



## CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BLACKWOOD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL ON  
MONDAY 19TH JUNE 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.

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PRESENT:

Councillors:

J. Ridgewell, Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Simmonds, J. Taylor

Representing Teaching Organisations: Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT)

Representing Religious Organisations: Mrs J. Jones (Church in Wales), Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales)

Together with:

Mrs V. Thomas (RE Consultant), Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), Miss J. Tyler (Administrative Assistant)

### 1. APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR TO CAERPHILLY SACRE

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair to Caerphilly SACRE. A nomination for Councillor John Taylor was moved and seconded, and it was unanimously agreed that he be appointed Chair of Caerphilly SACRE up to the next County Borough elections.

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chair to Caerphilly SACRE. A nomination for Mrs Janet Jones (Church in Wales) was moved and seconded, and it was unanimously agreed that she be appointed as Vice-Chair of Caerphilly SACRE up to the next County Borough elections.

### 2. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members to Blackwood Comprehensive School and thanked the RE Co-ordinator, Mrs Nicola Boardman, for making the necessary arrangements for the meeting.

Introductions were made and the Chair welcomed newly elected Councillor John Ridgewell to his first meeting of Caerphilly SACRE. It was noted that Councillor Ridgewell had taken up a vacant place on the committee, arising from the retirement of Mr David Carter as a county councillor. Members wished Mr Carter a very happy retirement and agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to him on behalf of Caerphilly SACRE.

### **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E.M Aldworth and Mrs G.D. Oliver, Ms B. Davies (UCAC), Miss H. Marsh (ASCL), Mr C. Parry (NAHT), Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army), Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reform Church), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese), Ms R. Bradshaw (Co-opted Member) and Mrs J. Elias (Service Manager - Additional Learning Needs).

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **5. MINUTES – 16TH MARCH 2017**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 16th March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

### **6. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE (MINUTE NO. 6)**

Members were advised that teacher representatives Ms Bethan Davies (UCAC) and Mrs Helen Marsh (ASCL) had recently tendered their resignation from Caerphilly SACRE. Ms Davies has secured a new post from September 2017 and Mrs Marsh is retiring in July 2017. In addition, Mrs Jacquelyn Elias is due to retire from Caerphilly Council in July 2017, with Paul Warren confirmed as the new local authority education representative for SACRE.

Members expressed their appreciation to Ms Davies, Mrs Marsh and Mrs Elias for their contributions to Caerphilly SACRE and it was agreed that letters of thanks would be sent to them to wish them well in their future endeavours. It was noted that the appropriate teaching associations would be contacted to seek nominations for replacement representatives on SACRE.

It was also noted that efforts are continuing to fill SACRE's vacant co-opted position (which is allocated to Race Equalities First or a similar equalities organisation) and to secure representatives of non-Christian faith communities from the principal religions to support the work of SACRE. The Clerk to SACRE has received some responses from interested organisations, with it hoped that this matter can be progressed by the Autumn Term meeting.

### **7. ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2016 (MINUTE NO. 8)**

It was noted that a letter has been circulated on behalf of SACRE to all secondary schools to inform them of the analysis of results.

SACRE thanked Mrs Thomas for the updates.

### **8. PRESENTATION – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT BLACKWOOD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Mrs Nicola Boardman (RE Co-ordinator at Blackwood Comprehensive School) welcomed Caerphilly SACRE to the school on behalf of the Head Teacher, Mr Ravi Pawar.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Mrs Boardman introduced the RE staff at the school and outlined the programme of study at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 4 (Statutory RE).

Key Stage 3 comprises seven classes per year group, including a discrete Additional Learning Needs group, a 'buffer' group and five mixed ability classes. All classes receive one hour of RE per week. The programme of study is based on the Caerphilly Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, together with guidance documents relating to thinking and assessment skills.

At Key Stage 4 (GCSE), there are 66 pupils across Years 10 and 11 who are following this course, and take-up as a GCSE option is usually around 20% of the year group. GCSE pupils have 5 one-hour lessons per fortnight and follow the WJEC Syllabus Specification B.

At Key Stage 4 (Statutory RE), Religious Education currently features as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) lessons. There are significant changes from next year with the introduction of two statutory RE lessons a fortnight, and the WBQ Global Citizenship module will be covered within that time together with additional topics to ensure coverage of the agreed syllabus for RE.

Mrs Boardman explained that a common approach to lesson planning is undertaken across Key Stage 3, with an emphasis on the use of Bloom's Taxonomy to promote higher levels of thinking and challenge, as well as the use of Literacy and Numerical Framework (LNF) skills. Staff utilise activities such as visual stimuli, video clips, use of artefacts and thinking strategies) to develop thinking, questioning and reflection skills. Teaching resources (such as optical illusions, reasoning rectangles, and Diamond 9/triangle templates) are also used to encourage pupils to have open minds and accept differing points of view, develop inference and assessment skills, share ideas and prioritise key information.

Examples of topics considered by pupils include "Big Bang vs Big Plan" and "Journey of Life". Pupils have used role play techniques during the study of Hindu marriage and have examined learned behaviour such as hate/love. Staff commonly utilise the "thinking hats" strategy for pupils to examine alternative perspectives to issues, and focus on exploring the full potential of each pupil and encouraging them to express a personal response.

SACRE were shown a comparison of target and actual Key Stage 3 attainment results across Levels 5, 6 and 7 over the last three years. The results are generally very good and are level with or exceed the target percentage.

Mrs Boardman then outlined the teaching of RE at Key Stage 4, which places an emphasis on preparing pupils for the GCSE examination. This includes discussion around "model marking" criteria for examination questions, together with "skill up", where pupils are encouraged to extend their answers to demonstrate full awareness of the subject matter.

SACRE were shown an example of the preparation work surrounding a typical GCSE Type A question, including a structured analysis/criteria form to ensure that the pupil is covering all the required areas. Pupils also complete a progress card for each area of the syllabus, which is actively monitored by staff, and in cases where a borderline C/D grade is being achieved, the school will meet with the pupil and their parents to see what support can be given to help improve their result. Over the past three years, the school has achieved 100% at GCSE A-G and also seen some excellent results (exceeding school targets) across both the A\*-A and A-C grading bands.

In closing, Mrs Boardman referred to the future challenges that lay ahead for the teaching of RE, in view of the curriculum changes at Key Stage 3 arising from the Donaldson review and the revised RE specifications at Key Stage 4.

SACRE thanked Mrs Boardman for her informative presentation.

## **9. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017-2018**

Discussion took place on the tentative meeting dates proposed within the agenda and offers were sought from SACRE Members for suitable host venues within the county borough. Agreement was reached on the dates and venues, and details will be circulated to all SACRE Members in due course.

The Autumn Term meeting will be held on Monday 16th October 2017 (2pm) at Penallta House Council Offices, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach.

The Spring Term meeting will be held on Tuesday 13th March 2018 (2pm) at Cwm Ifor Primary School, Penyrheol, Caerphilly.

The Summer Term meeting will be held on Wednesday 13th June 2018 (2pm) at Newbridge School, Bridge Street, Newbridge.

## **10. RESULTS OF THE RE SURVEY OF SCHOOLS – STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Members were reminded of the letter sent to all primary and secondary schools in Caerphilly in January 2017 on behalf of SACRE to remind them of statutory requirements for Religious Education. Primary schools were asked to acknowledge receipt and confirm their understanding of the requirements by returning an enclosed proforma. Secondary schools were asked to confirm their understanding of the requirements across all key stages and were also asked to complete a survey to outline their delivery of RE at Key Stage 4.

Several reminders were sent to those schools that had not provided a response, with the matter then passed to Paul Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement) in June 2017. SACRE were pleased to note that all secondary schools (15 in total) have now completed the survey, and 67 out of 77 primary schools have now completed and returned the proforma.

Mrs Thomas explained that she had carried out an analysis of the secondary school survey responses, and summarised her findings to SACRE. Most schools are delivering RE at Key Stage 4 through a Full Course and/or Short Course combination (although three schools indicate that this will be implemented from September 2017). 8 of the 15 schools continue to deliver some of their RE through an option group. 6 schools are using the WBQ Global Citizenship Challenge as part of their delivery model for RE. 5 schools are using registration periods or the school's Thought for the Day time as part of the delivery model, and one school is using 'drop down' (off-timetable) days as part of their delivery of RE.

SACRE were advised that whilst a number of schools have now strengthened their RE delivery models to ensure they meet statutory requirements, there is a continued need to monitor the situation. Updates will be provided to SACRE over the coming months and the matter will be reviewed during 2018.

Mrs Thomas reiterated the concerns raised at SACRE's Spring Term meeting over the use of Thought of The Day time and registration periods to deliver statutory RE. She explained that following consultation with the local authority's Education representative to SACRE (Mrs Jacquelyn Elias), she had prepared a letter to all secondary schools which outlined the main areas of concern raised by the RE Survey, provided clarification on several key points, and outlined the position of SACRE in relation to these matters:-

- (1) The letter confirmed that those schools who are providing statutory RE by following either a GCSE Short Course or a GCSE Full Course or a combination of the two courses are fulfilling statutory requirements as long as all pupils are receiving religious education, whether or not they are entered for accreditation.
- (2) In the case of those schools delivering RE at Key Stage 4 within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ), coverage of the Global Citizenship unit alone would not be sufficient to cover all aspects of the agreed syllabus programme of study.
- (3) The letter reminded schools that the Thought for the Day approach is a school's way of delivering their act of collective worship and not as a means of delivering RE.
- (4) The letter referred to the use of registration time by some schools as a way of delivering their statutory RE. Schools were reminded that the registration period is a pastoral activity and should be a time when a form tutor can develop a relationship with the pupils in their form and deliver messages of importance to the class.

