



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT CWM IFOR PRIMARY SCHOOL, CAERPHILLY
ON TUESDAY 13TH MARCH 2018 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E.M Aldworth, Mrs M.E. Sargent

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

Together with:

Mrs V. Thomas (RE Consultant), Mr P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement),
Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Mr G. Rees (Head Teacher) – part of meeting

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members to Cwm Ifor Primary School. SACRE thanked Mr Gareth Rees (Head Teacher) for making the necessary arrangements for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G.D. Oliver, J. Ridgewell and J. Simmonds, together with Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT), Mr C. Parry (NAHT), Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army) and Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese).

Due to the lack of a quorum in respect of teaching union representatives, it was explained that Caerphilly SACRE could note the contents of the reports presented at the meeting but would be unable to make any committee decisions on this occasion.

3. PRESENTATION FROM THE HEADTEACHER OF CWM IFOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr Gareth Rees (Head Teacher) provided an overview of the teaching of RE within the school. SACRE were advised that the school holds assemblies and collective worship throughout the week and Mr Rees outlined examples of the RE themes and subjects taught within each year group. The school underwent an Estyn inspection in January 2017 which resulted in positive comments around learning experiences, the standard of collective worship and the opportunities that are available for pupils to learn about current issues such as homelessness. It was noted that RE within the school includes termly themes and links in with national events of interest such as the Football World Cup. Mr Rees acknowledged the challenges that the new curriculum will bring to the teaching of RE and the ways in which the school are preparing for this.

In response to queries from the committee, Mr Rees outlined the work of the pupil Digital Leaders at the school, planning and preparation for collective worship and the school's links to Trinity Fields and satellite schools. Discussion took place regarding the right of withdrawal from RE in view of the WASACRE guidance document recently circulated to all schools. Mr Rees outlined the processes that are followed and the open and honest dialogue that the school holds with parents who are considering withdrawing their children from the subject or certain trips/activities in connection with Religious Education.

SACRE were pleased to receive the informative presentation and thanked Mr Rees for taking the time to meet with Members and for responding to the queries received.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES – 16TH OCTOBER 2017

The minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE held on 16th October 2017 were received and noted. They will be formally ratified at the Summer Term meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

6. SACRE Schedule of Meetings 2017-18 (Minute No. 5)

Members were reminded that the Summer Term meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 13th June 2018 (2.00 p.m.) at Newbridge School.

7. SACRE Membership Update (Minute No. 6)

An update was provided on the current membership position, with it explained that the Clerk to SACRE is liaising with the relevant teaching unions to fill the three vacant places. Mr Paul Warren has written to all primary schools to seek expressions of interest, as membership of SACRE is particularly under-represented across this sector. Efforts are also continuing to ascertain whether those representatives who have not attended for some time wish to remain on Caerphilly SACRE. Mr Warren confirmed that he would contact the NAHT head teacher representative in this regard as another head teacher from the same union has expressed an interest in joining SACRE.

Members were advised that following the resignation of Ms Nicola Boardman (NUT) in the autumn, a letter had been sent on behalf of SACRE to thank her for her valued contributions and to wish her well for the future.

SACRE were reminded that the membership situation remains fluid and that if the vacant teacher union places can be filled with sufficient primary school representation then this will alleviate the need for one of the co-opted places to be held by a primary school representative (who has not attended in some time). It was emphasised to SACRE that it is therefore vital for the teaching union places to be resolved before vacancies across any other groupings can be addressed.

Members were advised there was a vacant co-opted place reserved for Race Equality First or a similar organisation. GEMS had been contacted and their regional community cohesion co-ordinator had informed SACRE that there was an interested party to fill the position. However, on closer examination this individual actually represents the steering group of COMMON (Council of Mosques and Muslim Organisations Newport). It was advised that due to the nature of their role, they would be better placed to represent the Muslim faith within Committee A, and this would resolve the issue of not having a non-Christian religion represented on SACRE. However there are currently no vacancies within this grouping. The RE Adviser explained that increasing this committee group to 6 from the current 5 places would provide equal balance across each representative committee and also balance out the lack of non-Christian faith representation; however, a report would need to be presented to full Council in order for the composition to be increased.

SACRE were also updated regarding membership requests, with it noted that the Humanist representative has now written to both Caerphilly Council and SACRE to request that each of the committee groupings and the co-opted positions be increased by one place each. SACRE were advised that the matter of Humanist representation within Committee A was discussed by WASACRE at their November 2017 meeting and they have now written to Welsh Government for clarity regarding the 10/94 guidance document. It was noted at the latest WASACRE meeting on 9th March 2018 that Welsh Government have now responded and advised that they have asked officials to review this specific focus on the legislation around the requirement of law.

The Chair reminded Members that the two co-opted places were originally established to address imbalances within the main committee groupings (in respect of primary school and ethnic minority representation) and that any co-opted vacancies should only be filled if SACRE determine that there is a need to do so.

