

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held by video conference on Tuesday, 1 February 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

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

Representing Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Philosophical Convictions

Dominic Oakes, Jennie Downes (Vice Chair) and Collette Owen

Representing Teacher Associations

Leah Crimes, Sarah Griffiths and Katie Mason

ALSO PRESENT

RE Adviser (PL), Principal Education Manager (JB) and Committee Administrators (KEJ & RTJ [Zoom Host])

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor Rachel Flynn

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of 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 20 October 2021 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising –

Page 1 – Present – a Humanist Representative had been appointed to the SACRE and it was agreed that the list of members present be changed to “Representing Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Philosophical Convictions” in future.

Page 9 – Item 9: SACRE Draft Annual Report 2020/21 – the report had been finalised and submitted to the Welsh Government.

The RE Adviser reported on the need for SACRE to amend its constitution to reflect the changes to include Non-Religious Philosophical Convictions representation and also in relation to the Curriculum for Wales and the Agreed Syllabus. The Chair asked that the matter be considered at the next scheduled meeting in June 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 20 October 2021 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 CURRICULUM FOR WALES

The Chair welcomed the Principal Education Manager to his first SACRE meeting.

The Principal Education Manager introduced the item on the Welsh Government's new Curriculum for Wales which was due to come into effect in September 2022. He was grateful to the RE Adviser for his presentation and explanation of the Religion, Values and Ethics guidance which had recently been released.

The RE Adviser explained the requirement for convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference to prepare an Agreed Syllabus to be adopted by the local education authority. The intention was to record and circulate the presentation to participants in order to inform that process. In addition to SACRE representatives it was hoped that as many teachers as possible could attend the Agreed Syllabus Conference which had been provisionally scheduled for 14 March 2022.

The RE Adviser gave a presentation which provided an overview of the Curriculum for Wales and explanation of the Religion, Value and Ethics (RVE) guidance.

Areas covered within the comprehensive presentation included –

- curriculum and assessment legislation requirements
- an introduction to the six areas of learning and experience and further specifics and language used – ‘statements of what matters’, ‘principles of progression’, ‘descriptions of learning’ and ‘designing your curriculum’
- specific reference to the statements of what matters for the Humanities area which encompassed context, skills, knowledge and concepts for development
- links to web pages including a summary of legislation with specific legislation relating to RVE guidance and how it could be adopted as an Agreed Syllabus
- the change from religious education to religion, values and ethics to reflect the expanded scope and inclusion of non-religious beliefs including humanism, atheism and secularism
- legislative changes governing the Agreed Syllabus Conference and SACREs to reflect both religious beliefs and non-religious philosophical convictions
- aims of the Agreed Syllabus with the RVE guidance having been written as a basis for the Agreed Syllabus with a high level of collaboration
- legal requirements for an Agreed Syllabus Conference and questions for them and SACREs to consider
- the removal of the right to withdraw from RVE in the Curriculum for Wales

- the purpose of the RVE guidance to provide additional support on how RVE could be taught in the Humanities area and those who must have regard to it
- the context of spiritual development in RVE which remained a key aspect
- designing the curriculum for RVE to include: cross-cutting themes, cross-curricular skills, skills integral to the four purposes, the statements of what matters, RVE concepts and the RVE lens
- learner progression and learning journeys in RVE with illustrative examples, and
- points for schools/settings to consider when designing their curriculum for RVE.

In closing the RE Adviser acknowledged the wealth of information contained within the presentation but highlighted that the Curriculum for Wales and full RVE guidance was far more comprehensive. The recorded presentation and PowerPoint slides would be circulated to SACRE members and schools to view and consider the content at their own leisure.

The following matters were raised during the ensuing debate –

- the RVE guidance was a comprehensive document and a link to the relevant webpage had been included on the agenda for members to access and consider at their leisure; the presentation, whilst also lengthy, had broken-down and summarised elements of the guidance for ease of reference and use
- confirmed the Welsh translation 'Canllawiau ar Grefydd, Gwerthoedd a Moeseg' for 'Religion, Vales and Ethics Guidance' as detailed in the presentation
- Councillor Meirick Davies referred to the current UK Consultation on banning the right to proselytise and potential implications for religious teachings. The RE Adviser had been unaware of the proposals but advised that there was legislation in Wales to protect the teaching of Christianity within the current curriculum and thanked Councillor Davies for bringing the matter to attention
- there was some debate on the purpose of the guidance to be pluralistic and teach what people believed across Wales, not indoctrinating people and telling them what they believed, and whilst church schools may have a different purpose regarding RVE and its delivery, there would still need to be a pluralistic element to that reflecting the differences of the people and beliefs in Wales
- the legislation which underpinned the RVE guidance clearly stated that it must reflect that the religious nature of Wales was Christianity in the main and then other principal religions together with non-religious philosophical convictions, so there was a sense and history of Wales tied in with those teachings
- it was the responsibility of schools to make students aware of the dimensions of morality and spirituality and the learning journeys in RVE were cited as an excellent vehicle for students to explore their own faith and beliefs, with the freedom to make their own personal choices and decide for themselves
- the right of withdrawal would no longer be needed after the implementation of the new curriculum because of the way RVE was taught
- it was clarified that Collective Worship had its own set of laws and philosophy behind that which currently had to be wholly, broadly Christian
- teacher representatives reported upon the plans and developments in their own schools regarding the new curriculum and welcomed the presentation delivered which provided greater clarity in the teaching of RVE going forward and thanked the RE Adviser for all his hard work in that regard.

The Chair thanked the RE Adviser for his interesting and informative presentation which had been well received by SACRE and would also be of huge benefit to schools in developing the new curriculum and teaching of RVE.

RESOLVED that the presentation by the RE Adviser regarding the Religion, Values and Ethics guidance be received and noted.

6 SUPPORTING THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IN ADOPTING AN AGREED SYLLABUS

The RE Adviser explained that, following on from the previous agenda item, Denbighshire local authority was required to adopt an Agreed Syllabus, and in order to provide support to the local authority in that regard, it was recommended that SACRE advise the local authority to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference.

SACRE was advised that provisional arrangements had been made to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference at 10.00 am on Monday 14 March 2022 and it was hoped that as many teachers as possible would be able to attend in addition to SACRE members; the recording of the presentation would be shared with schools beforehand. The RE Adviser believed that the RVE guidance as presented met the requirements of the new curriculum and could be adopted as the Agreed Syllabus. He also cautioned against too many adaptations of the RVE guidance given the training provided by the Welsh Government on the guidance which would otherwise fall to the local authority; potential litigations given that the RVE guidance had been through the relevant quality assurances processes, and that guidance also provided a link in with the curriculum for Wales holistically taking into account the other areas of learning and experience and progression steps. He considered that those points should be carefully considered at the Agreed Syllabus Conference when deciding on what to advise the local authority in terms of the Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE was comprised of three separate committees representing (1) Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Philosophical Convictions, (2) Teacher Associations, and (3) the Local Authority, and the RE Adviser referred to the requirement for each committee to vote separately on the report recommendation. Upon being put to the vote of each committee it was unanimously –

RESOLVED to advise the local authority to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference.

7 WASACRE

The RE Adviser reported that the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 November 2021 had not yet been made available for circulation but much of the meeting had focused on the RVE guidance. He directed members to the WASACRE website <https://wasacre.org.uk/> for useful information, including agendas and minutes from previous meetings, and also an updated handbook for SACRE members reflecting recent legislative changes and information on SACREs and WASACRE's work. It was noted that the date of the next WASACRE meeting had yet to be confirmed.

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

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The dates of future SACRE meetings in 2022 had been confirmed as follows –

23 June (Thursday) and 19 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 11.30 am.