

Wales Association of SACREs meeting, Virtual via Microsoft Teams 21st March 2023 10.30am - 1.00pm.

Attendance

Ynys Môn / **Anglesey**

Rheinallt Thomas (RT) **Gwynedd Hughes** (GH)

Blaenau Gwent

Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / Bridgend

Alice Parry (AP) Edward Evans (EE)

Caerffili/ Caerphilly

Caerdydd / Cardiff

Sir Gaerfyrddin / Carmarthenshire Jennifer Harding-

Richards (JHR)

Ceredigion

Mary Davies (MD)

Conwy

Collette Owen (CO) Phil Lord (PL)

Sir Ddinbych / **Denbighshire**

Collete Owen (CO) Phil Lord (PL)

Sir y Fflint / Flintshire

Anna Stephens (AS) Debbie Owens (DO) Jane Borthwick (JB)

Gwynedd

Sibani Roy (SR) Paul Rowlinson (PR) Eurfryn Davies (ED)

Merthyr Tudful / Merthyr Tydfil

Sir Fynwy / **Monmouthshire** Louise Brown (LB)

Castell-nedd Port Talbot /Neath and Port Talbot

Nia Jenkins (NJ) Rachel Samuel (RS) Wayne Carpenter (WC)

Casnewydd / Newport Hayley Jones (HJ) Huw Stephens (HS) Neeta Baicher (NB)

Sir Benfro / **Pembrokeshire**

Clare Campbell (CG) Sam Skerme-BlackHall (SB)

Marc Tierney (MT) Mike James (MJ) Amanda Lawrence (AL) Clare Campbell (CC) Sian Rowles (SR) Jennifer Harding-Richards (JHR) Lydia Cheshire (LC)

Powys

John Mitson (JM) Fiona Thomas (FT) John Meredith (JM)

Rhondda Cynon Taf Donna Graves (DG)

Abertawe / Swansea Jennifer Harding-Richards (JHR)

Torfaen

Bro Morgannwg / Vale of Glamorgan

Wrecsam / Wrexham Tania ap Siôn (TS) Libby Jones (LJ)

NAPFRE

EFTRE Phil Lord (PL)

Kate Russell (KRU) Philip Blaker (PB)

Observers:

Paul Morgan (PM)

Andrew Pearce (APE)

Gwawr Meirion (GM)

Welsh Government

Kathy Riddick (KR)

Church in Wales

Elizabeth Thomas

Jennie Downes (JD)

Catholic Education

Angela Keller (AK)

Qualification Wales

REMW

WJEC

ESTYN

REC

(ET)

Service

Interfaith Network

ADEW

University Of Wales Elin Stock (ES)

USW Trinity St David Rachel Bendall (RB)

Minutes (from recording) Jo Nicholls (JNI)

Minutes of the meeting

1. Introduction and welcome

TaS welcomed everyone to the Spring meeting and thanked the Pembrokeshire Local Authority and SAC / SACRE for hosting the meeting. TaS thanked Lydia Cheshire and the team for their work in setting up this meeting.

TaS welcomed and introduced the Chair of Pembrokeshire SACRE - Cllr Sam Skyrme-Blackhall.

Cllr Sam Skyrme-Blackhall welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the following introduction:

"Enabling young people to learn without judgements and prejudices, understand, grow and develop their own views and perspectives on all things is a privilege we should embrace. We gather towards the end of the 2nd term of operating the new syllabus and no doubt there is much learning and experiences we can share throughout our time together. I am proud of the work being done in here in Pembrokeshire – supporting our Schools – and critically the work in our Schools – supporting our young people. From specific support for Early Years to working with Headteachers to share learning – we are all finding our way and I am grateful to our dedicated officers who are driving this forward with real commitment and purpose. I know that is a shared experience across Wales.

Of course, we will adapt and flex as we find the best route forward – that is the nature of anything new. But in doing so, we need to remember our core values – the things that shaped the development of this new curriculum and keep them in mind as we embed this. Getting this right is so important – and in doing so we will truly help our young people to be healthy, confident individuals, leading fulfilling lives as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world".