The letter explained that SACRE does not look favourably on any schools using Thought for the Day or registration time as a means of delivering the agreed syllabus for RE. Schools were advised that use of these particular delivery methods shows a lack of status for the subject, and were reminded that in accordance with the requirements of the local agreed syllabus, Religious Education should be given parity with other subjects. The letter gave a reminder of SACRE's monitoring duty to ensure that schools are providing Religious Education according to an agreed syllabus, and urged schools to consider again whether their way of delivery is actually meeting statutory requirements for RE or giving the subject the status and recognition that it deserves.

The letter also highlighted concerns raised by the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) regarding a wider issue of statutory requirements not being fully met by schools in Wales. Despite inspection reports to the contrary, it appears there are, on occasions, issues with the delivery of RE. To this end, WASACRE recently met with the Estyn Chief Inspector to raise awareness of these issues. It was agreed that all school inspectors would be fully informed of the criteria that constitutes the meeting of statutory requirements for RE and would be advised to carefully examine the delivery of RE in schools, especially at Key Stage 4.

Having fully discussed the analysis of the RE survey, Members agreed that the proposed advisory letter be sent out on behalf of SACRE to the headteachers of all secondary schools. It was confirmed that the local authority and Education Achievement Service (EAS) had been made aware of the issues raised in the letter, and SACRE were pleased to note the proactive action that had been taken on this matter to date.

## **11. REVISED GCSE AND GCE SPECIFICATIONS FOR RS - UPDATE**

The report provided an update on the revised specifications for GCSE Religious Studies, which have been approved and are in place for first teaching from September 2017, and of the support available to teachers and schools. The new GCE (A Level) specifications for Religious Studies were introduced in September 2016.

SACRE were advised that EAS have now appointed two lead practitioners to support schools with the implementation of the new GCSE specifications (Rhian Davies from King Henry VIII School in Abergavenny and Clare Lane from Ebbw Fawr Learning Community). A network meeting has been arranged for 28th June 2017 (2-4pm) at King Henry VIII School. Caerphilly SACRE have passed details of this meeting onto their schools.

The GCSE lead practitioners have already begun mapping out Christianity and Hinduism, and other religions will follow. It is intended to hold one network meeting per term and the venue may be rotated depending on popularity and demand. There is also an expectation that the GCSE lead practitioners will go out to schools to support teachers where necessary.

WASACRE have been receiving updates from the four educational consortia regarding their support arrangements. To date, ERW Consortium (Mid/West Wales) and GwE (North Wales) Consortia have provided updates at the Spring and Summer Term meetings of WASACRE respectively and the EAS and Central South Consortium will deliver a similar update at WASACRE's Autumn Term meeting.

Discussion took place regarding the resource materials available in respect of the new specifications and Mrs Thomas confirmed that it is intended for these to be placed on the Hwb Digital Learning for Wales Portal. The first part of the GCSE course book is due for release in August 2017 (with Unit 2 anticipated in September 2017). A teacher representative referred to a wealth of information available online but observed that it is spread across a number of different websites.

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

## **12. UPDATE ON NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW**

The report updated Members on the latest developments regarding the Donaldson review of the National Curriculum in Wales and the shape of the new curriculum.

Several meetings have recently been held with Welsh Government and relevant stakeholders (including representatives from WASACRE, NAPfRE (National Advisory Panel for Religious Education), Estyn and other agencies) to establish the way forward and address a number of issues regarding the shape of the new curriculum. Further details of the meetings, items discussed and subsequent actions were appended to the report.

At a RE Planning meeting with Welsh Government officials on 27th March 2017, several key items were discussed, including the relationship between the locally agreed syllabus, the statutory requirements and the new curriculum framework. Work is also being carried out to develop the RE aspect of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE), and it has been arranged for WASACRE, SACREs and NAPfRE to have a greater involvement in the development of the new curriculum. Also considered were matters which may impact the curriculum reform process, including managing withdrawal from RE. It was agreed at that meeting that the WASACRE paper on withdrawal from RE would be shared with WG and that RE needs to be clearly identified in the new curriculum framework to allow learners to be withdrawn.

A Member asked whether Manon Jones (who is leading the pioneer schools developing the new curriculum) could give a presentation to SACRE on the work being carried out. It was explained that he already provides regular updates at the WASACRE meetings (comprising of representatives from each SACRE) so that attendees are able to relay the progress back to their respective SACREs.

Members were also updated on the outcome of an AOLE planning meeting between the pioneer groups on 2nd May 2017. Eleanor Rawling has been commissioned by WG to write a paper on the Welsh Curriculum Review: Developing a Curriculum Framework, and was at the meeting to outline her recommendations. These included the reasoning that each teaching discipline should identify what defines or is essential to a subject, and teachers were asked to form subject groups in order to identify one 'Big Idea' which could be

developed. This poses questions around the fundamental teaching of RE, and WASACRE and NAPfRE members have therefore been asked to consider the Big Ideas for Religious Education and whether they are able to identify the 'minimum' Big Ideas, skills, processes and criteria for selecting components of an RE curriculum.

SACRE were very interested in the 'Big Idea' concept and discussed the potential challenges in applying this to the subject of RE. It was noted that the shape of the new curriculum is gathering momentum and Members were reminded of the considerable impact that this could have on the way that RE is taught in the future.

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

### **13. ESTYN UPDATE**

The report updated Caerphilly SACRE on the outcome of a meeting held between WASACRE, NAPfRE and Estyn representatives on Monday 5th June 2017.

Mrs Thomas explained that this had been a very positive meeting, where RE representatives were able to draw Estyn's attention to a number of key issues, and Estyn also provided updates across several areas. A number of items were discussed at the meeting, namely the thematic review of Religious Education at Key Stages 2 and 3, current inspection of RE: meeting statutory requirements according to an agreed syllabus for Religious Education, RE at Key Stage 4, and RE and the new Estyn Inspection Framework from September 2017.

Mrs Thomas outlined the remit and process of the thematic review, and explained that Estyn are examining how to maintain a balance during their evidence-gathering sessions for the thematic review. They are also observing how schools develop links with local communities and how schools are preparing for the changes arising from the Donaldson review. RE representatives agreed to send to Estyn the NAPfRE guidance document "What makes good RE?" as it contains useful information in respect of the current arrangements for RE. At the meeting with Estyn, discussion took place on how Estyn's inspection reports can be used to identify issues surrounding the teaching of RE or evidence good practice in schools. It was suggested that detail in some inspection reports could be strengthened in relation to RE.

Additionally, Estyn were advised of concerns in relation to the use of WBQ, Thought for the Day and registration period for the delivery of RE, and discussion also took place regarding the new Estyn Inspection Framework which will place an additional focus on RE during school inspections. SACRE were advised that due to the constructive nature of the meeting with Estyn, it is hoped that further meetings can be arranged on a regular basis.

Members thanked Mrs Thomas for her update and noted the contents of the report.

### **14. CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE**

The Clerk to SACRE updated Members on the correspondence circulated to schools on behalf of SACRE. This included personalised reminders to the headteachers and RE staff of those schools who had not returned the statutory requirements pro-forma/RE survey and a follow up email from Paul Warren reminding schools of the need to respond.

Secondary schools were also sent a letter outlining RE examination results for Summer 2016, as well as details of the network meeting in relation to support available for the implementation of the revised Religious Studies GCSE specifications.

A Member referred to correspondence he had received from a local resident regarding an online petition supporting collective worship in schools. Mrs Thomas added that a similar petition had preceded this which called for the abolition of collective worship in schools. Details of both petitions are available on the National Assembly for Wales website.

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

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

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Usk on 3rd March 2017. A copy of the draft minutes were tabled at the meeting.

Having already discussed the main agenda points and the deliberations of WASACRE throughout the course of the meeting, SACRE noted the contents of the minutes.

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

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

Councillor J. Taylor and Mrs V. Thomas confirmed that they would be attending the WASACRE meeting on 7th July 2017 (Wrexham). 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 2017-2020**

The report outlined the nominations in respect of the Executive Committee and Vice-Chair of WASACRE for the period 2017-2020.

Having fully considered the pen portraits of those nominated, SACRE unanimously agreed that Gill Vaisey be put forward as Caerphilly SACRE's preferred candidate for the role of Vice-Chair and that their vote be cast at WASACRE's Annual General Meeting on 7th July 2017. SACRE also endorsed the two candidates nominated for the two vacant positions on the Executive Committee (Alison Lewis and Gill Vaisey).

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance at the meeting and requested that a letter of thanks be sent to Blackwood Comprehensive School to express SACRE's appreciation for the warm welcome they had received from pupils and staff.

The meeting closed at 3.52 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 16th October 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR