



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT CWMABER JUNIOR SCHOOL, ABERTRIDWR, CAERPHILLY, ON TUESDAY, 14TH JUNE 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Taylor - Chair
Mrs J. Jones (Church in Wales) - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Mrs E.M Aldworth

Representing Teaching Organisations: Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT)

Representing Religious Organisations: Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reformed Church),
Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales)

Together with:

Mrs V. Thomas (RE Consultant), Mrs J. Elias (Service Manager – Additional Learning Needs),
Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Mrs B. Davies and Mrs S. Dann (Cwmaber Junior School)

1. WELCOME FROM CWMABER JUNIOR SCHOOL

The Head Teacher, Mrs Bethan Davies, welcomed Caerphilly SACRE to Cwmaber Junior School, and Members were treated to a rousing performance of “Shine Jesus Shine” by the assembled school children. SACRE were pleased to note the enthusiastic participation of all pupils in attendance and gave their thanks for the warm welcome they had received.

Mrs Davies then introduced Councillor J. Taylor (Chair), who outlined the role of Caerphilly SACRE to the assembled pupils.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.G. Carter, Mrs G.D. Oliver, Mrs M.E. Sargent and J. Simmonds, Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs B. Davies (UCAC), Miss H. Marsh (ASCL), Mr C. Parry (NAHT), Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese), together with Ms R. Bradshaw and Mr E. Mushayanyama (Co-opted Members).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES - 3RD MARCH 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 3rd March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. PRESENTATION - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT CWMABER JUNIOR SCHOOL

Mrs Sarah Dann (RE Co-ordinator) and a number of pupils delivered a presentation regarding the teaching and learning of Religious Education at Cwmaber Junior School.

The pupils outlined examples of the RE themes and subjects taught within each year group. The 'RE Alive' theme focuses on achievement of goals and encourages children to find out more about communities. Recent class activities have included the making of Eid cake and other religion-themed recipes, and examining the spiritual and special journeys undertaken by Christians and Muslims. SACRE were shown examples of ICT work within RE classes, and were informed that the school also holds a daily assembly, which has a weekly theme and receives many visiting speakers from local community and religious groups.

SACRE were pleased to note the ways in which different religions are studied across the school and thanked the pupils for their informative and articulate presentation. The remaining pupils and school staff then left the meeting.

6. REVISED CRITERIA FOR GCSE AND GCE SPECIFICATIONS: UPDATE

The report summarised the latest situation regarding proposed changes to specifications and assessment practices for Religious Studies (RS) at GCSE and GCE (AS and A) Level. These changes were originally due to be implemented in Autumn 2016 but Qualifications Wales has now deferred the introduction of the new GCSE Religious Studies qualifications to September 2017. The new A Level specifications will be implemented in Autumn 2016 as planned.

Mrs Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant to SACRE) outlined the current routes in the delivery of RE within secondary schools:-

Route 1 (Optional Religious Studies) involves RS as an option choice at Key Stage 4 (KS4), which is offered by a significant number of schools. Pupils who choose the subject will then follow the specification for RS and be entered for the full course examination, having received the same curriculum time allocation (around 10%) as all other optional subjects.

Route 2 (GCSE RS accreditation in the statutory KS4 Religious Education lesson) - many schools in Wales use the statutory RE lessons to follow a RS external specification with the whole cohort and enter pupils for a short course or full course examination.

Mrs Thomas explained that a significant number of schools use both routes, meaning that if a student has taken RS as an option choice, then that student will still be present in the statutory RE lesson, and so needs to follow a different specification for RS or they will be following the same lesson content twice. It is possible to do so at present because there are two RS GCSE specifications at WJEC (as well as the availability of specs from examining

boards in England). However, with the proposed merging of the two specs into one, this will no longer be an option and it is here that it will have the negative impact.

At a meeting on 15th April 2016, discussion took place between WJEC and NAPfRE (National Advisory Panel for Religious Education) regarding the new specifications and of the implications of there only being one specification for schools, (especially those schools currently following the combined Route 1 and 2 option), and established two main effects:-

1. Schools/teachers may decide to retain their optional RS and **not accredit** the short course in the statutory lesson. A factor influencing that decision could be the increased rigour in the exam specification(s) making it more difficult for candidates to be successful in achieving a GCSE RS accreditation in the statutory lessons. Statutory RE would still have to be provided and this could be incorporated into Welsh Baccalaureate or some other form of provision, which would have a huge effect on entry figures for WJEC.
2. Schools/teachers may decide to only follow RS in the statutory lessons and the RS option will disappear. This will also have an effect on A and AS level Religious Studies.

Arising from this meeting, it was determined that WJEC will offer both the short and full course options from a single specification, and will not be offering an additional RS GCSE specification from September 2017. There has been no call for an additional RS specification in England, but the WJEC will review the impact after two years. It is a matter for each school's internal organisational structures to ensure that an optional RS GCSE course and a RS GCSE (short course) for statutory RE lessons can run side by side.

WJEC will contact schools who appear to provide an organisational structure which allows the GCSE optional full course and the statutory GCSE RS short course to run concurrently with no overlap and where the pupils are not educationally disadvantaged, so that any good practice can be shared with other schools. WJEC will also contact Estyn to draw attention to the need to keep a watching brief on the provision for statutory KS4 RE to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Caerphilly SACRE fully discussed and noted the report, and agreed that a letter be sent on their behalf to WJEC to request further guidance on the new specifications, including a timescale for the availability of the final new specifications, suggested support materials, and a grid outlining the commonality and differences between the old and the new specifications.

7. NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT: UPDATE

The report outlined the latest developments regarding the review of assessment arrangements and the National Curriculum in Wales, which was announced by the Minister for Education and Wales on 1st October 2012.

In February 2015, Professor Donaldson released his report and recommendations via the document "*Successful Futures – Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*". In October 2015, "*A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*" was released, which outlines the plan for taking forward these recommendations.

Pioneer schools and stakeholders will have a say in the shape of the curriculum via a series of meetings. Curriculum Pioneers will define an Area of Learning and Experience framework, and New Deal Pioneers will focus on the pedagogy and leadership needed to deliver the requirements of the new curriculum as it develops.

NAPfRE are developing a guidance document called "*What makes good RE*" for the Pioneer Network to consider when working on the shape of the RE curriculum. At a recent meeting in April 2016, NAPfRE were advised by WG representatives of the steps currently being undertaken by the Pioneer Network, including induction events and group working to develop the structure of the new curriculum. The next stages will involve pioneer schools working within areas of learning and experience to consider the 'big questions' of curriculum development (such as scope and connections), and considering the strands within each area.

Arising from this meeting, NAPfRE agreed to prepare a briefing paper for WG (appended to the SACRE agenda papers in draft form) in order to outline the particular issues relating to RE with a new curriculum, share any useful documents, action research case studies or examples of good practice which might help the Pioneer schools, and identify schools which identify good practice.

During the course of the ensuing debate, SACRE highlighted the need for proactive engagement and for cohesion to be established in respect of the new curriculum framework. Members were advised that the "*What makes good RE*" document will provide some guiding principles for Pioneer schools tasked with devising the new Humanities curriculum that will be introduced in 2020.

Mrs Thomas outlined the importance of defining the role of RE within the new curriculum, as it is proposed that RE will sit within the Humanities area of learning. SACRE were advised that consideration needs to be given to how the new curriculum will affect the National Exemplar Framework and the agreed syllabuses for RE, and also the statutory requirement to address SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development). Discussion also took place regarding the implications that the new curriculum could have in terms of staffing structure and departmental responsibility within schools.

Following consideration of the report, SACRE noted the latest developments relating to the position of RE in the curriculum.

8. INCERTS ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

The report outlined concerns raised at the March 2016 meetings of NAPfRE and WASACRE regarding the use of the online Incerts assessment programme which tracks pupils' progress in National Curriculum subjects and Religious Education.

SACRE were advised that there are two options for schools to choose from regarding level descriptions for RE but it is not clear on the Incerts website which set of levels are the correct ones to be used by maintained and voluntary controlled schools. Some schools have been advised by Incerts that there are no statutory Level Descriptions for RE and that they can choose which set of Level Descriptions they use in the Incerts programme. This is incorrect as the Level Descriptions found in the locally agreed syllabus are statutory.

Schools are urged to ensure that they are using the correct version if adopting the programme, and any schools that have started using the wrong Levels option will have to start the assessment process again when they switch to the correct option. A draft letter to all primary schools in Caerphilly summarising these issues was appended to the report.

Having discussed and noted the report, SACRE agreed that a final version of the letter, outlining the correct method to be used in respect of the Incerts programme, be circulated to all Caerphilly primary schools on behalf of the Chair.

9. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2016-17

The tentative meeting dates proposed within the agenda were agreed by Members and offers were sought from SACRE Members for suitable host venues. School locations for the Spring and Summer meetings were suggested and details of these venues will be circulated to the relevant persons once confirmed.

