



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL AND RESOURCE CENTRE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY 16TH MARCH 2017 AT 1.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Simmonds

Representing Teaching Organisations: Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT)

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

Together with:

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

Also present:

Mrs Tracey McGuirk (Deputy Head Teacher) – part of meeting

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members to Trinity Fields School. SACRE thanked Mrs Tracey McGuirk (Deputy Head Teacher) for making the necessary arrangements for the meeting. Members were pleased to note that they would be observing an act of collective worship during the course of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E.M Aldworth, D.G. Carter and Mrs G.D. Oliver, Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Mrs B. Davies (UCAC), Miss H. Marsh (ASCL), Mr C. Parry (NAHT), Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army), Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales), and Ms R. Bradshaw (Co-opted Member).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 18TH OCTOBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 18th October 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Caerphilly School Inspections Report Analysis Autumn 2015 - Summer 2016 (Minute No. 7)

SACRE were updated on the follow-up action arising from an Estyn inspection at St James Primary School. At its Autumn Term 2016 meeting, SACRE were keen to ascertain whether one Estyn recommendation (which stated that the school should develop curriculum planning to ensure systematic coverage of all subjects at Key Stage 2) included Religious Education. SACRE subsequently wrote to the school to establish whether this recommendation encompassed the teaching of RE, and if so, the action being taking on this matter.

Mrs Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant to SACRE) explained that the school has now confirmed that the Estyn recommendation was a general one and that RE was not individually mentioned in the inspection report. However, all subjects (including RE) will be addressed in the school's Post-Inspection Action Plan. Mrs Thomas summarised the contents of the plan, which included planned implementation dates for each area, and confirmed that she was satisfied with the action taken on this matter. SACRE were pleased to note the detailed contents of the action plan produced by the school.

WASACRE – Feedback from the WASACRE Meeting in Rhyl, Denbighshire on 23rd June 2016 (Minute No. 13)

Members were updated on two Caerphilly secondary schools who had indicated via a WASACRE Welsh Baccalaureate survey that they were not meeting the statutory requirement in respect of the provision of RE at Key Stage 4. Mrs Thomas has now contacted these schools to ascertain whether they understood and answered the survey question correctly, and to establish a suitable course of action if needed. Mrs Thomas confirmed that one school had reintroduced Short Course with all pupils and were now meeting the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. At the other school, the issue was raised with the Welsh Baccalaureate co-ordinator and he was going to take up the matter with the Headteacher. The school has since returned a SACRE survey relating to Key Stage 4 provision and this shows that an additional timetabled lesson has now been allocated for the provision of RE, which appears to have resolved the matter.

SACRE thanked Mrs Thomas for the updates. There were no other matters arising.

6. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Members were advised that efforts are being made to fill SACRE's vacant co-opted position, which was previously held by a representative from Race Equalities First and is allocated to this or a similar equalities organisation. The Clerk to SACRE has recently approached Race Council Cymru to seek recommendations for a potential co-opted member. It was suggested that the Clerk also contact GEMS (Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service) who may be able to assist on this matter.

Attempts are also being made to secure representatives of non-Christian faith communities from the principal religions to support the work that SACRE is doing. The Clerk to SACRE has contacted the head offices for the Hindu and Buddhist faiths in Wales, with a view to seeking a suitable person to sit on SACRE as a local faith community member

SACRE noted the details of the membership update.

7. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2017: FEEDBACK

The Clerk to SACRE summarised the numerous events which took place across Caerphilly to mark this International Day of Remembrance, including coffee mornings, Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) displays and poetry readings in Risca, Rhymney, Blackwood and Abertridwr Libraries.

SACRE Members were invited to the official ceremony held at Blackwood Miners' Institute on Friday 27th January 2017, which included a welcome from the Leader of the Council, and was followed by a number of poignant readings from pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. Following the lighting of the commemorative candle, guests were invited to view a special book of poetry written by pupils from the school, which will raise money for Save The Children.

Ahead of the day itself, a letter was sent to all schools on behalf of SACRE to advise them of the resources available via the HMD website and encouraging them to mark the event in some way. SACRE Members were also sent a link to the Events page of the website, which listed other commemorative events across Wales that were being held on and around Holocaust Memorial Day 2017.

SACRE remarked on the impressive book of poetry written by the Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni pupils and were pleased to note the moving commemorative events that had taken place across the county borough to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2017.

8. ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2016

Mrs Thomas presented an analysis of examination results at GCSE, AS and A Level by Caerphilly pupils in Religious Studies and Religious Education for 2016. The report also summarised the 2016 results in comparison to the previous two years, the Regional Consortia figure (comprising the five South East Wales local authorities) and the All Wales figure. For the first time, the percentage of the cohort (students within a particular Key Stage) entered for RE courses was also included in the report. Further information detailing the attainment results for each Caerphilly school was also tabled to Members at the meeting.

SACRE referred to an increase in the number of schools entering candidates compared to previous years and it was confirmed that the additional information relates to pupils at Glan y Nant Learning Centre.

At **GCSE (Full Course)** the results across all grade boundaries (27.7% at A* - A, 71.1% at A* - C and 97.8% at A* - G) are considered to be good and compare well with the performance across previous years. At all grade boundaries, results are better than the Consortia figures and are comparable with the All Wales figures.

At **GCSE (Short Course)** the results at A* - A (13.8%) and A* - C (45.8%) are below previous performance but at A* - G (92.9%) are better than 2015 performance (which was considered to be a very strong year) and are also better than the Consortia and All Wales figures. A significant number continue to be entered for Short Course which is very encouraging because it provides pupils with the opportunity for accreditation for their Key Stage 4 study. It was noted that pupils do not usually opt to follow the Short Course as it is delivered as part of the Statutory Requirements for RE.

The results for **A Level** Religious Studies highlighted lower entry figures than 2015 but an increase on 2014. Performance at A* - A (13.1%) is comparable to 2015 but below the Consortia figure and All Wales figures. At A* - C, the pass rate (69.1%) is below previous performance and the Consortia and All Wales figures. Members were pleased to note the pass rate for grades A* - E (98.8%), which although below the previous outstanding performance of 100%, is still a very good result, and is comparable to the Consortia and All Wales figures.

At **AS Level** Religious Studies, no A grades were achieved, but A - C grades (42.9%) are better than 2015 and A - E grades (71.5%) were similar to 2015. The entry figure and number of schools entering pupils have increased this year. Cohort entry is higher than the Consortia figure but below the All Wales figure. Mrs Thomas explained that this data only included those students who had 'cashed in' their result (which avoids the same results being counted twice) and advised Members that because of this situation, the AS statistics need to be considered with caution.

Having fully considered and discussed the report, SACRE noted the analysis of examination results in Religious Studies and Religious Education for 2016 and agreed that a letter be circulated to all secondary schools to inform them of the analysis of results.

9. UPDATE ON GCSE CONSORTIA ARRANGEMENTS/REVISED WJEC SPECIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

The report detailed the ongoing support available to teachers and schools arising from the revised specifications for GCSE Religious Studies, which have been approved and are in place for first teaching from September 2017.

Members noted the details of recent WJEC training days (entitled *WJEC GCSE Religious Studies Route A and B Preparing to Teach*). Mrs Thomas explained that these courses had been heavily subscribed and well received, and highlighted the ongoing concerns raised by teaching staff as to whether the new Religious Studies course book (containing the revised specifications) will be ready ahead of first teaching in September 2017.

Members were also updated on progress made by the four educational consortia across Wales in developing a support programme for teaching staff. At its Spring Term meeting, WASACRE received a presentation outlining the collaborative arrangements in place between the ERW Consortium (Mid/West Wales) and WJEC. It is intended that the sharing and good practices that are being developed will tie in with other Consortia across Wales.

Mrs Thomas advised SACRE that she has been regularly updated on the support programme being developed by the South East Wales EAS Consortia (including the Caerphilly local authority). EAS will appoint an Advisor to lead and co-ordinate the work of GCSE curriculum hubs, and who will be SACRE's main contact point for progress updates. RE co-ordinators from two lead schools (King Henry VIII and Ebbw Fawr Learning Community) have recently been appointed to develop a support programme for the new GCSE Religious Studies specifications. EAS recently met with these schools to determine the forward work programme and it is hoped that they will attend SACRE's Autumn 2017 meeting to deliver a presentation on the new specifications and their impact on the delivery of the RE Syllabus.

It is planned for the GwE (North Wales) Consortia to provide an update on their support arrangements at WASACRE's Summer Term meeting, and it has been suggested that the EAS and Central South Consortium deliver a similar update at WASACRE's Autumn Term meeting. In closing, Mrs Thomas explained that the emphasis is very much on sharing good practice and materials across Wales to support schools during the implementation of the revised specifications, and confirmed that progression is continuing well in this area.

During the course of the discussion on this item, a teacher representative Member advised SACRE that she had been unaware of the Consortia arrangements regarding the new specifications. It was suggested that although SACRE use several established contact points when distributing information to schools, other agencies may not be following this practice and therefore such messages are not being received by the most relevant person.

Mrs Thomas outlined her intention to contact the RE co-ordinators at the lead schools to discuss the work developed to date on the new specifications, and to seek clarification on how the lead schools intend to operate. Members acknowledged the limited time remaining before the implementation of the revised specifications and the pressures placed on schools as a result. Mrs Thomas also confirmed that she would seek permission for SACRE to circulate to schools the details of the next GCSE Religious Studies Network meeting being held on 28th June 2017, which will be an opportunity to share good practice and develop an understanding of the new specification requirements.

Following discussion on its contents, SACRE Members noted the report in respect of the revised WJEC specifications and the support available to schools.

10. NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW: UPDATE

The report outlined the latest developments regarding the review of the National Curriculum in Wales and the shape of the new curriculum.

Members were reminded of the Donaldson review of the curriculum which recommended that Religious Education should form part of the Humanities Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE), and remain a statutory curriculum requirement. Manon Jones of Welsh Government (WG) is leading the Pioneer schools which are developing the new curriculum, together with two of the AOLE, namely Humanities, and Language and Literacy. Extracts from the latest Curriculum for Wales newsletter were appended to the report, which outlined the progress being made in the development of the new curriculum.

Mrs Thomas explained that a number of meetings have been held with Manon Jones and the Pioneer Schools to discuss and establish the way forward regarding this AOLE. WASACRE recently attended a meeting with the Minister for Education to pose a question around the status of the Agreed Syllabus in light of the proposal that RE becomes part of the Humanities AOLE. Following proactive discussions at this meeting, it has been determined that the shape of the future curriculum should include discrete subject areas within each AOLE. It is hoped that there will be an opportunity to view a number of different teaching models at WASACRE meetings in 2017/18.

Discussion took place on the contents of the report and Members expressed a need for consistency in the approach towards the shape and delivery of the new curriculum. It was noted that the National Advisory Panel for RE (NAPfRE) have drafted some guidelines for consideration by the Pioneer schools, and are hoping to meet with these schools in the near future to expand on the reasoning and philosophy behind this document.

Following discussion of the report, Members noted the developments relating to the position of RE in the curriculum.

11. ACT OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP BY THE PUPILS OF TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL

SACRE adjourned from the meeting room at 2.35 p.m. to view the act of collective worship.

Mrs Tracey McGuirk provided an introduction to the afternoon assembly, which is hosted by an alternating class each day and broadcasts simultaneously around the other classrooms within the school. This style of assembly uses calming music and images to encourage a relaxing environment prior to the end of the school day, and provides the opportunity for pupils to reflect on the day's learning, activities and experiences.

SACRE split into two groups in order to observe the act of collective worship from the perspective of different classes. Members were impressed by the children's attentiveness during the assembly and the ways in which they interacted with their classmates and teachers and the other classes during this session. SACRE enjoyed the singing during the assembly and were pleased to note the enthusiastic participation and engagement of all those in attendance.

SACRE expressed their thanks to the pupils and staff for allowing them to join in their act of collective worship, and reconvened in the meeting room at 2.55 p.m.

12. ESTYN ANNUAL REMIT 2017/18

The report summarised the Cabinet Secretary for Education's annual remit to Estyn, which is additional to Estyn's core business of inspections. This document sets out the specific advice required by the Welsh Government in 2017/18 and an indicative forward look at advice likely to be required by the Welsh Government in 2018/19.

Included in the report to SACRE was an extract from the Annual Estyn Remit 2017/18 (RE specifics). This referred to a thematic review of religious and moral education at Key Stages 2 and 3, which would be included in the remit to Estyn for 2017/18. This review forms part of a series of reports on curriculum subject areas and will build on the 2013 WG report on Religious Education in Key Stage 4.

Members were advised that Mark Campion (Estyn Inspector) will address WASACRE regarding this matter at their Summer Term meeting, and that SACRE will be updated on the contents of the thematic review following its publication.

SACRE noted the update relating to the Estyn Annual Remit 2017/18.

13. CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE

Members were updated on the correspondence circulated to schools on behalf of SACRE, which included information on the Farmington Scholarships for 2017-2018, details of the resources available to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2017, advice on the GCSE specification for RE and Sample Assessment Materials, and circulation of SACRE's Annual Report for 2015-16.

Members were also reminded that at the Autumn 2016 meeting of SACRE, it had been agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would write to all secondary schools in Caerphilly in relation to statutory requirements for RE at Key Stage 4. Separate letters were subsequently emailed to all primary and secondary schools in January 2017 to remind them of the statutory requirements for Religious Education. All schools were asked to return an enclosed proforma to confirm that they had read and understood the statutory requirements. The secondary schools were also asked to outline how they deliver RE at Key Stage 4.

Having collated the responses received, the Clerk to SACRE emailed all outstanding schools in February 2017 to ask that they acknowledge receipt as soon as possible. To date, 36 out of 76 primary schools and 9 out of 15 secondary schools have returned a completed proforma. A summary of the responses received was tabled at the meeting.

Discussion took place regarding the low response rate and Officers stressed the importance of the message that had been sent to the schools and the pressing need for schools to understand their statutory legal obligations in relation to the delivery of Religious Education. This exercise will allow SACRE to identify any RE issues in schools and offer support and guidance where needed. It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would email a second reminder to the outstanding schools and stipulate a response deadline date. Details of any outstanding schools past this date will be forwarded to Mrs Jacquelyn Elias (Service Manager - Additional Learning Needs) and Mrs Keri Cole (Chief Education Officer) so that further action can be taken on this matter.

Mrs Thomas summarised the responses received from secondary schools to date. Some schools cite the use of the new Welsh Bacculaureate qualification as one component in delivering RE at Key Stage 4. Mrs Thomas explained that this would not be sufficient on its own to meet the statutory requirements, but that the relevant schools have included additional activities to complement the programme of study and demonstrate how they meet these requirements. Mrs Thomas expressed concerns over the use by some schools of “Thought of The Day” time to deliver RE, explaining that it is clearly stated in the agreed syllabus that time allocated to this is distinct from and separate to RE in schools. Also this time is for delivery of collective worship and not RE. Some schools may also believe that registration periods are suitable for the delivery of RE. However, this is a pastoral activity set aside for the registration period, and Mrs Thomas expressed a need for it to be reiterated to schools that they should ensure that the programmes of study of the agreed syllabus are delivered and it is highly unlikely that either of these activities are a suitable means of delivering RE to pupils. It also shows a lack of status for the subject and a lack of parity for RE with other curriculum subjects.

It was observed by SACRE that the delivery of RE at Key Stage 4 according to the locally agreed syllabus is becoming an increasing concern across many local authorities in Wales, with Officers sharing information and best practice with their counterparts on the way forward in addressing this issue with schools. It was agreed that once all the Caerphilly school responses have been collated, they will be assessed by Officers from the Education Directorate to determine whether further action or challenge is needed on this matter. SACRE will also examine the full set of responses at its Summer Term meeting to establish whether schools need to be asked further questions regarding their programme of study.

SACRE were pleased to note the positive outcomes arising from this exercise to date and noted the details of the correspondence update.

14. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN CARMARTHENSHIRE – 18TH NOVEMBER 2016

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Carmarthenshire on 18th November 2016. A copy of the draft minutes was included in the meeting papers.

A number of items considered at the WASACRE meeting were discussed throughout the course of SACRE’s meeting, including a presentation on the support for schools in delivering the new GCSE specification for Religious Studies (including the role of Lead Practitioners), and an update on the National Curriculum Review.

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

15. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE SPRING MEETING IN USK, MONMOUTHSHIRE ON 3RD MARCH 2017

Mrs Thomas provided a verbal update on the discussions and deliberation of WASACRE at its meeting in Monmouthshire on 3rd March 2017. She explained that it had been a very insightful meeting, with many of the items also discussed at the SACRE meeting. These included two presentations from NAPfRE (*Teaching Religious Education within a Humanities curriculum* and *Enriching the modern curriculum from a pioneer school perspective*) and a presentation from Manon Jones (*Work of the pioneer school network and the Humanities Areas of Learning and Experience*). Some issues were raised by WASACRE members regarding whether schools were fully delivering the agreed syllabus for RE, particularly at secondary school level, either through a Humanities approach or through the use of registration time. Members were asked to take this matter up with their SACREs.

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

16. REPRESENTATION AT THE FORTHCOMING WASACRE SUMMER MEETING IN WREXHAM ON FRIDAY 7TH JULY 2017

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

Mrs V. Thomas expressed an interest in attending the WASACRE meeting on 7th July 2017 (Wrexham). Further nominations will be sought at SACRE's Summer Term meeting. Interested Members will be contacted with the agenda papers nearer to the meeting date and the Clerk to SACRE will inform WASACRE of the attendees.

17. EXECUTIVE VOTING 2017 - NOMINATIONS TO THE WASACRE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

No nominations were received at the meeting. It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would recirculate nomination details to all Members via email and forward any subsequent nominations received to WASACRE by the closing date of 31st March 2017.

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance at their meeting. He requested that a letter of thanks be sent to Trinity Fields School to express SACRE's appreciation for the warm welcome they had received from pupils and staff at the school and for allowing SACRE to view their act of collective worship.

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 19th June 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR