



## CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – 10TH DECEMBER 2009

**SUBJECT: FEEDBACK FROM WASACRE MEETING ON 13TH NOVEMBER 2009 IN  
RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**REPORT BY: ESIS**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The report is to inform members of the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE's meeting held on 13th November in the Council Chamber, Clydach Vale, Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

- 2.1 Members were welcomed to Rhondda Cynon Taf by the Worshipful Mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Councillor Rob Smith and Mike Keating, the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **3.1 Interfaith Council**

It was explained that the NASACRE questionnaire on SACREs and interfaith organisations would be adapted by members of the executive committee to access a broader range of SACRE and interfaith initiatives in Wales.

#### **3.2 REsilience project**

It was explained that the RE Council for England and Wales had won a DCFS tender for developing a large project in England concerning RE and community cohesion, and that the Welsh Assembly Government had put a request in for Wales to be included. It was noted that the aim of the project would be to support teachers in dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. WASACRE members will be updated on this project at the next meeting.

### **4. CORRESPONDENCE**

#### **4.1 RE Festival March 2011**

A letter had been received by the RE Council for England and Wales asking for support and enthusiasm for a RE Festival that is being planned for March 2011. The aim of the festival is to celebrate RE and to raise the profile of the subject on a local and national level. Ideas and guidance for activities will be produced by the RE Council.

## **5. 'ALL WALES COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY' - JOANNE GLENN**

A presentation was received on the 'All Wales Community Cohesion Strategy' by Joanne Glenn, Head of the Community Cohesion Strategy Unit of the Welsh Assembly Government. The aim of the strategy is to encourage people to live alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect and to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to participate and has equal access to resources. It was explained that there is a need for the strategy due to the pace and scale of changes in population in Wales during the last few years. The strategy, which is currently in draft format, focuses on aspects relating to housing, learning, communication skills, social inclusion and preventing violent extremism.

Information was received regarding the UK based Prevent strategy that aims to undermine extremist ideology, disrupt those promoting violent extremism, to identify and support individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist and increase the resilience of communities to engage with and resist violent extremists.

In terms of the agenda for Wales it was explained that the Education Cohesion Programme Board were considering a number of projects:

- REsilience
- Getting on Together (GOT)
- GCSE Islamic Studies
- EYST (Ethnic Youth Support Teams)
- Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board
- Young People's Conference
- Prevent Seminar across FE and HE sectors

It was noted that Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham had received Community Cohesion Grants. All 22 local authorities will receive 3 years of funding to support community cohesion (to be distributed through the Community Safety Partnerships).

It was noted that the role of SACRE could be to:

- Promote community cohesion through RE
- Promote understanding and awareness of community cohesion
- Look at local issues from the point of view of RE
- Contribute to 'mapping' activities
- Contribute to discussions on Prevent

WASACRE members raised serious concerns regarding the draft strategy especially in relation to the projects being considered by the Education Cohesion Programme Board. Members noted that they were very uncomfortable with the continuous emphasis on Islam and the fact that many of the suggested projects were not 'inclusive'. Representatives also raised concerns about the possible GCSE Islamic Studies course.

It was noted that there would be a future meeting between Denize Morris, RS subject officer at DCELLS and Joanne Glenn to discuss further aspects of the Community Cohesion Strategy.

## **6. SUPPORTING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT ST DEINIOL'S LIBRARY**

A presentation was received by Taina ap Sion on the research work, resources and accredited courses being developed by St Mary's Centre at St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden. Information was received about the curriculum developments that the Centre has been involved with such as 'The Christian Special Places' series and 'The World Faiths Today' series. The Centre, in partnership with RMEP, has translated a number of books into Welsh

e.g. 'Stories to Remember' series and 'Places of Worship' series. The Centre is also continuing to translate into Welsh the primary and secondary acts of collective worship produced by SPCK ([www.assemblies.org.uk/cymru](http://www.assemblies.org.uk/cymru)).

The Centre provides, through partnerships with York St John University and Glyndwr university a number of post graduate qualifications for religion based contexts and faith based contexts.

Another development has been the publication of a new journal and newsletter for RE: AGweddau / REview. Both newsletter and journal includes references to curriculum developments, research work and new resources. Schools and other interested people can sign up to receive the journal and newsletters on the St Mary's Centre website: [www.st-marys-centre.co.uk](http://www.st-marys-centre.co.uk).

## **7. 'PERSONA DOLLS'**

A presentation was received by Mary Parry, RE advisor for Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire on the use of persona dolls in RE. It was explained that the dolls were useful in implementing inclusive and anti-discriminating policies and practices especially in the Foundation Phase. Mary demonstrated the use of a persona doll by introducing members to 'Seema Patel'. Mary outlined Seema's 'persona' by providing background information and demonstrated how the doll could be used to explore aspects of Hinduism with the pupils e.g. worship in the home. Reference was also made to the work on Hinduism that is available on the NGfL website to support the teaching of RE in the Foundation Phase.

## **8. REPORTS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **8.1 Feedback from Estyn Stakeholders Forum**

Vicky Thomas provided feedback from the Estyn Stakeholders Forum held on 15th June 2009. During the meeting information was shared on the new inspection arrangements for 2010 and the outcomes of the consultation on the arrangements for the new inspection framework. WASACRE resolved to write and to discuss with Estyn the need for inspectors to continue to report on schools' fulfilment of statutory requirements (in relation to CW and RE) with the introduction of the new inspection arrangements in 2010. WASACRE would also like assurances that the guidance information to inspectors would 'flag up' the need for statutory requirements to be met.

### **8.2 Meeting with Jane Hutt**

It was noted that a delegation from WASACRE would be meeting the Minister on the 7th December 2009.

### **8.3 WASACRE website**

It was noted that WASACRE are considering the development of a website in order to develop the Association's effectiveness and profile. The costing for the proposals is currently being investigated.

## **9. SHOWCASE OF RE RESOURCES**

### **9.1 The Puddles series**

Two new publications will be available shortly:

- A Wedding Day Wish for Puddles
- Puddles and the Happy Easter Day.

Soft toys will also be available for Arthur and the kittens.

## 9.2 **Child's Eye View of Festivals**

Attention was drawn to two DVD that support the teaching of RE in the Foundation Phase. The DVD follows eight young children as they celebrate the festivals of Chinese New Year, Divali, Eid-ul Fitr, Hanukkah, Easter, Vaisakhi, Wesak and Christmas with their families and friends. The DVD is accompanied by a booklet with details of all the stories, songs and creative activities featured in the series, as well as background notes for teachers.

DVD Price: £24.99

## 10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 18th March 2010 - Swansea
- 24th June 2010 - Wrexham
- 26th November - Caerphilly

## 11. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to note the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE.

Author: Vicky Thomas (ESIS Religious Education Advisor)