Pembrokeshire SACRE shared the following two presentations:

- i) **WASACRE 21.3.23.mp4 (video)**
- ii) Religion Values and Ethics in Pembrokeshire

2. Quiet reflection

3. Apologies

Apologies from the Executive Committee members – Vicky Barlow, Jennie Downes, Mathew Maidment, Paula Webber. Chris Abbas, Blaenau Gwent and Chris Owens, WJEC.

4. Minutes of the last meeting Microsoft Teams held on 16th November 2022

RS – Fiona Thomas needs removing from the NPT SACRE attendee list.

The minutes on the last meeting were formally agreed.

5. Matters arising from minutes of the last WASACRE meeting

- Item 7 part 4 Welsh Government (WG) clarity on the date until which SAC and SACRE will need to co-exist.
- WG colleagues have clarified that the reference to these bodies needing to be in place until 2025 was intended to mean the 2025 academic year commencing in September which concludes in the summer of 2026, but they appreciate that the earlier response was potentially ambiguous in that regard and subject to interpretation.

6. Welsh Government matters:

i) Meeting (15th December 2022)

Representation from WASACRE/NAPfRE - Tania ap Sion, Libby Jones, Rachel Samuel.

Rachel Samuel gave feedback on the outcomes of several agenda items as follows:

1. SACRE annual reports – structure review

John Pugsley asked WASACRE to submit a proposal outlining what needs to be done for the Welsh Government review of Annual Reports. Funding can be offered for any work required. The proposal should be sent to John Pugsley and Kerry Davies who will make a proposal to Lloyd Hopkin and their legal team.

2. Information communication update on RVE / Case studies for RVE Learning.

Explanation of what WG is looking for in terms of evidence of good practice.

To demonstrate 'what and how' RVE takes place in the classroom. The case studies will be produced in film form. Two different schools are needed to demonstrate visual activities, with resources and assessments being cut into the film afterwards. Kerry Davies would look at the filming brief that WG has provided to identify the requirements. This challenges NAPfRE colleagues to find the best examples and how to decide what could be shared. Links to examples of films to be shared with SACREs from a pilot carried out in Swansea to give an idea of what they are looking for.

3. Update on Adjustments to RVE guidance on Hwb

The adjustments we have requested have been logged in for the next review cycle. In summer 2023 there will be a review with SACREs and other relevant bodies. The Legal Team has the final say if the modifications are accepted (Pat McCarthy) - WG emphasises that it has not been forgotten and will be addressed in due course. Kerry Jones to find out how the process will work to make sure it happens. John Pugsley to share the feedback from PMcC with the WASACRE Executive Committee representatives.

4. Inquiry by local Authority - Termly activities in primary schools and the right to withdraw

JHR: Have had inquiries from schools regarding the compulsory nature of RVE for ages 3 -16. Especially affects primary schools at this time of year with nativity plays, Christmas stories etc. A small group of representatives in the community are asking that their children be taken out of these activities. We discuss with schools how to differentiate between RVE and joint worship and the ethos and culture of the school.

We are aware that there is no right of withdrawal but we are asking for clarification on how we differentiate between those aspects for primary colleagues.

WG response:

Advice is the same as for previous application in July 2022.

- Schools should have clear lines of communication with parents, ensuring they understand what is included and why.
- Where parents (or even learners) seem to have concerns about specific learning it will help to discuss sensitively with parents and understand where these concerns have arisen and explore how they can be addressed. It is very possible that these doubts are due to a misunderstanding about what is covered or what is required by the Curriculum for Wales.
- From September within the Curriculum for Wales, it is clear that there is no legal right to withdraw (which means, unlike in the past, parents have a right to have their request to withdraw their child granted), but of course some parents may try to take their children out of certain aspects. The school has discretion as to how to manage that and will need to come to a decision with the learner and the family. Obviously, that is in everyone's interest naturally, we don't want learners to be taken out of the mainstream by parents entirely because of fears about the curriculum.

Additional advice was given:

- Identify the issue
- Is it a matter of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)?
- If it is RSE, draw the schools' attention to the expectations regarding the code and the RSE guidelines, in particular:
 - ➤ The importance of pluralism i.e. being able to assure the parents that teaching is presented in a multiple manner and this is the school's legal duty
 - The requirement of the code to ensure that a range of views and beliefs are considered in the context of RSE
 - > The importance of close lines of communication with parents and carers on these issues
 - Refer the LA and the school to the Frequently Asked Questions on Relationship and Sexuality Education as it may be helpful.

