



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) - 12TH JUNE 2014

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL OF ENGLAND AND WALES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the Religious Education Council of England and Wales Annual Conference on the 7th May 2014 in the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides Members with excerpts from the speech of Huw Lewis, Minister for Education.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 SACRE's have a statutory duty under Section 391 of the 1996 Education Act to monitor and develop the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools and the CCBC Strategic Equality Plan 2012.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Religious Education Council of England & Wales Annual Conference was held on the 7th May 2014 - Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay.
- 4.2 Detailed below for Members information is an excerpt from the speech of Huw Lewis, Minister for Education.

"I am delighted to welcome your Conference to Cardiff this year at a time of such significant change in the Welsh education.

It is these changes that I want to speak to you about today.....

Now, this leads me on to looking at how the teaching of Religious Education fits in to the changing educational landscape here in Wales.

Religious Education teachers are already introducing and implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework in their lessons.

The Welsh Government takes religion and the teaching of Religious Education in society very seriously.

Since devolution, there have been many examples of this, from the setting up of the First Minister's Faith Forum and the publication of the Welsh Government's Faith in Education, strategy to the full inclusion of Religious Education in the first curriculum review in 2008.

Religious education makes a distinctive contribution to a balanced and broad-based school curriculum.

We live in a society that is more culturally diverse than at any time in its history, so here has never been a greater need for high quality Religious Education in our schools.

RE promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and the physical development of pupils in our society.

It prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The subject contributes to pupils' well-being and to community cohesion, by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in the diverse society that is Wales today.

As a Welsh Government we welcomed the Estyn report on Religious Education in June last year which was broadly positive.

Estyn reported that more pupils gain a qualification in religious studies than in any other non-core subject in Wales.

In 2011, over 28,000 pupils gained either a full-course or shortcourse GCSE in religious studies.

This is out of around 36,000 pupils who entered GCSEs that year.

In fact the number of entries for full GCSE courses in religious studies has risen by a third in Wales over the last 5 years.

2012 over a quarter of all year 11 pupils were entered for the full course and, of the non-core subjects - only history had more entries.

By comparison, in 2008, many more subjects had significantly more entries than Religious Studies - subjects such as French, Art and Design, Geography, History and ICT for example.

So, RE is not only important, it is increasing in popularity by pupils wish to follow the subject to GCSE level.

However, Estyn did raise some issues and it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that *all* children and young people benefit from the good quality Religious provision which already exists in many schools in Wales.

For example, schools do need to develop strategies to raise the attainment of boys at Key Stage 4.

They need to improve the standards for pupils who are not entered at all for a qualification.

They also need to ensure that tasks are challenging enough to enable more able pupils to reach higher levels at Key Stage 3.

To do this we will continue to share good practice in relation to professional development opportunities for teachers of religious education.

We will also continue to engage with key partners in assessing the quality of support provided by local authorities and consortia to religious education in schools...

Looking at the bigger picture, I recently announced the appointment of Professor Graham Donaldson to lead a wide ranging and independent review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales.

Professor Donaldson's review encompasses the Basic Curriculum, which includes Religious Education.....

I very much look forward to receiving Professor Donaldson's report and recommendations at the turn of this year.....”

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment process has not been applied, however Religion and Belief is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and locally is covered by section 6 (xi) of the CCBC Strategic Equality Plan 2012.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications attached to this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications attached to this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All consultations have been reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 SACRE note the information .

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 To ensure SACRE are fully informed of the discussion at the Religious Education Council of England and Wales Annual Conference.

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