

## **CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT NEWBRIDGE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL ON THURSDAY, 6TH MARCH 2003 AT 8.45 AM**

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PRESENT:

Councillors:

Mrs. K.R. baker and D.M. Gray

#### **Representing Teachers Associations**

Mrs. FC. Anthony – NAHT

Miss H. Bartley – ATL

Mrs. S. John (UCAC)

#### **Representing Religious Organisations**

Mr. D. Brooks – Baptist Church in Wales

Together with:

Mrs. V. Thomas (ESIS Religious Education Advisor), Ms. C. Thomas (ESIS Associate Religious Education Advisor) and Mrs. K. Wall (Committee Services Officer).

### **YEAR 9 ASSEMBLY**

Before the SACRE meeting, members were given the opportunity to observe a Year 9 assembly.

### **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

The Chairman thanked Miss Bartley and Councillor D.M. Gray (Chairman of Governors) for extending an invitation for SACRE members to visit the school and for the hospitality provided. SACRE members echoed these comments and also asked Miss Bartley to thank the pupils for their hard work in preparing for the assembly.

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.W. Gough, K.R. Snell and J. Taylor, Mrs E. Hawthorn (Valleys RE Teachers Association), Miss N. Thomas (NUT), Mrs M. Wade (United Reformed Church) and B. Hopkins (Head of School Effectiveness).

### **SA1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of Caerphilly SACRE held on 4th December 2002 were received and noted.

### **SA2 WASACRE SYMPOSIUM REPORT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AGREED SYLLABUSES**

Consideration was given to the report that summarised the main discussion points of the Symposium on Religious Education Agreed Syllabuses held at Llanidloes in April 2002. It was noted that the objective of the Symposium had been to consider the status and role of agreed syllabuses for religious education in Wales and SACREs had been requested –

- To make appropriate comments and respond to WASACRE by the end of July 2003;
- To bring the report to the attention of Governing bodies.

Mrs Thomas (ESIS Religious Education Adviser) presented the report and explained that group discussions at the Symposium had centred around the following four key questions –

**QUESTION 1** – In what ways would the exemplar framework for religious education and the national exemplar level descriptions (ACCAC) affect your present LEA agreed syllabus?

**QUESTION 2** – List and evaluate ways that would enable SACREs to conduct their five yearly reviews more effectively.

**QUESTION 3** – Consider and list the advantages and disadvantages of having a national religious education syllabus for Wales. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

**QUESTION 4** – What actions do we as SACREs, LEAs and Schools need to take to help raise the status of, and standards in, religious education in schools? Can any other organisations play a part?

Consideration was given to the Summary on page 15 of the document and SACRE members were also asked to consider the following specific points –

- That each LEA should have access to adequate specialist professional support
- The usefulness of the ACCAC Exemplar Framework for RE
- The merits of collaboration within and between LEAs
- Resourcing and funding of SACREs
- Whether SACRE is in favour of a National Syllabus for RE in Wales

During discussion, Members made the following comments and it was agreed that a draft report outlining SACRE's responses would be submitted to the next meeting for approval before submission to WASACRE.

It was also agreed that the Report on the Symposium would be forwarded to the Governor Support Unit for distribution to Governing Bodies.

### **DISCUSSION POINT 1**

In considering this question, SACRE members firstly endorsed the comments made by the symposium discussion groups relating to the importance of advisory support for the subject. Members felt that Caerphilly SACRE was in a very fortunate position as through ESIS, Caerphilly Local Education Authority (LEA) had access to two full time Religious Education Advisers and that a considerable amount of support material including a handbook for the agreed syllabus, schemes of work, level descriptions, resource packs had been provided. The LEA had also provided an artefact resource facility.

SACRE members commented that they felt that without this level of support, both the teaching of religious education and the work of SACRE would be adversely affected.

### **DISCUSSION POINT 2**

Members then considered how the Exemplar Framework for religious education and the National Exemplar Level Descriptions would affect the present Agreed Syllabus and felt that the layout of the draft Framework was helpful as a basis for consistency between authorities and the similarities with

Curriculum 2000 were welcomed as a means of raising the status of the subject.

The proposal to adopt a unified set of level descriptions for the whole of Wales was also particularly welcomed by SACRE members as a means of raising standards in religious education.

### **DISCUSSION POINT 3**

SACRE members supported the sentiments expressed at the Symposium that 'It was crucial that all SACREs have access to full time advisory staff to draw on expertise, provide the overview, and to be proactive in developing the subject'.

The value of co-operation between local authorities in the process of review and implementation of new syllabuses and in the preparation of resource and support material was also acknowledged. Locally, it was noted that ESIS provided advisory services to three other neighbouring local authorities and that following the work undertaken by a cross authority Working Party, a common religious education syllabus had been developed.

The lack of resources and support material available through the medium of Welsh was also mentioned and SACRE members felt that a wider collaboration across LEAs would be helpful.

### **DISCUSSION POINT NO 4**

Funding was then discussed and SACRE members endorsed the comments made at the Symposium that adequate funding was vital to enable teachers to be released to participate in the review process.

In Caerphilly, it was noted that the LEA had fully funded the attendance of teachers at meetings of the Working Party established to develop the Agreed Syllabus and had funded the provision of support materials and an artefact resource facility.

### **DISCUSSION POINT NO 5**

SACRE members were not averse to having a national religious education syllabus for Wales as they felt that it would ensure consistency throughout Wales and continuity for both teachers and pupils who moved schools within Wales. However, the concerns expressed at the Symposium that a national syllabus could result in a loss of local control and ownership were also echoed by SACRE members and they emphasised the need for SACREs to be able to add local material and make local decisions.

#### **SA3 WASACRE FEEDBACK**

Copies of a report that provided a summary of the discussions and deliberations of the WASACRE meeting held on 12th February were circulated at the meeting and the information was noted.

#### **SA4 NEXT WASACRE MEETING**

It was noted that the next WASACRE meeting would be held in Wrexham on 27th June and it was agreed that the Clerk would contact the usual representatives to check on their availability.

#### **SA5 FEEDBACK: HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2003**

Mrs John provided a verbal report in respect of the Holocaust Memorial Evening held at the Temple of Peace, Cathays Park on 27th January.

#### **SA6 CORRESPONDENCE**

**(a) Nomination to Serve on WASACRE Executive Committee**

The Clerk reported that she had received a letter from the Secretary of WASACRE asking SACRE to nominate members for the following posts –

- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Two places on the Executive Committee (for a period of 3 years)

Councillor D.M. Gray had previously expressed his interest in serving on the Executive Committee and the Clerk had therefore submitted his nomination. SACRE members endorsed the action taken.

**SA7 PRESENTATION – THINKING SKILLS IN R.E.**

Ms Carys Thomas (Associate Religious Education Adviser) addressed the meeting and made a presentation entitled 'Thinking Skills in R.E.' that outlined the core concepts and different types of thinking skills that could be employed when teaching religious education. As part of the presentation, SACRE members also participated in a number of practical exercises that highlighted these different thinking skills.

The Chairman thanked Ms Thomas for her presentation and SACRE members for their participation.

**SA8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held at the Council Offices, Tredomen on Wednesday, 2nd July at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.