The response of those present from WASACRE and NAPfRE was that we do not think the question has been adequately answered - How can schools differentiate between RVE, collective worship, and the ethos and culture of the school, in order to avoid complaints and issues relating to removal back?

5. Identify support and resources for RVE

WASACRE was asked to produce a general map to show what is already offered in terms of support and resources in Wales. John Pugsley to send a resource document to support that work. JP and KD need to be kept up to date by WASACRE.

6. Resources of the Council of Free Churches

This is something for the Governance side within WG. It is not directly related to classroom practice. The information will be shared with Claire Horton from WG to see if there is anything that WG can support in reference to the documents.

7. RSE Judicial Review Update

When this meeting took place, WG was still waiting for an outcome. JP confirmed that as soon as he gets something that goes to the public he will send it to us first. We now know this outcome – the court sided in favour of WG and for RSE to remain mandatory for all learners. The parents have started their appeal. We still don't know how it will affect RVE if the appeal is successful.

ii) Informal agreed syllabi monitoring process

Tania ap Sion reported on the informal agreed syllabi monitoring process / review, as follows.

On 15 December 2022, the WG invited WASACRE to undertake: "an informal monitoring process of the agreed syllabi for each LA to get a sense of how faithful these are to the vision and ethos of RVE in the Curriculum for Wales".

This is part of the supportive approach that the WG is taking during the period of curriculum roll-out, recognising the importance of being supportive earlier rather than later. In practice, the review is a short desk-based exercise, which involves looking at the text of the agreed syllabi for each local authority. It goes no further than reviewing the texts themselves. At the end of March, a report will be submitted to the Welsh Government on the findings. After this, sometime in the near future, the Welsh Government has confirmed that we will be able to use relevant parts of this research to share practice among the local authorities – including possibly showcasing particular examples. Within this, the importance of local determination should always be kept to the fore while also seeing the value of sharing practice within that. The review process itself has been rigorously set up and approved by the Welsh Government:

- 1. There has been careful selection of the 6 Team members who are well placed to carry out this review;
- 2. We created a proforma based on a sample of five agreed syllabi, covering language, syllabus content, clarity, local context, and editing. This proforma was then used for all the agreed syllabi to ensure consistency in approach.
- 3. We also ensured that each agreed syllabus was reviewed by at least 2 or 3 team members at the level of the individual, small group, and then as a whole Team.
- 4. No team member reviewed any agreed syllabi that they had been personally involved in, and we allocated random numbers to the agreed syllabi throughout the review process and report writing.

We are very grateful to all 22 SACs for sharing with us their agreed syllabus so promptly, and we hope that you will find this a really helpful exercise.

I am also very grateful to all the members of the Team who have worked together so effectively and well over the past seven weeks to ensure that we complete the review and submit the Report to the Welsh Government on time.

7. Report on Estyn meeting (14th February 2023) – Monitoring standards and progress - WASACRE Executive members present: AP, RS, MM, and LJ

Alice Parry gave feedback to the meeting that WASACRE had requested a meeting with ESTYN to receive an update on the plans for monitoring RVE within the Curriculum for Wales. WASACRE Members were grateful of the briefing paper that was shared in advance of the Autumn Meeting in November 2022 and wanted to discuss the following items in more detail:

 Monitoring the provision of RVE in schools and regard to the Agreed Syllabus

Estyn is not a monitoring organisation. However, Inspection teams will be looking at the broad curriculum plan of each school it inspects, and if a particular element of the curriculum was missing, e.g. mandatory RVE, this would be raised with the school and would be included in the final report. They may consider whether RVE is being taught within the spirit of the CfW, but would not be specifically monitoring objective, critical and pluralistic approach and delivery of RVE.

2. Monitoring standards and progression in RVE

Very rarely would a report include a comment on standards and progression within a specific subject. There may be comments on the acquisition of particular skills etc. in certain subjects, as way of example of progression, which could include RVE. Inspectors are looking at standards and progression overall. Data is for the school only, to inform their own planning. Colleagues made it very clear that schools should not produce data especially for Estyn to prove that their learners are making progress or are achieving set targets or standards. Every school should know every learner, in the sense of, where they are, where they need to be, and how they can get there. If inspectors look at school data, it will be to build a picture of whether, and how well, the school knows its learners. Inspectors will not be looking for 'evidence' of progression, i.e. comparing standards with other schools or classes or years groups etc. It wants to see how the school uses its own data to inform their planning for improvement and progression.

