

## **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 5 February 2019 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Representing Denbighshire County Council**

Councillors Ellie Chard, Tony Thomas and Emrys Wynne

#### **Representing Religious Denominations**

Mr. Dominic Oakes

#### **Representing Teacher Associations**

Ms. Ali Ballantyne

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Senior School Improvement Officer (JM) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

### **SILENT REFLECTION**

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

#### **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR - FROM RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS**

Councillor Emrys Wynne proposed, seconded by Councillor Ellie Chard that Mr. Dominic Oakes be appointed Chair for the remainder of the 2019 term.

***RESOLVED** that Mr. Dominic Oakes be appointed Chair of Denbighshire SACRE for the remainder of the 2019 term.*

#### **2 APOLOGIES**

Councillor Tony Flynn, Reverend Martin Evan-Jones and Reverend Brian Jones

#### **3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The following members declared a personal interest –

Councillor Ellie Chard – Agenda Item 9 – previously worked at Ysgol Mair  
Councillor Emrys Wynne – Agenda Item 9 – Governor Ysgol Brynhyfryd

#### **4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

No urgent matters had been raised.

## **5 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The notes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held on 4 July 2018 (previously circulated) together with the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 5 February 2018 (previously circulated) were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the notes of the SACRE meeting held on 4 July 2018 and minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 5 February 2018 be received and approved.

## **6 SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) presented the draft Annual Report for Denbighshire SACRE 2017/18 (previously circulated) for approval. The report provided details of SACRE's activities during the previous academic year including advice given to the local authority together with other local and national matters.

Members were advised that Mr. Philip Lord was no longer the RE Adviser for SACRE and the local authority would be providing professional support to SACRE in future. The SSIO would be taking over that role in the interim pending a formal replacement. The draft Annual Report had been prepared by Mr. Lord and subsequently updated by the SSIO for SACRE approval.

During presentation of the report members' attention was drawn to the following –

- Agreed Syllabus – no changes had been proposed pending publication of the findings of the curriculum review
- Examination Results – the number of pupils entering examinations had decreased in line with the reduction of pupils on roll with a projected further decrease in pupil numbers over the next three years followed by an increase in the current Year Groups 7 & 8; it was disappointing to note a decline in results and whilst a trend had not been identified, RE results did tend to fluctuate – the dip could be explained by schools having to deal with new GCSE specifications and comparisons with next year's results would give a clearer indication in that regard – if SACRE considered it an area of concern the matter could be recommended to GwE for further investigation; A Level Results had not been included in the agenda pack and would be emailed separately to members – 21 fewer pupils sat an A Level in Religious Studies than the previous year and whilst the overall A\* – C rate had declined, the number of A\* grades had increased
- Methods of Teaching – there had been no changes to methods of teaching
- Teacher Training – it had not been possible during the year to make a visit to or receive a visit from an Initial Teacher Training Institute. There had been some changes to teacher training and further detail would be provided at the next SACRE meeting
- Inspection Reports – the inspection profile had been good and no issues had been raised in relation to Religious Studies and Religious Education or Collective Worship over the last twelve months.

During debate members expressed their disappointment that GwE, and in particular Mr. Philip Lord, was no longer involved with SACRE and tribute was paid to Mr. Lord's professionalism, expertise and valuable support he had provided to SACRE. Members agreed that a letter of appreciation be sent to Mr. Lord together with their best wishes to him for the future.

The SSIO advised that WASACRE held termly meetings for which SACRE was entitled to send representatives and it was noted that Denbighshire had not been represented at the last meeting held in November 2018 in Llantwit Major. It was agreed that Councillor Emrys Wynne would represent Denbighshire SACRE at the next meeting to be held on 26 March 2019 in Cardiff but if he was unable to attend then Councillor Ellie Chard would attend instead. It was noted that no further dates had been set for future WASACRE meetings although the meeting in summer 2019 would be held in Conwy. In terms of whether it was possible to claim expenses for attendance at WASACRE meetings officers agreed to take up the issue and report back to members thereon.

**RESOLVED that –**

- (a) *the Annual Report of Denbighshire SACRE for 2017 – 2018 be approved as an accurate account of SACRE's work;*
- (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;*
- (c) *a letter of appreciation be sent to Mr. Philip Lord, former RE Adviser on behalf of SACRE, and*
- (d) *Councillor Emrys Wynne attend the next WASACRE meeting on 26 March 2019 in Cardiff with Councillor Ellie Chard substitute representative.*

## **7 EXAMINATION RESULTS 2018**

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) presented the verified Religious Education KS4 examination results of Denbighshire's secondary schools (previously circulated) for members' consideration.

