

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)
Agreed Syllabus Conference held by video conference on 14 March 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

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

Representing Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Philosophical Convictions

Jennie Downes (Vice Chair) and Collette Owen

Representing Teacher Associations

Leah Crimes and Sarah Griffiths

ALSO PRESENT

RE Adviser (PL), Principal Education Manager (JB), Democratic Services Officer/Zoom Host (KE) and Senior Committee Administrator (KEJ)

Teacher – Susan Williams (Christchurch School, Rhyl)

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor Meirick Davies, Dominic Oakes and Katie Mason

Councillor Emrys Wynne and Sarah Griffiths would be arriving late to the meeting.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest had been raised.

3 PRESENTATION ON THE PURPOSE OF AN AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

The RE Adviser explained the requirement for the local authority to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference to discuss the formal adoption of an Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics every five years. He delivered a brief presentation on the purpose of an Agreed Syllabus Conference which covered the following –

- Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) was a locally determined subject and the Agreed Syllabus specified what should be taught in RVE within each of the 22 local authorities in Wales for those schools that taught the Agreed Syllabus
- the Guidance was directed at those responsible for preparing an Agreed Syllabus who must have regard to it, including the Agreed Syllabus Conference and the local authority who had a function in adopting the Agreed Syllabus
- the Agreed Syllabus Conference was legally required to review the syllabus and recommend an appropriate syllabus to the local authority for adoption
- following adoption of an Agreed Syllabus all maintained schools and settings had to have regard to it, including schools of a religious character, in their design of the Agreed Syllabus element of their RVE provision
- a local authority could adopt or adapt the Guidance as their Agreed Syllabus
- the Agreed Syllabus Conference must ensure the syllabus reflected the fact that (a) religious traditions in Wales were in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions represented in Wales, and (b) a range of non-religious philosophical convictions were held in Wales
- detailed the composition of the Agreed Syllabus Conference together with voting rights and unanimous agreement sought on a recommended syllabus of RVE
- the removal of the right to withdraw from RVE in the Curriculum for Wales from September 2022 for all learners up to and including year 6; from September 2023 for years 7 and 8, and following the continuation of the phased roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales from September 2024 for year 9, September 2025 for year 10 and September 2026 for year 11.

There being no questions from members arising from the presentation it was –

RESOLVED that the presentation by the RE Adviser regarding purpose of an Agreed Syllabus Conference be received and noted.

4 THE NEWLY AGREED SYLLABUS

The RE Adviser facilitated a discussion on the advice the Agreed Syllabus Conference would formally provide to the local authority on the adoption of Denbighshire's newly Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics, with specific consideration given to adopting the RVE Guidance as Denbighshire local authority's Agreed Syllabus from September 2022 to September 2027.

Members noted the merits of adopting the RVE Guidance in its entirety as the Agreed Syllabus which included: the training provided by the Welsh Government would be applicable to that RVE Guidance; there would be consistency across many other local authorities in Wales working along the same curriculum lines; the RVE Guidance had been designed as a good fit into the new curriculum as part of the Humanities Area of Learning Experience, and the RVE Guidance had already been through the relevant consultations with stakeholder and quality assurance processes meaning there was little scope for potential litigations. The teachers present reported upon the development of the Humanities Area of Learning Experience within their schools and considered that the RVE Guidance linked well within the curriculum and supported the suggestion that it be adopted as the Agreed Syllabus, and that support was also echoed by other members.

Councillor Tony Flynn proposed, seconded by Collette Owen that the local authority be advised to adopt the RVE Guidance, in its entirety, as its Agreed Syllabus.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference 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 proposition. Upon being put to the vote of each committee it was unanimously –

RESOLVED to advise Denbighshire local authority to adopt the Religion, Values and Ethics Guidance as an Agreed Syllabus from September 2022 to September 2027.

The RE Adviser also sought members' consideration of the following –

- Conwy SACRE had noted the lack of reference to post 16 in the RVE Guidance but that reference to post 16 had been included as part of the legislative summary within the Curriculum for Wales, specifically for RVE because it was no longer applicable for every post 16 pupil to follow an RVE curriculum. However, if a child wished they would still be entitled to receive provision for RVE and it was suggested that entitlement should be explicit in the advice given to the local authority. It was noted that Conwy SACRE had proposed an appendix to the Agreed Syllabus incorporating the reference to post 16 in the legislative summary as guidance in that regard. The Chair proposed, seconded by Councillor Cheryl Williams that the same approach be taken in Denbighshire
- given the phased roll-out of the new Curriculum for Wales it was suggested that the local authority continued with the current Agreed Syllabus in line with that phased approach and the local authority be advised accordingly. Councillor Cheryl Williams proposed that approach, seconded by Councillor Rachel Flynn. Due to the need for both the current and new Agreed Syllabus to be easily accessible the intention was to make it available on the Denbighshire website on the webpage hosting SACRE agendas etc.

Each of the three committees voted separately on the above two propositions and it was unanimously –

RESOLVED to further advise Denbighshire local authority to –

- (a) *include an appendix to the Agreed Syllabus incorporating the reference to post 16 provision of RVE as detailed in the legislative summary within the Curriculum for Wales, and*
- (b) *in line with the phased roll-out of the new Curriculum for Wales, the local authority continues with the current Agreed Syllabus for years 8, 9, 10 and 11 in 2022, for years 9, 10 and 11 in 2023, for years 10 and 11 in 2024, and year 11 in 2025.*

The RE Adviser explained that he had also prepared some supporting material for the Agreed Syllabus which teachers may find useful as part of their curriculum planning, and he guided members through those documents which had been based on information extracted from the RVE Guidance which covered the following –

- possible disciplinary approaches including Religious Studies, Philosophy, Theology, Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology amongst others
- RVE concepts and connecting them with statements of what matters in the Humanities Area of Learning Experience
- tables to help teachers identify possible concepts they may want to develop in their curriculum and how they may support a greater understanding of the statements of what matters for humanities
- cross referencing the concepts explicitly specified in the statement of what matters and the descriptions of learning with the concepts in the RVE guidance
- seven lenses broken down and examples of learning journeys and progression
- questions included in the RVE Guidance and points to consider for schools and settings when designing their curriculum for RVE including using a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rating to evaluate progress.

The RE Adviser was keen to hear the views of the teachers on the supplementary material with a view to undertaking further work on the documents before submission to the next SACRE meeting to consider advising the local authority to provide the support material for all schools. The teachers present voiced their support and thanks to the RE Adviser for the supplementary material which they considered would be beneficial to schools when planning for the curriculum in the earlier stages by breaking down the guidance into one concise document and also for those schools which had progressed further in mapping the new curriculum by using the document to cross reference work produced and evaluate progress.

During further debate it was acknowledged that the supplementary material needed to be presented to schools as a means of supporting them in the development of the new curriculum and not to create additional work or concerns. It was noted that different approaches could be taken by different schools with some benefiting from the structure provided within the document but other schools may wish to take a more organic and fluid approach, with schools using the supporting material to best suit the individual school. There was some discussion as to how best to take the matter forward and it was agreed that the existing Microsoft Teams Group of teachers would be a good way of sharing and developing the support material collaboratively and ensure its use to best effect prior to presenting the document to the next meeting of the Chairs of School Clusters scheduled after Easter which would ensure schools' involvement in the process prior to presenting a final document to SACRE for consideration.

The RE Adviser also drew attention to the lack of formatting of the RVE Guidance in terms of page and paragraph/section numbering and the difficulty in navigating the document as a result. Consequently it was suggested that number formatting be included in the RVE Guidance when it was adopted as the Agreed Syllabus.

The Chair proposed both the above actions, seconded by Leah Crimes and following a vote by each separate committee it was unanimously –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the supporting material provided by the RE Adviser be shared and further developed with the Microsoft Teams Teacher Group prior to its presentation to the Chairs of School Clusters and subsequent submission to the next scheduled SACRE meeting for final agreement to advise the local authority to provide that supplementary support material to all schools, and*
- (b) *to further advise Denbighshire local authority to format the Agreed Syllabus appropriately to aid navigation of the document and ease of use.*

At this point the RE Adviser shared his sketch notes and interpretation of the text for each of the statements of what matters as a means of providing pictorial ways of presenting that information which could be made available to schools for use, with the caveat that they be used together with the statement of what matters directly.

Prior to the close of the meeting members were advised that the Chair would write an introduction to the Agreed Syllabus together with a statement from the Education Department to endorse the document for schools prior to its publication.

The Chair thanked the RE Adviser for his hard work and to all members for their contributions. Councillor Emrys Wynne expressed this thanks for the translation service to provide the opportunity for those to use the Welsh language.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.