3. Collective worship

Estyn colleagues shared the 2017 Estyn guidance on collective worship which all Inspectors are given prior to an inspection. This includes components which collective worship may incorporate and also FAQ that may be helpful to schools. The school context is taken in to consideration regarding collective worship in both primary and secondary settings and pointed out the reference in the guidance to 'thought for the day' and reflection time as well as prayers and more traditional forms of worship. Estyn colleagues were not aware or any renewed interest in collective worship within inspection teams, and are aware that opportunities for SMSC development can be provided elsewhere in the curriculum and within the ethos of the school.

4. Effective practice

'Green shoots' are being identified during inspection visits, but it is still early days. Teams are seeing some appropriate RVE provision in line with the guidance.

Engagement visits are taking place but there hasn't been any focusing on RVE yet. There are a variety of channels through which possible engagement visits can be identified. There could be an EV in the future focussing on RVE or C/W but that would depend on whether those specific elements are identified as an area of interest for an EV. When an EV takes place a report is published on the Estyn website.

In conclusion, colleagues from WASACRE and Estyn felt that the meeting had been beneficial and all agreed that a twice yearly meeting would be arranged between the two bodies in future. WASACRE colleagues invited Estyn colleagues to provide updates at the WASACRE main meetings as and when needed.

8. Professional Learning presentation

Libby Jones gave an update on this agenda item and shared a clip from one of the RVE playlists from the first batch of five professional learning resources that have now been published on Hwb, called, 'What's new'. The links to the resources on Hwb will be shared with SACREs for wider distribution. She reported as follows:

We are very grateful to our Welsh Government colleague Rachael Hicks for pushing these resources forward, through to publication. We have waited a long time for them, but it is worth the wait as the quality of these resources is exceptional. I have already shared a clip from the, 'What's new for secondary schools' playlist which Alice Parry created and features in. Today I am going to present the, 'What's new for Headteachers' playlist. There will be a policy Insight event held on 25th April (link in the chat) which will showcase these resources along with other useful resources that schools and SACREs can use.

LJ shared her screen and presented the playlist, stopping on specific pages to draw attention to some interesting and useful information, including, the description of 'have regard to', self-evaluation, implications for Headteachers, reflections and questions, and the case studies. The Headteacher's playlist also has the same introductory sections and information as the other playlists in this first batch, such as the welcome page, contents, aims and critical engagement pages.

Link for policy insight event: https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/policy- insight-events/

Links for the bilingual resources on Hwb:

English: https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/eef7e399-93bb-4d7c-ab68-145c93f4c6d3/en

Cymraeg: https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/eef7e399-93bb-4d7c-ab68-145c93f4c6d3/cy

Members raised questions regarding 'have regard to' and agreed syllabi, which LJ clarified and members also shared very positive comments about the resources. One question was raised regarding SACRE members having access to Hwb. The resources can be accessed without needing a log in, but it was suggested that Members seek advice and support from their local authority.

9. Conversations with England colleagues (NASACRE, REC, Regional RE Hubs)

TaS reported that conversations are currently taking place with England colleagues. Education in Wales is becoming increasingly different to England with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales. This raises a number of issues concerning how we value one another and how we work together.

NASACRE

The WASACRE Executive welcomed an invitation from NASACRE to restart conversations. A meeting was held on 31st January 2023 with the Chair of NASACRE, Linda Rudge and Sue Holmes the Secretary and members of the WASACRE Executive Committee -TaS, EE and LJ.

The purpose of the meeting was to restart the sharing of recent events and updates and to explore the potential links between the two associations. It was mutually recognised that although the associations had so much in common there was also so much divergence.

To summarise –possible areas for further conversations were identified:

- 1) NASACRE occasionally receives enquiries from SACs and SACREs from Wales about professional learning and the NASACRE annual conference. It was resolved to put LJ in touch with the NASACRE administrator to discuss these questions as it is important to have the correct lines of communications.
- 2) To explore the possibility of including an item at the NASACRE conference where there might be mutual cross overs and where WASACRE could contribute usefully.
- 3) NASACRE is going to share their newsletter which is distributed 3 / 4 times a year.

The aim is to to put in place more regular conversations and develop the relationship between NASACRE and WASACRE.

REC

In February WASACRE received a request for a meeting from Indy Nottage, Executive Officer for the RE council for England and Wales to discuss how the REC can best support WASACRE in our Wales context. TaS, LJ (WASACRE Executive Members) and Paula Webber (Chair of NAPfRE, WASACRE Executive member) met with REC on 6th March 2023.

It was an open, frank, and positive conversation about our concerns regarding the relationship between WASACRE and REC. WASACRE have worked closely with REC on a number of projects in the past but currently it appears that the relationship is not working as effectively as it could.

The outcome of the meeting was for the REC to organise a meeting with representatives of the Wales focused REC organisations i.e., WASACRE, Church in Wales, REMW, members of the REC board - Kathy Riddick, the Chair Sarah Lane Court and Indy Nottage. The meeting is to be arranged in April 2023.

The aim is to create a structure to enable communication and collaboration within the REC over the long term. The structure needs to reflect the needs of the organisations in Wales and ultimately Wales learners. There has been a suggestion to set up a REC Wales forum.

Regional RE Hubs

Both the Chair and Vice Chairs of WASACRE and NAPfRE received an email from the lead director for a new online platform called Regional RE Hubs asking what we wanted to see on it for the Wales area.

The background of the Regional RE hubs is as follows:

The 1st year was funded by Dept of Education in England to address specific England RE requirements. Now in its 2nd year, it is funded by charities and has one more year of funding. After this it hopes to receive further funding from Dept of Education, England.

The steering group includes organisations such as REC, RE Today, AERIAC, AWRI and NASACRE. The aim of the regional hubs is to improve communication between teachers, professional development, resource providers and research communities. It is an information exchange to increase accessibility to support, training, and resources for the regions. They also run a course which is being accessed by places of worships and other places in Wales which awards an RE hub accreditation.

A meeting was held on the 12th January 2023. The WASACRE Executive members shared their concern that the Regional RE hubs have been developed without any direct communication with WASACRE or NAPfRE. This is an issue that must be addressed and raises the questions as to how WASACRE and NAPfRE are perceived by these groups in England and how communications can be improved. It raised questions - what are our needs in Wales? How can we identify our needs? How to deal with them?

RT: Two members of REMW have met with Indy Nottage. REMW also commented that this initiative has come as a surprise.

TaS: Confirmed that colleague JHR has been involved with the RE hubs. LB: REC has always been England based. LB wondered whether it would be better that it is called REC for England. All research and documents are based on England. It would be another layer of work for WASACRE.

TaS: It is always valuable to collaborate and share practice with our colleagues in England and Europe but we must consider what is meaningful to us in Wales.

10. EFTRE Conference (August 2023)

PL gave an update and shared the link to the EFTRE conference 'Bridges over Troubled Waters – RE in changing times' which is to be held in Rome on 24-27 August 2023. TaS, with European colleagues, will be presenting the findings of a European wide project, impact of Covid on teaching RE. Other presenters include Kathryn White from Culham St. Gabriel's Trust. The programme also includes workshops and potential off-site visits to a synagogue, non-Catholic cemetery, catacombs and a Muslim community. PL, TaS and possibly LJ will be attending the conference.

WASACRE would like to support a teacher from Wales to attend and we would ask them to provide feedback on their experience on their return. TAS mentioned that this is an excellent opportunity for a teacher and confirmed that WASACRE will fully fund the travel, conference attendance and accommodation.

ACTION: If any teachers are interested, please contact WASACRE, before the Easter break.

11. Up-dates:

- REC

KR: REC is in its 50th year with an in-person celebration planned at the start of May. REC is refocusing on how to obtain the maximum benefit from members. If REC are to continue to represent Wales, it requires a permanent member of the board to represent Wales. Serious though is required about the benefit in this relationship.

The continued work on the religion and world views resources is taking up a lot of REC's time, a project which is focused on England. We could look at and see if the document is of interest to the curriculum for Wales.

