provided that Denbighshire would be hosting the spring meeting of WASACRE to be held in Ruthin on the 23rd June, 2016.

(d) Nominations for new Members of the WASACRE Executive Committee.

A copy of an invitation for nominations for the WASACRE Executive Committee had been circulated at the meeting. Members agreed that Reverend B. Huw Jones name be forwarded as a nomination for the WASACRE Executive Committee.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE had been scheduled for Friday, 20th June, 2016 at a venue to be confirmed.

The Chair felt that increased representation from the respective schools would be important and welcomed. Members agreed with the suggestion that the CA extend an invitation to all schools to attend a future meeting of SACRE.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 a.m.