Members considered the results of both the GCSE full course and short course examinations and were disappointed to note the low number of pupils sitting those examinations highlighting that the majority of pupils in Denbighshire's schools had not sat an RE examination during that academic year. The exception was Prestatyn High School which historically performed well in terms of entering pupils for the full course and members congratulated the school in that regard. The benefits of a rounded education and the value in Religious Education whether or not it resulted in a qualification was acknowledged by SACRE. However members were keen to encourage schools to enter more pupils for RE examinations and discussed with the SSIO whether there were any practical measures which could be implemented to achieve that aim. The SSIO explained the recent change in emphasis and points accrued across a broader range of subjects which may have

an impact on future pupil numbers sitting RE examinations. In terms of encouraging take up of RE examinations the SSIO agreed to raise the issue at the next Headteachers Federation meeting and to keep the matter under close review. It was also suggested that the issue could be taken up by the Schools Standards Monitoring Group. With regard to the general reduction in pupils on roll and correlation with the decline in the number of pupils sitting RE examinations, the SSIO agreed to undertake further research into that element in order to provide a better indicator when considering future years' performance.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to members' comments and actions above, the Examination Results 2018 report be received and noted.

## **8 ESTYN INSPECTION PROCESS AND REPORTS**

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) submitted a report (previously circulated) informing members of the new inspection framework for schools introduced in September 2017.

In providing an overview of the new process the following was highlighted –

- schools would be given two weeks' notice of an inspection – this would leave less time to prepare but result in a better reflection of the school and less pressure on staff
- there would be a twelve month gap in inspections as a result of the new curriculum however Estyn would continue to inspect failing schools
- schools would be inspected twice in six years rather than once
- the new inspection focused on pupil progress and review providing a more accurate picture with an equally challenging approach.

Section 50 inspections were for schools that had a religious character and taught denominational religious education. Sections 50 inspections had been carried out at three primary schools during 2017/18 – Ysgol Esgob Morgan, Ysgol Tremeirchion and Ysgol Llanbedr. All three schools had good faith inspections with no concerns raised. Members were pleased to note the positive inspection outcomes and good features identified.

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

## **9 NEW CATHOLIC SCHOOL, RHYL**

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) presented a report (previously circulated) informing members of the progress of the new Christ the Word Catholic School – Ysgol Gatholig Crist y Gair and its readiness to open in September 2019.

Christ the Word Catholic School was an impressive new build which would open in September 2019 to replace Ysgol Mair and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School. The new school had been funded in partnership by the Council and Welsh Government through its 21st Century Schools Programme and could cater for 420 full time pupils aged 3 – 11 and 500 pupils aged 11 – 16. It was acknowledged that more time needed to be spent on marketing the school to increase pupil numbers

and there were plans to develop a new website and to use social media as promotional tools. A new Headteacher, Amanda Preston, had recently been appointed who was very experienced with a proven track record. The building work was progressing well and remained on target and members were shown some footage illustrating the plans for the building and school facilities and copies of the school prospectus were also made available.

In terms of demographics the SSIO confirmed there were sufficient numbers to fill the school and there would be no impact on St. Brigid's School which was also full. With regard to teacher recruitment, being a practicing Catholic was 'desirable' rather than 'essential' criteria for the post. In response to SACRE's request the SSIO confirmed he would make arrangements for the next spring term meeting of SACRE in 2020 to be held at the new school and provide a tour of the facilities.

***RESOLVED*** that the progress report and presentation on the new Christ the Word Catholic School be received and noted.

## **10 NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES**

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) delivered a power point presentation on Religious Education and the new Curriculum for Wales.

Members' attention was drawn to the following –

- the key recommendations arising from the curriculum review
- the timeline for implementation of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements which would be made available for feedback in April 2019
- the four purposes (1) ambitious, capable learners, (2) ethical, informed citizens, (3) enterprising, creative contributors, and (4) healthy, confident individuals
- the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) with Religious Education being part of the Humanities element as opposed to a specific subject
- the 'What matters' key concepts across the AoLEs to identify the key elements that all learners should experience within their areas
- wider RE policy to consider including the description of an agreed syllabus; RE in school sixth forms; RE in school nursery classes and withdrawal from RE
- the need to ensure that the agreed syllabus supported the Humanities AoLE and ensuring a place for RE in the new curriculum and parity with other subjects
- a new supporting framework for RE to be developed to support the new curriculum for Wales with a group being established for that purpose.

Members noted the place of Religious Education in the new curriculum for Wales and the group being established to develop the supporting framework for RE involving a range of specialist sources and expertise. The Chair felt it would be useful for the new curriculum and assessment arrangements to be circulated to SACRE members for consideration when they became available in April 2019. The SSIO also agreed to invite an officer from GwE to a future SACRE meeting to provide an overview of the new curriculum.

***RESOLVED*** that –

- (a) *the presentation on Religious Education and the new Curriculum for Wales be received and noted;*
- (b) *the SSIO circulate the new curriculum and assessment arrangements to SACRE members once they became available in April 2019, and*
- (c) *the SSIO to invite an officer from GwE to a future SACRE meeting to provide an overview of the new curriculum.*

Prior to the close of the meeting it was noted that the next SACRE meeting had been scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 26 June 2019 in County Hall, Ruthin. At the Chair's request the SSIO agreed to look into the possibility of holding that meeting in Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.