- EFTRE

PL encourages everyone to look at the website, there are interesting reports available. There are studies that could be done with secondary schools on the nature of RE education systems around Europe.

- REMW

REMW met with Indy Nottage.

REMW aim to revisit the paper previously presented to WASACRE. This paper described the potential changes in the nature of REMW with a view to making progress on this matter.

- NAPfRE

The PL working group are looking at the right of withdrawal and the advice that SACREs and head teachers may give. Any outcomes will be passed on to WASACRE.

- IFN

No update

- Estyn

14th February meeting already reported earlier in the meeting.

- WJEC

- LJ read out a report from Christopher Owens:
 - The WJEC Autumn Professional Learning formerly known as CPD for GSCE Religious Studies was successfully completed in Swansea, Cardiff and Llandudno in December 2022 with additional online PL in January 2023. Materials from the PL events are available on the WJEC website.
 - WJEC submitted a detailed response to the Welsh Government's consultation on the proposals for the new GSCE Religious Studies for start of teaching in Sept 2025.
 - WJEC's working deadline is completion of the new specification with specimen assessment materials for Sept 2024, with the first teaching scheduled for Sept 2025.
 - Disappointingly there has been a decline in entry of RE across all examination levels for the summer series 2023.
 - Entry for AS Religious Studies dropped by 350 candidates from pre covid levels and this has rolled into advanced level studies.
 - At GSCE level there has been a very significant decline in entry for the summer 2023 series of around 6,500 candidates. Any decline is a cause for concern not least for future uptake of AS and advanced levels and has further implications for higher education.

TaS stated that the decline in candidates is to be an agenda item for a future meeting.

RS mentioned that all GSCE, AS and AL examinations this summer in Religious Studies have had a pre-release information gone out to schools on certain areas in the syllabi that should be given greater attention. RS is happy to circulate the links to SACREs.

ACTION: RS to share this link with SACREs

- Report from the Executive Committee held on 8th February 2023

TaS confirmed there was nothing further to report that hadn't already been covered on the agenda.

12. Correspondence

LJ reported on the following correspondence:

- Received correspondence from Education Workforce Council (EWC) asking WASACRE to nominate members for the EWC. This needs to be taken to the WASACRE Executive Committee.
- Received correspondence from the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) stating they are currently undertaking a long-term enquiry into the implementation of the two key educational reforms during the last Senedd which is the Curriculum Assessment Wales at 2021 and the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act 2018.
- Over the course of the sixth Senedd the Committee will carry out a series of short focus thematic check-ins. Each check-in will include engagement activities and scrutiny of a Welsh Government Minister. The first of these check-ins took place in spring/ summer 2022 and further information is available via a link. This link can be shared with SACREs.

ACTION: WASACRE to share this link with SACREs.

WASACRE Elections

There are 2 places available on the WASACRE Executive Committee, nominations from SACs and SACREs need to be with LJ or AP by Friday 31st March. The list of nominees will be circulated to SACs and SACREs by Friday 28th April. Nominees should be available to attend the Exec Committees meetings regularly should they be successfully elected at the AGM.

13. Any other business (to be agreed in advance of the meeting with the Chair)

KRU, Qualification Wales has been leading on the development of GSCE of Religious Studies and dealing with the WASCRE responses to the consultation. KRU informed WASACRE of the new consultation that is now out which is called 'The Full Offer', these are qualifications (entry level, level 1 etc) that support the new curriculum in Wales.

One question within the consultation links to whether there should be a specific qualification linked to the RVE guidance.

KRU encourages WASACRE to share the consultation link with RS teachers for their feedback. The more responses received the more valuable it is. The consultation is open until June 2023.

KRU thanked WASACRE for all its work in relation to the GSCE consultation.

HS congratulated all those who have spent a lot of time and effort using their expertise in serving us in their capacity as WASACRE.

MJ seconded HS's kind words and thanked the Committee for all of their hard which is very much appreciated.

TaS appreciated this recognition of WASACRE's work.

NB wished the Bahai community a very happy new year.

14. Date for next meeting: Summer Term, Denbighshire.

This will be an online meeting on Monday 19th June 2023. TaS thanked Pembrokeshire for hosting and thanked the attendees.