SACRE noted that an update report in respect of membership and the issues discussed at the meeting would be presented for consideration at their Summer Term meeting in June 2018.

Mrs Thomas also informed SACRE that she would be retiring after the Summer Term meeting of SACRE. The Consortia and Caerphilly Local Authority have been informed and will be seeking a suitable replacement. Mrs Thomas informed SACRE that she is sorry to leave the group as it has been an honour to work with such a committed group of people but that the time was now right for her to completely retire from her consultancy work. The Chair and other members of the group thanked her for her work with Caerphilly SACRE.

There were no other matters arising.

8. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2018: FEEDBACK

Caerphilly SACRE were updated on the commemorative events which took place across the county borough to mark this International Day of Remembrance.

SACRE Members were invited to a special service to mark Holocaust Memorial Day held at Penallta House Council Offices on Friday 26th January 2018. The ceremony involved readings by pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Caerffili and the lighting of a symbolic candle, and guests had the opportunity to view poetry and artwork produced by pupils of the school.

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 Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) website and encouraging them to mark the event in some way. A large number of schools participated in the event and several schools reported back on their activities, with further details included in the report.

Caerphilly SACRE discussed a number of observations by members regarding the Penallta House ceremony. The Chair confirmed that he would write to the relevant Officers on behalf of SACRE regarding the focus of the event and would relay the feedback and suggestions received from Members in order to enhance the quality of the service in future years. Members also suggested that the service could be held as a combined event with schools to increase the level of representation across all ages and Mr Warren confirmed that he would raise the matter with his colleagues in Education.

Caerphilly SACRE were pleased to recognise the efforts of participating schools in commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day 2018 and noted the contents of the report.

9. ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2017

Mrs Thomas presented an analysis of examination results at GCSE, AS and A Level by Caerphilly pupils in Religious Studies and Religious Education for 2017. The report also summarised the 2017 results in comparison to the previous two years, the Consortia figure (comprising the five South East Wales local authorities) and the All Wales figure. 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.

GCSE Religious Studies Full Course 2017 - SACRE were referred to a typo within the report analysis and asked to note that it should state that the A*-C results (66.8%) are below previous performance (71.1% in 2016), but better than the Consortia figure (66.2%) and below the All Wales figure (68.3%) Members were also advised that the overall percentage of pupils gaining A*-G should read 96.9% (and not 86.0% as reflected within the report). Performance is therefore comparable to previous years (97.8% in 2016 and 98.4% in 2015), and is better than the Consortia figure (95.5%) and slightly below the All-Wales figure (97.5%). Overall, results are below previous performance across all grade boundaries, are better than Consortia figures at all grade boundaries, but are below All Wales figures at all grade boundaries.

SACRE noted the factors that may impact on results and suggested that it could be useful for future reports to include a comparison with the Consortia and Wales results for the last two years as an additional benchmarking measure. Members were pleased to see a significant increase in entry for Full Course, and noted that cohort entry has also significantly increased to 41.1% (up from 29.5% in 2016).

GCSE Religious Studies Short Course 2017 - the results are below previous performance at all grade boundaries, although overall performance at A*-G grades (86%) is comparable with the Consortia figure (86.3%) and below the All Wales figure (90.2%).

There was a big decrease in entries this year and it appears that more schools are now entering pupils for Full Course rather than Short Course. However, a significant number of pupils continue to be entered for RE overall (through either Full Course or Short Course) and this 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. SACRE also observed that Summer 2018 will produce the first set of Short Course results following the new GCSE specifications and that it will be interesting to see how these changes will impact on performance.

A Level Religious Studies 2017 - entry figures were below previous numbers and the cohort entry is slightly below 2016 but are higher than the Consortia and All Wales figures. Performance at A* - A (9.8%) is below previous performance and the Consortia figure (17.1%) and All Wales figure (18.2%). At A* - C, the pass rate (67.2%) is below previous performance and the Consortia and All Wales figures. The pass rate for grades A* - E (98.4%) is comparable to 2016 performance and better than the Consortia figure (96.8%) although below the All Wales figure (99.8%).

Reference was made to the dip in performance against previous years (particularly at the higher grades of A* and A*-C) and SACRE were interested in determining whether there may be certain factors that are influencing performance, especially in view of the new A Level specifications introduced in Autumn 2016. This was especially noticeable when compared to the AS results which were much improved this year at all grade boundaries. It was confirmed that a letter would be sent out on behalf of SACRE to those schools that offer A Level Religious Studies, to find out what factors may be causing the dip in performance, and establish whether there are ways that SACRE can support schools on the matter.

AS Level Religious Studies 2017 – Performance has improved across all grade bandings and is the best result of the last three years (10.7% at A grade, 64.0% at A - C and 96% at grades A-E). Both the entry figures and cohort entry have dramatically increased this year, and cohort entry is comparable with the Consortia (16.0%) and exceeds the All Wales figure (11.3%). 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 2017 and also noted that the usual letter would be circulated to all secondary schools on behalf of SACRE to inform them of the analysis of results.

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, arising from the Donaldson review in 2012 which recommended that Religious Education should form part of the Humanities Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), and remain a statutory curriculum requirement.

The report summarised the development work on the curriculum that is currently being

progressed by the 6 AoLE groups. The Humanities working group recommendation is to follow the 'Big Ideas'/'What Matters' approach, which would provide an organising construct whilst also allowing sufficient flexibility for each disciplinary area.

Appended to the report was an update newsletter from Welsh Government (January 2018) which set out timelines in respect of the new curriculum, an update on the What Matters approach, details of the development process for Humanities and the next steps over the coming months. The update newsletter also contained a copy of the initial proposals for the What Matters key concepts for the Humanities AOLE, which were submitted to the Curriculum and Assessment Group in December 2017.

It was noted that Welsh Government are exploring how Humanities supports the new curriculum and have agreed to work closely with WASACRE/ NAPfRE colleagues during this process. WASACRE have been commissioned to make a contribution regarding a suitable approach to the organisation of RE within the Humanities discipline, and have drawn up a paper on *What Matters in RE* (appended to the report) which was presented at the Humanities Planning Workshops in November 2017 in Swansea.

Discussion took place on the contents of the report and it was explained that WASACRE had received a presentation on the work of the pioneer school network and the Humanities AoLE at their meeting on 9th March 2018. It had been observed that the content of this presentation differed to the initial proposals for the What Matters key concepts, and Mrs Thomas confirmed that when this presentation is given at the next meeting with Welsh Government on 20th March 2018, this matter will be raised if there are still pressing differences between the presentation and proposals.

It was noted that all SACREs have been invited to consider these initial What Matters proposals and provide comments and/or suggestions for consideration during the next phase of development work. However, Mrs Thomas explained that it would not be appropriate for Caerphilly SACRE to prepare a response during their meeting as it requires input from teacher representatives. Mrs Thomas highlighted comments received on the proposals by other SACREs, including the lack of opportunities for Continued Professional Development, and discussion took place regarding the remit of local authorities in respect of RE training and the lack of time allocated to such training. Members also discussed the proposed framework and SACRE were of the view that there needs to be more clarity in respect of the way forward, given the planned implementation date of January 2022.

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

11. CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE

SACRE were advised that WASACRE have recently produced a guidance booklet for schools called "*Managing the Right of Withdrawal from RE*" and that the Clerk to SACRE has arranged for copies to be sent to all schools across the county borough. Schools have been asked to complete an enclosed questionnaire regarding withdrawal from RE, and the Clerk to SACRE will then collate the responses and forward responses to WASACRE by the closing date of 31st March 2018. Two questionnaires have been returned to date. A copy of the booklet has also been sent to all SACRE Members, who were pleased to note the useful and informative guidance contained within the document.

Members were also updated on other items of correspondence circulated to schools on behalf of SACRE. This included information on the Farmington Fellowship for 2018-2019, details of the resources available to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2018, circulation of SACRE's Annual Report for 2016-17, and a letter to all schools to advise them of the Faith

Community Support available via SACRE faith representatives. It was noted that the Clerk to SACRE had also forwarded concerns from a faith representative regarding the "Fist of Jesus" smartphone game to Paul Warren, who had since contacted all schools to remind them of the importance of internet safety.

SACRE were advised that arising from the Autumn 2017 meeting, WASACRE are seeking to appoint a Minutes Clerk to provide support in the production of their minutes. Details of the post were tabled at the SACRE meeting and it was noted that the Clerk to SACRE has passed the details to colleagues within the Authority so that they can be appropriately circulated. It was confirmed that the details would be circulated to all SACRE Members following the meeting and they were asked to forward the names of any interested persons to Paula Webber (Clerk to WASACRE) by the closing date of 31st March 2018 .

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

12. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN BRIDGEND - 10TH NOVEMBER 2017

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Bridgend on 10th November 2017. A copy of the draft minutes was included in the meeting papers.

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

13. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN SWANSEA ON 9TH MARCH 2018

An update on the discussions and deliberations arising from the main WASACRE agenda items, including the presentation from Manon Jones (Work of the pioneer school network and the Humanities AOLE) and the WASACRE Guidance document (Guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education) was provided throughout the course of the SACRE meeting.

14. EXECUTIVE VOTING 2018 - 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 30th March 2018.

15. REPRESENTATION AT THE FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETING IN ANGLESEY ON FRIDAY 6TH JULY 2018

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

Councillor John Taylor and Mrs Vicky Thomas confirmed that they would be attending the meeting on 6th July 2018. It was confirmed that the Clerk to SACRE would email all

SACRE Members to seek further nominations. 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 Members for their attendance at their meeting, and requested that a letter of thanks be sent to Cwm Ifor Primary School to express SACRE's appreciation for the warm welcome they had received .

The meeting closed at 3.56 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 June 2018, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR