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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 LL15 1YN on Wednesday, 26 June 2019 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Tony Flynn, Emrys Wynne and Cheryl Williams, Emrys Wynne, Rev. Brian Huw Jones, Ali Ballantyne and Dominic Oakes (chair)

ALSO PRESENT

Head Teacher – Denbigh High School (PE), Diocesan Education Officer (JD), Senior School Improvement Officer (JM), Democratic Services Manager (SP) and Committee Administrator (HB)

OBSERVING

Councillor Mabon ap Gwynfor.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received by Councillor Tony Thomas and Reverend Martin Evans-Jones.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillors declared that they were school governors.

Councillor Emrys Wynne declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6. He explained that he knew members of the Religious Education department in Ysgol Dinas Bran very well.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Dominic Oakes had a concern regarding the way his pack was delivered to him. He explained that given the concerns regarding the environment he felt that the plastic packaging was unnecessary and a paper envelope would suffice next time. Following on from his concern he also highlighted the amount of paper the packs contained, raising the question whether or not hard copies were necessary.

All members were to express their preferred way of receiving the Agenda Pack, either by post or email.

4 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held 5 February 2019 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters arising –

Page 9 – Councillor Ellie Chard attended the WASACRE meeting on 26 March and had shared her report with members.

Page 12 – New Curriculum Assessments arrangements were going to be circulated. The deadline for comments on the new curriculum was July.

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 5 February 2019 be received and approved.

5 ESTYN REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Head Teacher for Denbigh High School and Peer Inspector for Estyn (HTDHS) presented the Estyn Review of Religious Education (previously circulated).

The HTDHS had been invited to take part in a thematic study where the remit was to look at the delivery and quality of Religious Education across Key Stage 3.

During the visits, the inspectors had time to meet with Head Teachers to ask a set number of questions, they also met with students and reviewed examples of their work.

Standards – the panel of inspectors concluded that many schools had a good standard of Religious Education. In terms of transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 there was repetition in work, this information being gained from the students statements.

Students also commented that Religious Education helped them understand conflict in the World, and helped them understand why different people have different views and opinions. The HTDHS said that in Key Stage 3 it was evident that the class teachers enabled debate and discussion with subjects such as relationships etc.

It was evident that Religious Education was very good at developing student's skills, particularly literacy, thinking and reasoning. Religious Education within schools had no defining point of what could be studied.

Provision – Many schools, both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 had qualified staff to deliver the subject. However lack of transitional work meant repetition of topics.

The report highlighted that often in secondary schools the department was led by a subject specialist who often had a degree level qualification. Provision support varied across schools, some schools had a systematic way of learning with all resources available and other had weekly meetings with a specialist to ensure the curriculum was correct and to request any provisions that they would deem necessary.

Links – nearly all primary schools had good links with organisations however only a minority of pupils in Key Stage 2 visited a religious place that was not Christian. This raised the question how often religious representatives had visited schools.

Dominic Oakes queried whether that was because fewer religious representatives were contacting schools to visit or was it a lack of invitations from the schools. The HTDHS confirmed that it was a combination of both. A major factor was location, he advised members that a secondary school once visited a Mosque in Manchester, but have since stopped the visit due to logistical reasons. The chair proposed the idea of a list of approved places of worship that schools could attend, he felt that this would encourage schools to arrange the visits.

Quality of Teacher Feedback – members were advised that the information varied across both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. However the feedback was very thorough.

Leadership - many primary schools and nearly all secondary schools' curricula were monitored. Many secondary schools had a self-evaluation process within Religious Education, information would be reported to the Head Teacher who then would report to the Governing Bodies.

Professional Learning – Many schools had limited access to training for teachers. Many schools knew about SACRE but were unsure on its role. There were fewer opportunities at Key Stage 3 for teachers to meet with fellow subject specialists, also fewer instances where teacher from Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 were communicating to ensure a good transition.

Ali Ballantyne said that given Religious Education was compulsory in Key Stage 3 why weren't students given a level, she felt that the subject was becoming less important compared to other compulsory subjects.

Councillor Ellie Chard felt that grades within the Religious Education subject weren't necessary. Students have different views and opinions, therefore she felt it wouldn't be fair to grade them on their opinions.

The HTDHS said in order to track student progress, a level was given to each individual in each humanity subjects. At the end of Key Stage 3, the school had a legal requirement to report to parents. Legally the school did not have to report it prior to a final report at the end of Key Stage 3.

Ali Ballantyne felt that the levels should be reported.

Dominic Oakes added that the use of levels would be a very debatable point, however felt that the subject was honoured by not having levels. He then added that he did not feel a recommendation would be within the group's remit.

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) advised members that the Local Authority would be responding to the New Curriculum. As an authority they could

suggest that Religious Education was equally weighted within the other humanities subjects.

The Diocesan Education officer (DEO) felt that the skills developed by Religious Education was crucial to take through life. Therefore she felt going forward towards the new curriculum, further thought should be made on themes, studies, examples and what the expectations of the themes would be.

The chair felt that although the subject was important, it should be considered at another meeting once the subject of the new curriculum was further advanced. He also noted that a specialist Religious Education advisor previously attended and supported the SACRE, he queried why a specialist did not attend the meetings anymore. The SSIO confirmed that there was a specialist who worked for GwE who attended meetings, however Religious Education was a small part of their job and when circumstances change the provision had gone. The SSIO did however confirm that a specialist was being sourced to support SACRE in the new school term.

The SSIO advised that the Schools had received copies of the Estyn reports. The schools must build the recommendations within their school, as an authority they do not have the capacity to monitor the recommendation for each individual school.

In response to a question regarding current procedures the SSIO said that current procedures could not be bettered and since there were no major concerns regarding any school in the authority there would be no need to change procedures.

Councillor Emrys Wynne queried what the attitude towards prevention was within schools and how safeguarding was approached. The HTDHS explained that in Denbigh High School there were posters in every classroom with pictures and names of the safeguarding officers. Staff members were aware that if they had a safeguarding issue they should report it to the safeguarding officers or the head teacher. The school would then call Social Services' Children's Gateway number to report the issues. Staff were trained annually and prevention was part of the training.

On behalf of members the chair thanked the Head Teacher for Denbigh High School and Peer Inspector for Estyn for his report and suggested safeguarding within schools be on the forward work programme.

RESOLVED: - that the committee notes the recommendations from the Estyn Report.

6 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN YSGOL DINAS BRAN

The Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) presented the report on Religious Education in Ysgol Dinas Bran as apologies were received from the Deputy Headteacher who had been due to attend.

The SSIO began with a brief update on the history of Religious Education in Ysgol Dinas Bran. Religious Education had a good history in the school, with students in all years having one lesson a week. Following this, at Key Stage 4 students would decide what level of Religious Education to Study.

He continued to explain that currently, Dinas Bran had 59 Students on the full course GCSE RE and 145 on the short course GCSE RE, with an additional 73 students studying the Equality and Diversity Exam. He praised the Religious Education Department and commented that it was unfortunate that students did not want to study the subject for A-Levels.

The chair asked the SSIO for clarity regarding the figures, he queried whether there was no interest from any student for the A-Level course or whether it was a matter of only a hand full had expressed interest but the school could not accommodate it. In response the SSIO confirmed that the course on average would receive interest from one or two students per year.

The SSIO explained that they wouldn't be able to gain any figures on the number of students that had taken the course and continue to study the course until the Autumn Term, however said he could retrieve indicative figures for the next meeting.

From the Local Authority's point of view the SSIO noted that there were no issues regarding Religious Education in Ysgol Dinas Bran.

RESOLVED: - that the committee notes the provision of religious education at Ysgol Dinas Bran.

7 CURRICULUM FOR WALES CONSULTATION

Dominic Oakes noted that the group had previously discussed the Curriculum for Wales Consultation and proposed that the group did not review the entire document, but received a summarised update from the SSIO.

The SSIO explained that the report did not reference Religious Education as a separate subject but had referenced Humanities, which Religious Education falls under. He explained that as an authority they wanted to look at the curriculum which interprets human rights, values and religious views to ensure a positive development for the young people.

The progressions steps within the report highlighted how achievement outcomes were developed. The progressions stages were applicable to children between 4 and 16 years old.

RESOLVED: - that the committee considered and notes how the new Religious Education curriculum would be developed in Denbighshire.

8 CONWY CHARTER

Item withdrawn.

9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIONS AND WAR AND PEACE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LESSONS

The chair explained that he wanted the committee to consider whether issues raised within the Quaker's proposed peace charter be recommended to schools for use in Religious Education lessons. In particular he highlighted whether the armed forces should have access to children in schools.

The DEO advised members that they must be aware of the possible impact on the well-being of young people from service families. She felt that if the subject were to be approached, it should be approached with caution.

Councillor Mabon ap Gwynfor thanked the chair for raising the issue of armed forces, stating that as an authority the topic is not discussed enough. He felt inspired by this and confirmed he would be raising the matter in other committees.

The Democratic Services Manager raised concerns regarding SACRE taking a role in promoting the peace charter as the role was not within SACRE's terms of reference and the wording of parts of the charter were controversial.

The chair asked members for their view on the item.

Councillor Tony Flynn noted that he had a personal connection, he had considered members comments and did not feel the topic was appropriate.

Councillor Cheryl Williams also did not agree with it. She declared a connection as a member of her family was in the RAF.

Councillor Ellie Chard explained that if a decision regarding promoting the peace charter had to be made she would vote against it.

Reverend Brian H Jones felt if the item were to be part of debate and conversation then there would need to be both sides of the argument presented.

The chair noted the statements made by members. He also agreed that he had concerns regarding the language of the peace charter and understood that further work debate would be required.

Councillor Emrys Wynne said by reviewing the document, it would be difficult for SACRE to recommend the peace charter. He did however state that there was potential for further talks within the council.

The chair noted member's views on the topic.

RESOLVED: - that members note the verbal report.

10 WASACRE

Councillor Ellie Chard attended the WASACRE meeting in Cardiff, she commented that she had thoroughly enjoyed the day.

The chair thanked Councillor Chard for attending.

Ali Ballantyne suggested she would attend the next WASACRE meeting.

11 PROGRAMME FOR 2020

The Democratic Services Manager explained that dates for all of 2020 meetings would go to Full Council for approval on the 2nd July. Once approved he would circulate them to members for information.

Meeting Closed 11:57am

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