The Autumn Term meeting will be held on Tuesday 18th October 2016 (2pm) at Penallta House Council Offices, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach.

The Spring Term meeting will be held on Tuesday 2nd March 2017 (2pm) – venue TBC.

The Summer Term will be held on Monday 19th June 2017 (2pm) – venue TBC.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk informed Members that a letter of thanks had been sent to the relevant Council departments to convey SACRE's appreciation for the events held to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2016.

A WASACRE survey regarding the Welsh Bacculaureate had been re-circulated to all Caerphilly secondary schools with an additional 4 responses received. Further discussion on this matter took place later in the meeting.

An update in respect of the new curriculum for Wales, which detailed the plans of the Curriculum Reform Team (and which had been circulated to SACRE Members via email) was tabled at the meeting.

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

11. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN HAVERFORDWEST, PEMBROKESHIRE - 8TH MARCH 2016

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberation of WASACRE at its meeting in Haverfordwest on 8th March 2016. A copy of the draft minutes was included in the meeting papers.

At the WASACRE meeting, discussion took place regarding the Welsh Bacculaureate Survey, with it confirmed that the return rate to date had been encouraging. The value of RE co-ordinators completing the survey was highlighted in order for WASACRE to present a truer picture to Welsh Government and be able to support teachers. Mrs Thomas also highlighted discussions which took place regarding the revised GCSE specifications for Religious Studies and issues relating to the Incerts programme.

SACRE noted the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at the Haverfordwest meeting.

12. SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE ON RE IN SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to the report, which summarised the results of the WASACRE Welsh Bacculaureate survey recently sent to all schools across Wales. It was noted that 16 out of 22 SACREs returned the surveys, which had been completed by 70 schools out of the 207 establishments in Wales.

The survey found that since the implementation of the new Welsh Baccalaureate, the majority of respondents provide statutory Religious Education according to the Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE at KS4, and offer a RS GCSE qualification as a supporting qualification for Welsh Baccalaureate at KS4. The majority deliver this course as part of core RE time.

The survey queried if the new Welsh Baccalaureate has had a positive, negative or no impact on RE. The majority of respondents stated that the new Welsh Baccalaureate had no impact on RE. A summary of responses commenting on the positive/negative impact were detailed within the report.

The positive comments highlighted the benefits of the new Welsh Baccalaureate, such as enabling new RE content, encouraging a thinking style approach to the teaching and learning element, and increased time allocated for the teaching of RE. Negative comments highlighted reductions in core RE time and other subjects, and the requirement for additional curriculum time to deliver a more challenging syllabus at GCSE level.

The survey also asked schools if they require support from their local SACRE and the majority of respondents declined. Those who accepted stated that they would require support with developing resources, coping with the requirements of the new Welsh Baccalaureate and implementing these in the available curriculum time, and also expressed concerns regarding the impact of the new GCSE specifications.

Having fully discussed the report, Caerphilly SACRE noted its contents.

13. EXECUTIVE VOTING 2016 - NOMINATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The report outlined the profiles of the four nominees for the three vacant positions on the WASACRE Executive Committee.

Having fully considered the list of nominees, it was moved and seconded that Mary Parry, Huw Stephens and Mathew Maidment be put forward as Caerphilly SACRE's nominations to the WASACRE Executive Committee and that WASACRE be informed of the voting preference of Caerphilly SACRE. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

14. REPRESENTATION AT FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETINGS

Members were advised of the date and time of forthcoming WASACRE meetings and sought nominations for representation from Caerphilly SACRE.

It was noted that several SACRE Members were unable to attend the next WASACRE meeting on 23rd June 2016 (Denbighshire) due to prior commitments. It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would contact absent Members to seek representatives and forward nominations for the new WASACRE Executive Committee to Libby Jones (Clerk to WASACRE) should no-one be able to attend.

Councillor J. Taylor, Mrs E. Hawthorn, Mrs J. Jones, and Mrs V. Thomas expressed an interest in attending the WASACRE meetings on 18th November 2016 (Carmarthenshire) and 17th March 2017 (Usk). Mrs J. Elias volunteered as a reserve attendee for the meeting on 18th November 2016. They will be contacted with the agenda papers nearer to the meeting date and asked to confirm attendance.

The Chair thanked the Members of Caerphilly SACRE for their attendance at the meeting and also Cwmaber Junior School for their kind hospitality.

The meeting closed at 3.30 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR