



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2017 AT 2.15 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E.M Aldworth, J. Ridgewell, J. Simmonds

Representing Teaching Organisations: Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT)

Representing Religious Organisations: Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reformed Church),
Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales)

Together with:

Mrs V. Thomas (RE Consultant), Ms A. Davies (Service Manager for EOTAS and Behaviour)
Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Mr M. Gray (Crosskeys Methodist Church)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Andrea Davies (who was attending on behalf of Mr Paul Warren) and Mr Michael Gray (who was in attendance as an observer) to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G.D. Oliver and Mrs M.E. Sargent, together with Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mr C. Parry (NAHT), Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese), Ms R. Bradshaw (Co-opted Member) and Mr P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During the course of the meeting, Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, J. Simmonds and J. Taylor declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 (Caerphilly School Inspection Reports Analysis). Details are minuted with the respective item.

4. MINUTES – 19TH JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 19th June 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017-18

Members noted the dates of the Spring and Summer 2018 and the details of the host venues that had been secured.

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.

6. SACRE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Members were referred to the report which outlined the current membership of Caerphilly SACRE and summarised recent membership requests that had been received.

It was noted that there are two vacancies within the Teacher Association Representatives group (Committee B) and that efforts are continuing to fill these positions through the relevant teaching unions. All other places within the main committee groups are currently filled. There is also one vacant co-opted place within SACRE (which is a reserved position) and communication is currently ongoing with GEMS (Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service) to fill this position.

Mrs Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant to SACRE) explained that there are two co-opted places within SACRE and one of these has been allocated to a representative of Race Equality First (and prior to that, the former VALREC organisation) since its inception in 2011. This was because of a lack of non-Christian faith representation (such as Muslim or Hindu) within the Committee A group of SACRE, and it was felt that having a co-opted representative from a minority ethnic background would assist in redressing this balance. The other co-opted position is currently held by a primary school teacher, as the majority of the teacher association representatives (Committee B) were originally held by secondary school teachers, and it was felt essential to have primary school representation on SACRE in some capacity.

Following discussion on this matter, SACRE unanimously agreed that the first co-opted position continue to be reserved for a representative of Race Equality First or similar organisation, in order to address the imbalance of non-Christian faith groups on the main committee.

SACRE were also advised that membership requests have recently been received from Mr Michael Gray (a Methodist Church member and lay preacher) and Mr Ken Chamberlain (of the British Humanist Association). It was explained that Mr Gray would meet the criteria for a faith group representative (subject to endorsement from the Methodist Church) whilst Mr Chamberlain could only be considered for a co-opted position, as he does not meet the criteria for a faith group representative under the guidance from Welsh Government. However, both requests would have to be declined at this point in time, as there are no vacancies in either of the respective groups.

SACRE were advised that the membership situation is currently fluid across the committee and co-opted groupings. Given the two teacher representative vacancies, there is now an opportunity for SACRE to seek primary school representation for these places, which would alleviate the need for a primary school representative to hold the second co-opted place. Arrangements are also being made to contact those members who have not attended a meeting for some time, to determine whether or not they wish to remain a member of Caerphilly SACRE. This exercise could potentially open up vacancy opportunities across SACRE depending on the outcome across each committee group.

It was emphasised to Members that a competitive process must apply in the event of any vacancies and that nominations will be sought from relevant agencies prior to the selection process being undertaken. In the event that only a single expression of interest is received, advice will be sought from the appropriate Officer to ensure that due process has been followed before considering the application.

Following consideration of the report, it was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE notify Mr Gray and Mr Chamberlain of the current membership situation (and that their interest will be held on file pending a suitable vacancy) and that arrangements continue to be progressed to fill the vacant positions on SACRE.

7. CAERPHILLY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017 AND PROGRESS REPORT ON SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015-2018

Mrs Thomas presented the draft Caerphilly SACRE Annual Report for 2016-2017 for Members' consideration and approval prior to its submission to the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by 30th December 2017.

The Annual Report outlined the activities of SACRE during the academic year 2016-2017 and Members were asked to comment on its contents and check the report for accuracy. The RE Consultant referred Members to the executive summary of advice given by SACRE, and highlighted specific issues and the actions taken by SACRE to ensure it met all its statutory requirements. The final version of the Annual Report will be submitted to DfES by the deadline of 30th December 2017 and circulated electronically to WASACRE (who will include the Annual Report on their website), together with schools and other relevant parties.

Following consideration of its contents, SACRE unanimously agreed that the SACRE Annual Report for 2016-2017 be approved.

