



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT ST HELEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, CAERPHILLY ON WEDNESDAY 5TH MARCH 2014 AT 2:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor D.M. Gray - Chairman

Representing Teaching Organisations: Miss H. Bartley (ATL) and Mrs B. Davies (UCAC).

Representing Religious Organisations: Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reform Church), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese).

Together with:

V. Thomas (RE Consultant), T. Cunnick (Manager Community, Youth and Adult Education Services) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.G. Carter, Mrs G.D. Oliver, Mrs M.E. Sargent and J. Taylor and from Mrs J. Jones (Church in Wales) and K. Cole (Manager Learning, Education and Inclusion).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

2. MINUTES

It was reported that Miss H. Bartley and Miss B. Davies had tendered their apologies for absence at the last meeting but this had not been recorded in the minutes.

Subject to the inclusion of Miss H. Bartley and Miss B. Davies within the apologies for absence: -

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that all the actions arising from the last meeting had been completed which included the distribution of the Estyn Thematic Review and the Foundation Phase Guidance to schools. Teacher representatives expressed concern that information was not being cascaded down to RE Departments.

It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would contact schools in order to identify their Head of RE and formulate a direct contact distribution list to ensure that the information circulated was reaching the appropriate person.

The date and time of the next meeting was confirmed as 2pm on Thursday 12th June 2014 and was scheduled to be hosted at the Risca Salvation Army Citadel courtesy of Lieutenant Di Palma. However this had not been confirmed and other venue options were requested for Members consideration.

Miss B. Davies offered Ysgol y Lawnt and Miss H. Bartley offered Newbridge High Schools as alternative venues. Members thanked Ms Davies and Miss Bartley for their kind offer and welcomed the opportunity to visit both schools if not on the 12th June then during the 2014-15 meeting cycle.

4. SACRE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The report updated Members on the present Membership of Caerphilly SACRE and the actions taken to fill its current vacancies were detailed.

Members were advised that WASACRE would be taking forward the faith group vacancies in order to ascertain if the lack of response from Cyntun is being experienced by other SACRE's and decide a way forward.

It was noted that Ms K. Cole (Manager Education and Inclusion) would be asked to assist with primary school representation for the Co-opted Member vacancy. It was also noted that Mr P. Jones (Co-opted Member Secondary School Head Teachers) had resigned his post with Caerphilly County Borough Council leaving an additional Co-opted Member place vacant.

Having fully considered its content SACRE noted the report and the current position in relation to vacant places.

5. ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2013

The report informed Members of the attainment at GCSE, AS and A Level of Caerphilly pupils in Religious Studies and Religious Education for 2013.

SACRE were advised that the figures represented raw scores and as such did not necessarily reflect the selectivity of the entry and in some cases the numbers were too small to be statistically significant.

The results for the GCSE (Full Course) were confirmed and it was noted that there were 699 entries from 13 schools. Although the Caerphilly results were down on the All Wales figure this still equated to a quarter of pupils entered achieving a top grade (A* - A). Members were advised that 99% of pupils entered achieved a grade (A*-G) and this was above the All Wales figure of 98%.

The results of GCSE (Short Course) were confirmed and it was noted that the overall percentage of A*-A Grades at 25% was the best performance of the last three years and was better than the All Wales figure of 17.9%. A*-C grades at 59% was also better than the last

three years and better than the All Wales figure of 50.6%. Finally the overall percentage of A*-G grades achieved was 97% which was an improvement on the 2012 results and better than the All Wales figure of 93.4%.

The results for A Level Religious Studies were confirmed and showed an improvement on last years figures at A*-A and A*-C grades. It was noted that 100% of the pupils entered at A Level achieved a grade at A*-E, which was an excellent result and exceeded the All Wales figure of 96.3%.

The results for AS Level Religious Studies were confirmed and showed a significant increase in entry numbers in 2013. 16% of students entered achieved an 'A' grade and 56% of students achieved A-C grades. It was noted that at A-E grades there was a 92% pass rate and this was the best result of the last three years.

SACRE discussed the short course option and welcomed the introduction of a qualification at Key Stage 4 as this had reduced disaffection with the subject and encouraged pupil entry at AS and A Level.

Members sought clarification with regard to the availability of data from Cross Keys College and told that it had been very difficult to get access to the figures in past years and that SACRE would concentrate on school figures only.

Members felt that the data presented would be useful to all schools particularly in relation to self evaluation and should be shared.

Having fully considered the report SACRE noted the examination results for Religious Education and Religious Studies and requested that a letter congratulating schools on their performance and confirming the results achieved be sent to all schools.

6. NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW RESULTS 2013

The report informed SACRE of the forthcoming Phase 2 review and assessment of the National Curriculum in Wales.

It was noted that the review would be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 would focus on strengthening the teaching of literacy numeracy and wider skills ensuring continuity and progression from Foundation Phase to key stage 4. The consultation process for Phase 1 was outlined and was noted to run from the 22nd October 2013 until the 17th January 2014. Mrs V. Thomas (RE Advisor to SACRE) confirmed that she had been part of the response group to Phase 1. Phase 2 would concentrate on curriculum design at each stage of education to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum that is fit for the twenty-first century.

The implications for Religious Education were fully discussed and the importance of retaining RE's status on the curriculum was emphasised. The Phase 2 consultation would follow in Autumn 2014 but the exact timeframe had yet to be confirmed. Members were advised that WASACRE would respond to Phase 2 when appropriate and that Mrs V Thomas would inform and consult with SACRE on any changes that would impact on RE.

Clarification was sought with regard to continuing professional development (CPD) and Teaching Representatives expressed concern that consultation and information sharing had been seriously curtailed by the lack of interaction between departments and schools. The importance of sharing good practice within the learning community was discussed at length and the frustration that present training and development opportunities were concentrating on literacy and numeracy with no specialist subject consideration. Members agreed that RE required specialist advice and development. Members were reminded of the training opportunities provided by WASACRE and were advised that this might be an area that WASACRE would like to develop going forward.

Having fully considered its content SACRE noted the report.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF SACRE REPORTS 2008-2011

The report informed SACRE of the Welsh Government Review of SACRE Reports from 2008-2011.

The review by Welsh Government provided a summary of the work of SACRE's in supporting schools to raise standards in Religious Education and Collective Worship. It noted that the vast majority of SACRE's demonstrated secure arrangements for advising their local authorities on supporting and implementing their locally agreed syllabuses in line with the National Exemplar framework for Religious Education for 13-19 year olds in Wales.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the Executive Summary and the recommendation from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was highlighted. It recommended that SACRE's continue to provide effective advice to their local authorities on matters related to raising standards and learning and that all SACREs continue to support schools and monitor and evaluate the success for the advice given. Members were advised that initial speculation had been that SACRE would be going into consortium services through the EAS, however the consortium were now taking a view that this should be handed back as it is a local authority responsibility. This position was still to be clarified.

The recommendation in the report that from 2013-14 specialist subject support should continue to be offered by each consortium was referenced. Mrs Thomas confirmed that this provision would need to be carefully monitored going forward. The possibility of networking provision, training and continual professional development (CPD) for RE Teachers through WASACRE was noted.

The four main responsibilities of a SACRE were noted and Caerphilly SACRE's performance in meeting those responsibilities discussed. All Members agreed that Caerphilly SACRE was currently meeting each of those responsibilities as evidenced within their annual reports.

Members agreed that a four year review of SACRE reports was far too long and were advised that assurances had been given by Welsh Government that a 2 year review would now be implemented going forward.

Having fully considered its content SACRE noted the report.

8. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUALITY MARK

The report informed SACRE of the Religious Education Quality (REQM) initiative.

The Religious Education Quality Mark initiative was set up to raise the profile of and celebrate a commitment to excellence in Religious Education in schools. The REQM recognises good practice in RE and also provides a powerful tool for development.

Members were advised that there were five strands to the quality mark and these were outlined for information. The preparation and assessment process was explained and it was noted that the award would stand for a period of three years.

Clarification was sought on the costs of the award and this was confirmed as £475 per school. The REQM website was referenced and Members advised that the site provided an excellent self-evaluation tool that would be very useful to schools, irrespective of whether or not they take up the award.

Having fully considered its content SACRE noted the report and requested that a letter be sent to all schools highlighting the REQM award and the website as a self- evaluation tool.

9. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING 10TH OCTOBER 2013 IN CARDIFF

The report informed SACRE of the discussion and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting on the 10th October 2013 in Cardiff and provided Members with a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

SACRE noted the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE.

10. WASACRE - REPRESENTATION AT THE NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 27TH 2014 AT CAERPHILLY

The report informed SACRE of the details of the next WASACRE meeting to be held on the 27th March 2014 in Caerphilly and sought nominations for attendance.

Nominations were received from M. Western, H. Bartley, B. Davies, E. Hawthorn and Councillor D.M. Gray who agreed to attend and represent Caerphilly SACRE at the meeting.

Concerns were expressed that Members not in attendance at today's meeting might also like to attend the WASACRE meeting. Members requested that an email be sent to all SACRE Members inviting them to attend the forthcoming meeting. It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would collate the responses and confirm attendance numbers with WASACRE.

Having fully considered its content SACRE noted the report.

11. NOMINATIONS TO THE WASACRE EXECUTIVE

The report informed SACRE of the correspondence received from WSACRE in relation to nominations for new Members to the WASACRE Executive Committee.

It was noted that as Caerphilly SACRE was already represented through Councillor D. M. Gray there was no requirement for a nomination.

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 Thursday, 12th June 2014, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN