

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in by video conference on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

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

Councillors Ellie Chard (Chair), Tony Flynn, Cheryl Williams and Emrys Wynne

#### **Representing Religious Denominations**

Jennie Downes and Collette Owen

#### **Representing Teacher Associations**

No representatives in attendance

### **ALSO PRESENT**

RE Adviser (PL) and Committee Administrators (KEJ & SJ)

### **POINTS OF NOTICE**

- (i) Due to the current restrictions on travel and requirement for social distancing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic the meeting was held remotely by video conference and was not open to the general public
- (ii) In the absence of a teacher representative the Council's quorum requirements had not been met. It was agreed to proceed with the meeting on the basis that any decisions made would need to be formally ratified at the Council's next quorate meeting. Report recommendations were taken as read and agreed by consensus with no formal vote undertaken
- (iii) Collette Owen had replaced Mary Ludenbach as a member on SACRE representing the Roman Catholic Diocese.

### **SILENT REFLECTION**

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Dominic Oakes (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Rachel Flynn

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Ellie Chard declared a personal interest as Governor of Ysgol Tir Morfa

### **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 5 February 2020 (previously circulated) were submitted.

**Matters Arising** – Page 7 – Item 8 SACRE Newsletter – The RE Adviser explained the delay in circulating the newsletter to schools due to Covid-19 but confirmed that the information contained therein was still relevant and a bilingual version would be emailed to schools shortly.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 5 February 2020 be received and approved as a correct record.*

### **5 SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

The RE Adviser presented the draft Annual Report for Denbighshire SACRE 2019/20 (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 RE Adviser reminded members that the annual report was a historic document and he sought approval of the report, subject to any amendment of errors. He provided a summary of the report and drew particular attention to the following –

- SACRE had only met twice during the period of the annual report with the summer term meeting having been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic
- there had been little to report previously under the heading 'Provision of Initial Teacher Training' and the presentation SACRE had received from Graham French, Bangor University was a welcome addition which had provided information on teacher training and a focus on RE. It was expected that positive relationship would continue with references in future annual reports
- the first annual newsletter informing schools of important information regarding RE and the new curriculum had featured in the resource recommendations
- in addition to covering the business of SACRE some other annual reports in Wales had also been used as a means of promoting the wider elements of RE. It was suggested that practice be followed in future with Denbighshire SACRE receiving relevant presentations which could then feature in the annual reports and also be included in the annual newsletter to schools
- it was pleasing to note that following previous requests by members the draft report had been made available bilingually this year as part of the agenda pack.

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

***RESOLVED** that –*

- (a) *the Annual Report of Denbighshire SACRE for 2019 – 2020 be approved as an accurate account of SACRE’s work, and*
- (b) *the Local 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.*

## **6 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS**

The RE Adviser submitted a report (previously circulated) analysing the results of Estyn inspections in terms of RE provision and collective worship in four schools between October 2019 – February 2020. Inspections had been carried out at Ysgol Dyffryn Ial; St. Asaph VP Infants; Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog and Ysgol Bryn Hedydd.

Members considered the findings relating to each school and were pleased to note the positive comments and outcomes. Whilst accepting that Estyn was required to follow a prescribed format when carrying out their inspections it was generally felt a more individualised report for each school would add value and interest.

There was some debate about how schools were having to change and adapt in difficult circumstances to deal with the restrictions and challenges of Covid-19. The RE Adviser reported upon discussions with some schools and highlighted the benefits of smaller class assemblies with opportunities for pupils to express their thoughts and fears and to talk through issues with real purpose which had proved valuable to pupils’ and staff wellbeing. Jennie Downes endorsed those views and reported upon her experience with Church in Wales schools. She advised that whilst a lot of resources were going out to schools, the schools themselves were also producing their own resources and she provided an illustrative example to highlight the creativity in classrooms and amazing work being undertaken in difficult circumstances. She felt the challenge was to find a way to capture the excellent work going on in schools and sharing it for the benefit of others. The Chair queried whether that information could be sought when circulating the newsletter and the RE Adviser agreed to invite informal responses within his email to schools both in terms of the newsletter and in that regard. Jennie Downes also suggested the use of twitter to highlight and share good practice carried out in schools.

**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 reminding them of the services of the RE Adviser and School Improvement Officers in relation to any areas for development or key issues needing addressing, and*
- (c) *the Local Authority be requested to distribute the above letters.*

## **7 CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022**

The RE Adviser provided a verbal update on progress as follows –

- **Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill** – members' attention was drawn to two particular aspects arising from the consultation. The first related to the proposal to remove the right of parents to withdraw their child/ren from RE which was of specific concern. The second element related to the opportunity for pupils to receive state school RE in Church in Wales and Catholic schools which would have huge implications for those schools. The general feeling was that the syllabus in those schools should be diverse enough to allow pupils to receive a pluralistic Religious Education without the need for a second syllabus. WASACRE would be meeting with the Children, Education and Young People Committee to put forward their arguments and discuss the Bill in greater detail. Members were encouraged to read the consultation responses and feedback on the Welsh Government website.
- **Curriculum for Wales/RE Framework** – the draft framework regarding the new curriculum had yet to be published by the Welsh Government. WASACRE had requested that SACREs have sight of the supporting framework prior to it going through the Senedd so that it could be agreed and WASACRE continued to lobby WG to remind them that SACREs were an integral part of the development of the draft framework. If SACRE disagreed with the framework there could be major consequences – SACRE could create its own framework or readopt the current Agreed Syllabus indefinitely.
- **RE GCSE Qualification** – discussion had been ongoing over recent years regarding the difficulty of some pupils accessing the GCSE qualification which had prompted some members of the NAPfRE (National Advisory Panel for Religious Education) to develop their own examination qualification which would be of GCSE standard to meet statutory requirements for pupils at Key Stage 4. The intention was to create a formal GCSE in RE via Agored Cymru to be endorsed by Qualification Wales with the potential for the new GCSE for RE starting in September 2021.

Jennie Downes thanked the RE Adviser for his clear and simple explanation of the very complex issues arising from the consultations and for all his work in that regard. She also highlighted her own concerns regarding the implications for Church in Wales's schools and Christianity arising from the proposals.

The RE Adviser added that WASACRE had met the previous week via video conference and he reported upon the outcome of the elections – the two executive positions had been filled by him and John Meredith (Powys SACRE), and Tania ap Sion (Wrexham SACRE) had been voted Vice Chair.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal update from the RE Adviser be received and noted.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The dates of future SACRE meetings in 2021 had been confirmed as follows –

2 February (Tuesday), 24 June (Thursday) and 20 October (Wednesday).

In closing the Chair thanked the RE Adviser for all his hard work in supporting SACRE and she also thanked members for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 a.m.