

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Council Chamber, Nant Hall Road, Prestatyn on Friday, 24 February 2012 at 2.00 p.m.

### **PRESENT**

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

Councillors Christine Evans, Gwilym Evans and Morfudd Jones  
**Observer:** Councillor Meirick Davies

#### **Representing Religious Denominations**

Mrs. Sylvia Harris, Reverend Brian H. Jones, Ms. Mary Ludenbach, Lt. Sian Radford and Mrs. Elaine Wright

#### **Representing Teacher Associations**

Mrs. Maxine Bradshaw (Chair) and Alison Ballantyne (substitute for Maureen Phillips)

#### **Co-opted Member**

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Senior Learning Adviser RE (PL) and Clerk to SACRE (KEJ)  
The Secondary School Effectiveness Performance Officer (JM) attended for Item No. 9.

### **SILENT REFLECTION**

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Councillors Ann Davies, Glyn Jones and Jane Yorke together with Reverend Martin Evans-Jones, Mr. Rodney Elms, Mr. Gavin Craigen and Ms. Tania Ap Sion.

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

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

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

The Chair indicated that she intended to include for discussion the following matter requiring urgent attention –

Nomination to WASACRE Executive

#### 4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on 14 October 2011 (previously circulated) were submitted.

##### **Matters Arising –**

Page 3 – Item No. 7 – Correspondence from Humanist Society – Councillor Christine Evans indicated that her views on the matter had not been included within the minutes and she queried the outcome of the WASACRE meeting during which the membership request had been considered. The Senior Learning Adviser RE confirmed that the minute had only provided a brief summary because of WASACRE's recommendation to delay consideration of the matter pending their meeting in November 2011. He advised that although the matter had been discussed at that meeting no decision had been made about how to proceed and he felt it would be unwise to discuss the matter further until WASACRE had provided a firm viewpoint. Councillor Evans was concerned that the matter had been further delayed and the Senior Learning Adviser RE agreed to raise the matter again at the next WASACRE meeting.

Page 7 – Item No. 12 – Date of Next Meeting – whilst the accuracy of the minute was correct it was noted that the date of the next meeting had subsequently been changed from 13 February to 24 February 2012.

Alison Ballantyne sought further information regarding Archbishop Rice Jones Charitable Trust which had also been referenced within the minutes. Mrs. Sylvia Harris agreed to provide further details to Ms. Ballantyne outside of the meeting.

***RESOLVED*** that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 14 October 2011 be received and approved as a correct record.

#### 5 ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Senior Learning Adviser RE (SLA:RE) submitted a report (previously circulated) analysing the results of the recent Estyn inspection in terms of RE provision carried out at Ysgol Tremeirchion in November 2011. The school had been inspected under the new Estyn Framework.

The SLA:RE took members through the short report and members noted the positive references to RE and that no negative comments had been received. The regular Monitoring Reports produced from the SLA:RE's visits to schools provided more meaningful data for members to consider in light of the brief references provided by Estyn under the new reporting framework. Members were reminded that a report on the new Estyn Framework had been included later on today's agenda. The Chair confirmed that SACRE was very fortunate to receive detailed monitoring reports from the SLA:RE for schools consortia groups and she took the opportunity to thank him for all his hard work in that regard.

Councillor Morfudd Jones encouraged members to read the full inspection report for the school which put the various elements of the inspection into context and the SLA:RE agreed to provide a link to Estyn's website in future reports to SACRE for ease of reference.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *the report be received and noted;*
- (b) *a letter be sent to Ysgol Tremeirchion informing the school that their Inspection Report had been considered and congratulating them on the good features identified, and*
- (c) *the Local Authority be requested to distribute the above letter.*

## **6 EXAMINATION RESULTS 2011**

The Senior Learning Adviser RE (SLA:RE) submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing results for examinations at GCSE and Advanced Level Religious Studies for the year 2010 and 2011 together with an analysis of the differences and trends for members' review.

The SLA: RE proceeded to take members through the results in detail and reported upon comparisons between the 2011 and 2010 examination results for each school. He particularly referred to the following –

### **GCSE Results – Religious Studies 2011 – All – Full Course**

- Denbigh High School – an improvement of 10.4% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* - C which was 4.9% above the national average
- Glan Clwyd – an improvement of 31.8% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\*– C which was 8.9% above the national average
- Prestatyn High School – an improvement of 11% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 16.8% above the national average
- Dinas Bran - an improvement of 37.2% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 14.3% above the national average
- Brynhyfryd – an improvement of 5.9% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 14% above the national average
- Rhyl – had entered 88.9 candidates (none the previous year) which equated to an improvement of 88.9% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 16% above the national average
- Blessed Edward Jones – an improvement of 0.9% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 19.7 below the national average

- St. Brigids – an improvement of 5.5% on the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 27.1% above the national average.

The overall results had been positive with Denbighshire achieving 12% above the national average and an improvement of 11.1% compared to the previous year.

### **GCSE Results – Religious Studies 2011 – All - Short Course**

There was a mixed result for schools as follows –

- Denbigh – there were 68 more candidates than the previous year showing an improvement of 3.1% for those achieving A\* – C but 28.9% below the national average and much work was ongoing to improve those results
- Prestatyn – there were 45 more candidates than the previous year showing an improvement of 2.2% for those achieving A\* – C which was 55.8% below the national average
- St. Brigids – there were 2 candidates compared to 0 the previous year who had achieved A\* – C which was 42% above the national average

The overall results showed a decline of 15.8% in Denbighshire's results compared to the previous year which was 35% below the national average for 2011.

### **GCE Advanced Level – Religious Studies 2011 – All**

All schools had improved performance compared to the previous year –

- Denbigh – showed an improvement of 4.3% against the previous year for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 32.6% below the national average
- Glan Clwyd – there were 3 candidates compared to 0 the previous year showing an improvement of 100% for candidates achieving A\* – C which was 22% above the national average
- Brynhyfryd – showed an improvement of 20% for 4 candidates against the previous year for those achieving A\* – C which was 22% above the national average
- St. Brigids – showed 100% of pupils entered had achieved A\* – C resulting in an improvement of 16.8% compared to the previous year and 22% above the national average.

The overall results showed an improvement of 11.6% for Denbighshire compared to the previous year's results which was 6.4% above the national average.

In concluding his summary of the examination results, the SLA:RE drew members' attention to a results comparison of Denbighshire's schools to the national average over the period 2004 to 2011. He also explained that the previous practice of separately reporting upon boys and girls performance had not been possible for this

year although it was hoped that separation of that data could be undertaken in future.

During consideration of the examination results members took the opportunity to clarify a number of issues with the SLA:RE. It was explained that there had been no entrants for A Level at Rhyl High School or Blessed Edward Jones High School because sixth form provision had been transferred to the Rhyl Sixth College. In terms of the disappointing results at GCSE level in Blessed Edward Jones High School compared to the national average, Ms. Mary Ludenbach reported upon the steady improvements over a number of years during some difficult times for the school. She was pleased to report that the outlook was very positive.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) the statistical data and summary be received;*
- (b) the Senior Learning Adviser RE arrange meetings with those schools showing disappointing examination results to ascertain what strategies were being adopted in order to address issues of under performance and to offer his services in helping to bring about improvements, and*
- (c) letters of congratulation be sent to those schools where results had improved on the previous year and were above the national averages.*

## **7 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES**

(This item was brought forward on the agenda with the consent of the Chair)

The Senior Learning Adviser RE (SLA:RE) reported that the minutes of the meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) held on 24 November 2011 in Cardiff were not yet available for circulation. Instead, he verbally reported upon the meeting advising that three presentations had been given which focused on the theme of Community Cohesion. He particularly referred to an inspiring presentation made by Jared Nolan on a Community Cohesion project involving Usk Primary School and Gwent Ethnic Minority Service. Many items came under the Community Cohesion agenda and the project had provided a positive experience for those involved by bringing people together.

Members discussed the merits of community cohesion and how it was promoted in schools through various sporting activities and events and trips such as the Welsh Jamboree and Glan Llyn which encourages interaction of diverse pupils in various settings. Ms. Mary Ludenbach reported upon the range of diversity at Blessed Edward Jones High School with a mix of different cultures and Christian denominations. Mrs. M.B. Lloyd referred to the diversity of religions which could be brought together and the SLA:RE reported upon the aims of RE Week held the previous March to encourage non church schools to use St. Asaph Cathedral as a learning resource.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal report of the meeting of WASACRE held on 24 November 2011 be received and noted.

## 8 LITERACY/NUMERACY WITHIN RE COMPETITION FOR SCHOOLS

The Senior Learning Adviser RE (SLA:RE) verbally reported upon the possibility of arranging a competition for schools to produce resources that would include Literacy and Numeracy in KS2 and/or KS3 Religious Education. The idea was also being raised with Conwy and Flintshire and Conwy had agreed prize money of £200 as an incentive for entries and had requested that the Foundation Phase also be included. The idea involved offering blank pro forma lesson plans to schools for completion with the resultant lesson plans being judged by an Evaluation Panel involving a Literacy Adviser from the Curriculum Services and SACRE members. Once evaluated the best entries could be shared across all schools as a learning resource.

The Advisory Council welcomed the idea of a competition to encourage the production of innovative literacy and numeracy based activities which could be used as a learning resource and shared with other schools. Members also discussed the drive for literacy and numeracy within schools which were being built through different subjects and acknowledged the usefulness of an additional resource for schools in addressing those issues. Members felt it would be useful for the competition to be coordinated across Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire local education authorities to encourage a larger number of entries which could be shared across all three counties. The Secondary School Effectiveness Performance Officer suggested that the resources could be placed on Moodle.org website which was an open source community based tool for learning. It was proposed that the Chair and Vice Chair of SACRE be appointed to the Evaluation Panel to judge the entries received. In response to a question from Councillor Morfudd Jones the SLA:RE advised that the translation costs of the lesson plans needed to be further considered to enable a fully bilingual resource to be produced. The committee also discussed the prize money for the winning entry and Mrs. Sylvia Harris agreed to raise the possibility of grant funding with the Trustees of Archbishop Rice Jones Charitable Trust. Members also considered whether to stipulate that the prize money must be spent specifically on RE but felt that they would likely secure a higher number of entries if no stipulation was imposed in that regard. Consequently it was –

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *the arrangement of a competition by the Senior Learning Adviser RE, coordinated across Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire local education authorities, for schools to produce resources that would include Literacy and Numeracy in KS2 and/or KS3 Religious Education be supported;*
- (b) *the Chair, Ms. Maxine Bradshaw and the Vice Chair, Mr. R. Elms be appointed to the Evaluation Panel to judge the competition entries;*
- (c) *grant funding to support the competition be sought from Archbishop Rice Jones Charitable Trust, and*
- (d) *no stipulation be imposed on the prize money in terms of spend on Religious Education.*

At this juncture Mrs. Mairwenna Lloyd referred to a number of long serving members who had resigned from SACRE during the last year and it was agreed that letters of appreciation be sent to those individuals thanking them for their dedication and valuable service. The number of vacancies on the Advisory Council was also raised and the SLA:RE reported upon renewed efforts to fill those vacancies.

## **9 NEW ESTYN INSPECTIONS AND THE FOCUS ON SCHOOL EVALUATION**

The Secondary School Effectiveness Performance Officer (SSEPO) delivered a presentation to members on the new Estyn inspection framework and the focus on school self evaluation. Members were advised of the following –

- the introduction of the new inspection framework in September 2010 and the main changes resulting in a much simpler framework and a reduction in the number of key questions (from 7 to 3) by which schools were assessed
- schools being given four weeks notice of an inspection and the likelihood was that the six year cycle would continue unless a school faced serious issues
- self evaluation was now a key issue for schools with Estyn wanting to see that schools were self improving organisations who could identify strengths, weakness and capacity for improvement
- a smaller inspection team would be visiting schools with outcome based processes and a greater emphasis on the use of performance data; greater attention was also paid to pupils' wellbeing and SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural values) was included within that framework
- inspection reports were much shorter and written at a level for lay people to understand with emphasis on building capacity for improvement
- Estyn undertook an investigative process and expected to see quality assurance systems in schools and evaluations which needed to be outcome driven
- judgements were made on three Key Questions (KQ) – KQ1 How good are the outcomes?; KQ2 How good is provision?, and KQ3 How good are leadership and management?
- definitions of the grading for schools were also provided
- Ysgol Emmanuel and Ysgol Melyd had both received outstanding inspection reports and examples of their work had been provided on Estyn's website
- where schools were graded as adequate the local education authority would monitor progress and if there was no improvement in twelve months Estyn would undertake a monitoring visit. If no improvement was found the school would be regraded to inadequate resulting in more regular visits from Estyn and further support from the local education authority.

In terms of Religious Education, most RE Departments were not inspected as Estyn targeted their lines of enquiry at areas of weakness. For example, the SSEPO was pleased to report that Prestatyn High School's RE Department had been classed as outstanding and therefore did not warrant an inspection. SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural values) was considered under KQ3 but again not routinely inspected unless it had been identified as an area of weakness through the evaluation process. Overall Denbighshire's inspection had been very good – one

school was subject to monitoring by the local education authority but all the other schools inspected to date had been good and Denbighshire had the best profile in North Wales and one of the best in Wales so far. A clearer picture would emerge once all schools had been through the inspection process.

Members discussed the new framework and self evaluation process and the SSEPO responded to questions and comments as follows –

- to ensure consistency of approach to self evaluation schools had been provided with descriptors (developed by Cynnal) and Estyn had also produced guidance for schools
- methods to assess pupils wellbeing included completion of an online questionnaire; interviews, together with attendance levels and participation in other school activities such as sports and societies
- schools generally performed well in RE as a subject and SMSC but it was important to retain the level of resources to ensure standards did not slip
- there was a greater opportunity of sustaining A level teaching for RE and securing a viable number of participants via the Rhyl Sixth Consortia
- those pupils wanting Catholic provision post 16 needed to be addressed with Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School and there was a need to make effective use of teachers for pupils wanting to take those courses.

The Chair thanked the SSEPO for his interesting and informative presentation and Mrs. Mairwenna Lloyd felt it would be beneficial to invite a school which had been subject to the new inspection to a future meeting of the committee to advise SACRE of their experience. The Chair added that an RE Coordinator would be in a better position to speak to SACRE about how RE was perceived by the inspectors.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) the presentation by the Secondary School Effectiveness Performance Officer be received and noted, and*
- (b) an invitation be extended to a school who had been subject to an inspection by Estyn under the new framework to attend a future SACRE meeting to advise on their experience and how RE had been perceived by the inspectors.*

## **10 URGENT MATTER: NOMINATION TO WASACRE EXECUTIVE**

The Senior Learning Adviser RE (SLA:RE) advised that the term of office of the Reverend Brian H. Jones and Rheinallt Thomas on the Wales Association of SACRE's Executive was coming to an end. Accordingly WASACRE was seeking further nominations for those positions on the Executive.

During the ensuing discussion Reverend Jones advised that the majority of meetings were held in Cardiff and the SLA:RE expressed an interest in being nominated for the position. It was proposed by Mrs. Sylvia Harris and seconded by Mrs. Mairwenna Lloyd that Mr. Philip Lord, Senior Learning Adviser RE be nominated. All members agreed.



**RESOLVED** that *Mr. Philip Lord, Senior Learning Adviser RE* be nominated by Denbighshire SACRE for one of the vacancies on the WASACRE Executive.

At this juncture the Clerk to SACRE agreed to send a letter to all members advising them of the dates of future SACRE meetings once the timetable of council meetings for the forthcoming year had been finalised.

In closing the meeting the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance. She also advised that Councillors Christine Evans, Gwilym Evans and Morfudd Jones were attending their last meeting as elected members and paid tribute to their service on the Advisory Council and valuable contributions to debate.

**The meeting concluded at 3.40 p.m.**