Members were also referred to the Caerphilly SACRE Development Plan for the academic years 2015-2018, which has identified the key issues that need to be addressed in respect of RE provision across all schools in the county borough. A copy of the current Development Plan was included within the SACRE Annual Report, which summarised the actions identified, outcomes required and progress made in respect of RE provision during the academic year 2016-2017.

Having fully considered the report, Members noted the content and progress of the SACRE Development Plan 2015-2018 to date.

8. CAERPHILLY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORTS ANALYSIS - AUTUMN 2016-SUMMER 2017

Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, J. Simmonds and J. Taylor declared an interest in this item, being school governors for several of the schools referenced in the report. In that there was no decision being taken on this item, the interests were deemed to be personal and not prejudicial, and the Members remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.

The report outlined the main RE findings derived from the Estyn inspection of fifteen Caerphilly schools between June 2016 and June 2017. The analysis focused on comments in relation to spiritual development and collective worship. The context of the report was explained to SACRE, in that the focus of SACRE's remit was on RE and collective worship findings and not the general inspection results of the school, which could significantly vary in other areas.

Mrs Thomas summarised the findings for each of the inspected schools, including details relating to spiritual development, the quality of collective worship and whether the school met statutory legal requirements in relation to collective worship. Other comments and issues were also outlined in the findings.

The report explained that the Estyn Common Inspection Framework notes that inspectors should only report on instances where the school does not comply with statutory requirements relating to collective worship. It was therefore assumed that as Estyn had not noted any instances of non-compliance, all schools inspected met statutory requirements in relation to collective worship. Additionally, SACRE were pleased to note that seven of the Estyn inspections commented on the quality of collective worship in schools.

A number of positive outcomes were derived from the analysis and detailed to SACRE Members. Estyn observed that assemblies reinforce school values and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop spiritual awareness, and also celebrate pupils' achievements through positive encouragement and the use of rewards. Collective worship allows pupils to reflect upon the importance of friendship and racial tolerance, fosters the development of strong values, and provides opportunities for pupils to think about the world around them and their place within it.

One report referred to the school's link with local community organisations (such as the church and volunteer groups) which has a valuable impact on enriching and widening pupils' learning experiences. Several reports also highlighted charitable/fundraising activities within schools, which develop pupils' understanding of how to support people less fortunate than themselves. Overall, there were no areas for development within Religious Education identified across any of the schools inspected during 2016-2017.

Having discussed the report, Members noted its contents and the analysis of the Estyn inspection reports in relation to Religious Education. Education. It was noted that there was no need to request the action plan of any of the schools inspected, for non-fulfilment of statutory requirements, either for collective worship or for RE.

9. RE AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM: WELSH GOVERNMENT NEWSLETTER/ UPDATE

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.

Members were referred to the update to all SACREs from Welsh Government appended to the report, which outlined the curriculum reform process as of July 2017 and invited SACREs to comment on the work of the Humanities working group to date.

SACRE were advised that as part of this development work, the 6 AoLE (areas of learning and experience) working groups have prepared and produced reports to both the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG) and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) for feedback. Both groups, together with Welsh Government expert groups, have provided feedback on the work so far as part of the quality enhancement process. A summary of this work ("A New Curriculum For Wales: The Story So Far") is available on the Welsh Government website and a copy of this document was also appended to the report.

It was explained that the Humanities working group recommendation is to follow the 'big ideas' approach which would provide an organising construct whilst also allowing sufficient flexibility for each discipline area. It outlines a planning methodology to develop the AoLE by identifying the key knowledge/concepts, skills and competencies for each discipline within the Humanities and then 'building' the AoLE by identifying overarching 'big ideas'/what matters key concepts that will be drawn across the disciplines.

WG has agreed to work closely with WASACRE and NAPfRE colleagues during this process and has commissioned WASACRE to make a contribution regarding a suitable approach to the organising of RE within the Humanities discipline. They are also intending to commission other groups to develop a range of ideas and an approach for consideration.

SACRE discussed the 'Big Idea' concept and of the need to clearly identify boundaries and structures in relation to Religious Education. It was suggested that it would be useful for Members to have a list of those Pioneer Network schools in Wales who are working on the areas of learning and experience. It was confirmed that arrangements would be made for these details to be circulated to all Members.

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

10. REVISED GCSE SPECIFICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: 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.

Members were reminded of the email sent to all secondary schools on behalf of SACRE in July 2017, which detailed the new WJEC (Wales) GCSE Religious Studies textbook that would be available from August 2017. This was to ensure that schools were fully informed and could start their planning as soon as possible for the start of the new school term. Many schools have been using the EDUQAS text book whilst awaiting the new resource from WJEC.

SACRE were also updated on the arrangements for the GCSE lead practitioners, who are supporting schools with the implementation of the new GCSE specifications. The next meeting will be held at Lewis School Pengam (date to be confirmed) and will place a focus on Assessment for Learning (AFL). Rhian Davies (the Lead Practitioner from King Henry VIII School in Abergavenny) will be feeding back from the consortia meeting held in early September. The report also listed contact details for the Lead Practitioner to allow RE teachers to seek support if required.

Members noted that the work carried out by the Lead Practitioners is available through the Hwb learning resource and can be accessed across all four Welsh education consortia. SACRE were also informed that Lead Practitioners from two consortiums (Cardiff Central South and EAS) are due to give a presentation at WASACRE's Autumn meeting on the progress made and the sharing of the work achieved to date.

Following discussion on the contents of the report, SACRE noted the developments relating to the revised specifications for GCSE and the support available to schools.

11. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2018

The report informed Members of the resources available to schools in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2018.

SACRE were advised that the theme for 2018 is “The Power of Words” which explores how language has been used in the past, and how it is used in the present day. Further information on the theme and free educational resources are available through the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) website at www.hmd.org.uk/content/for-educators.

It was agreed that as per previous years, the Clerk to SACRE would write to all schools to make them aware of these resources and encourage them to commemorate the event. It was also confirmed that the Clerk would forward the details of the Council’s commemorative events for HMD 2018 to SACRE Members once these are finalised.

12. ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW OF RE: QUESTIONNAIRE

SACRE were advised that Estyn have a remit from Welsh Government to conduct a thematic review of RE at Key Stages 2 and 3. The rationale for reviewing KS2 and KS3 is to consider continuity and transition.

Consideration was given to the report, which explained that Estyn have a remit to conduct a thematic review of RE at Key Stages 2 and 3 in order to consider continuity and transition. This review forms part of a series of reports on curriculum subject areas and will build on the 2013 report on Religious Education in Key Stages 3 and 4. Evidence gathering will be via school visits, telephone information gathering, and a brief questionnaire to Chairs of SACRE (appended to the report).

The Estyn questionnaire sought the perspective of SACRE in relation to their contact with schools, the support and guidance provided by SACRE to school staff, teacher access to training and support, any issues regarding non-specialist teaching of RE in secondary schools, SACRE’s monitoring of standards and provision for RE, the impact of Successful Futures on the teaching of RE in schools, the quality of RE teaching, the standard of RE in schools, and the main issues facing schools. Responses to the questionnaire were drafted by the Chair (whilst supported by the RE Consultant) prior to the meeting. A copy of the document was tabled at the meeting and SACRE were invited to consider the draft responses and add further points as they felt necessary.

During the course of the discussion on the draft responses, Members requested that their concerns regarding the late availability of the new GCSE Religious Studies textbook be included so that Estyn can bring this to the attention of Welsh Government. Discussion took place regarding the support that faith groups can provide to schools, and the benefits that this can bring to the teaching of RE or the delivery of collective worship. It was agreed that a letter would be sent on behalf of SACRE to all schools, offering faith group representative support and services to those schools who may wish to use their knowledge and expertise.

In referring to questions centred around the curriculum framework, Members highlighted the need for training to be offered as a priority for the new Humanities curriculum and that it addresses each subject discipline directly. Members also spoke of the need for RE to have a clearly identified subject content within the Humanities curriculum because of the withdrawal clause, as there is a need to know what a parent would be withdrawing from..

Having fully discussed the draft responses to the questionnaire, SACRE agreed that the additional points as discussed at the meeting be incorporated into the document and that the final version be submitted to Estyn by the response deadline of 27th October 2017.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk to SACRE updated Members on the correspondence circulated to schools on behalf of SACRE. This included a letter sent to the headteacher of all secondary schools, responding to issues identified as a result of the recent SACRE RE survey. Schools had also been advised of the availability of the new GCSE textbook and reminded of the deadline for GCSE Unit 1 preliminary entries.

A Member also referred to an email she had recently sent to the Committee, which raised concerns about a smartphone game featuring Jesus as the lead protagonist. She explained that the game (which was violent in tone) could lead to children developing misunderstandings and damaging concepts around Christianity and that schools should be alerted regarding the nature of such games. SACRE thanked the Member for bringing the issue to their attention and confirmed that the matter would be raised with the relevant staff.

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

14. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN WREXHAM ON 7TH JULY 2017

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Wrexham on 7th July 2017. Having discussed these throughout the course of the meeting, SACRE noted the contents of the WASACRE minutes as contained in the meeting papers.

15. WASACRE - REPRESENTATION AT THE FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETING IN BRIDGEND ON FRIDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 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 in attendance. 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.

The Chair thanked all Members present for their contributions to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.18 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 13th March 2018, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR