



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 13TH JUNE 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 Teaching Organisations: Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs T. Lloyd (NAHT)

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

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and introductions were made.

SACRE were pleased to welcome back Mr Martyn Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese) and expressed their best wishes for his ongoing recovery.

Members gave a warm welcome to Mrs Tara Lloyd who was attending her first meeting as the new NAHT representative to SACRE. Members thanked the previous NAHT representative (Mr Chris Parry) for his contributions to the committee.

SACRE were also advised that Ms Meinir Jones had recently been appointed to SACRE as the replacement UCAC representative but had given her apologies for the meeting owing to a prior engagement.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G.D. Oliver, J. Ridgewell and J. Simmonds, together with Ms M. Jones (UCAC), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT) and Captain C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 16TH OCTOBER 2017

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

5. MINUTES – 13TH MARCH 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 13th March 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

6. SACRE Analysis of Examination Results 2017 (13th March 2018 - Minute No. 9)

Mrs Vicky Thomas (RE Advisor to SACRE) confirmed that a letter had been sent out on behalf of SACRE to those schools that offer A Level Religious Studies, to find out what factors may have caused a dip in performance in 2017, and establish whether there are ways that SACRE can support schools on the matter.

It was noted that only two responses had been received to date and Mrs Thomas suggested that this be placed on a future agenda for consideration at a later date. It was suggested that it could be considered after the Summer 2018 exam data has been received and analysed by SACRE.

There were no other matters arising.

7. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2018-2019

Mrs Thomas informed Members that Mrs Paula Webber (who is also the secretary to WASACRE) has been appointed as the new RE Advisor to Caerphilly SACRE from September 2018 and would be in touch in due course to arrange the meeting dates for 2018-2019.

Newbridge School was offered up as a potential meeting venue for the Spring or Summer Term meeting in 2019 and SACRE received the offer with thanks.

8. SACRE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE / WELSH GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

The report provided an update on the current membership position and asked SACRE to consider the way forward in light of correspondence received from Welsh Government in respect of Committee A membership.

SACRE were reminded that WASACRE recently wrote to Welsh Government seeking clarity on Committee A membership in light of Humanist requests to join SACREs under Committee A. The original guidance under paragraph 103 of Circular 10/94 stated that

“the inclusion of representatives of belief systems such as humanism, which do not amount to a religion or religious denomination, on Committee A of an agreed syllabus conference or Group A of a SACRE would be contrary to the legal provisions referred to at paragraph 102”.

Whilst the appointment of persons to a SACRE is a matter for local authorities and the SACREs, Welsh Government has taken legal advice into consideration and have now advised that representatives from non-religious belief systems may be appointed to Group A of a SACRE or ASCs, to ensure that SACREs/ASCs fully reflect the beliefs of the communities that they are representing and to comply with current legislation. The letter from WG, which supersedes paragraph 103 of Circular 10/94, was appended to the SACRE report.

SACRE were asked to note that they can only recommend membership changes across Committees A to C and that the final decision rests with the local authority's full Council.

Mrs Vicky Thomas highlighted the 5 faith representative places on SACRE, compared to 6 teacher representatives and 6 local authority councillor representatives. There are also 2 co-opted places (without voting rights) which were set up to address any imbalances across the main committee groups. One of these places is reserved for Race Equalities First or a similar organisation, and although an expression of interest has been received regarding the vacancy, upon closer examination, this individual would be better placed to represent the Muslim faith within Committee A. Members were also reminded of the request from a Humanist representative to join SACRE under Committee A.

Given SACRE's inclusive nature and their encouragement for a range of diverse views, and having regard to the revised guidance from WG, Mrs Thomas suggested that SACRE could consider extending membership of Committee A by two places in order to accommodate the inclusion of a wider range of faith groups/ religions and the inclusion of those who hold secular or non religious beliefs

Mrs Thomas also provided an update on Committee B membership (teaching representatives). The UCAC position has recently been filled and there are vacancies across the NUT and ASCL union places. The Clerk to SACRE is having difficulty in securing replacement members for these specific unions, whilst there has been an influx of interest from teachers across other unions which are already represented on SACRE. Members were reminded of the importance in having sufficient teacher representation and committed members on SACRE owing to the breadth of the National Curriculum review and the ways in which this could impact on the delivery of Religious Education.

The largest teaching union (NEU) is already well represented on SACRE, having two places via the amalgamation of the NUT and ATL. It was therefore suggested that SACRE consider increasing Committee B by one place to include a second representative from NASUWT, which is the second largest teaching union in the UK and for which two expressions of interest have already been received via a recent membership trawl to schools.

SACRE discussed the report and the need to increase the diversity of its membership. They acknowledged the concerted efforts by Mrs Thomas and the Clerk to SACRE to seek representatives from a diversity and multi-ethnic group as a co-opted member but accepted the difficulties faced in securing representatives from this area and recognised the need to find an alternative approach.

Discussion also took place on how to proceed regarding SACRE's co-opted places. The decision on the inclusion of co-opted members is within the remit of the SACRE Committee. It was noted that the other co-opted position is held by a primary school representative who has not attended in some time despite reminders being sent. It was

suggested that if Council are minded to agree an increase across Committee A and B then there should be no need to reserve co-opted places. The Chair reminded Members that the two places were originally set up to address any imbalances across the main committee groups and suggested that SACRE revisit this area later in the year, following Council's decision in respect of the main committee groupings, to determine whether there is any need for co-opted places on SACRE.

Following discussion on the contents of the report, Caerphilly SACRE unanimously RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- (i) Committee A (faith groups) membership of SACRE be increased by **two** places (to comprise one place for a non-Christian faith group/religion and one place for a group who hold secular or non religious beliefs);
- (ii) Committee B (teaching unions) membership of SACRE be increased by **one** place and allocated to the NASUWT teaching union.

SACRE also unanimously agreed that the way forward in respect of co-opted places be deferred pending the decision of Council on the above recommendations.

9. WASACRE WITHDRAWAL FROM RE SURVEY: UPDATE

SACRE were reminded of the WASACRE guidance document for schools titled "*Managing the Right of Withdrawal from RE*", which was provided free of charge to all schools in Wales and was circulated by the Clerk to SACRE to all schools across the county borough. The guidance document is intended to support schools dealing with withdrawal cases and also to share with parents who may be considering withdrawing their child from RE.

A short questionnaire was included with the document to help WASACRE gain an accurate awareness of the instances of withdrawal from Religious Education across schools in Wales. Schools were asked to return the completed questionnaire to the Clerk to SACRE so that the responses could be collated and returned to WASACRE by the closing date of 31st March 2018. A very low number of questionnaire responses were received and so WASACRE requested a second email trawl, which was carried out by the Clerk to SACRE in May 2018.

Members were referred to the information appended to the report which provided an analysis of the responses received to date. A total of 22 out of 76 Caerphilly primary schools have responded (30%), together with 3 out of 14 secondary schools (21%).

It was noted that there were 2 secondary schools where parents exercised their right of complete withdrawal from RE. 3 sets of parents and 9 pupils have withdrawn, with 1 family being Wiccans and the other 2 families giving no reason. No parents exercised their right of partial withdrawal from RE within secondary schools.

Across primary schools, there were 2 schools where parents exercised their right of complete withdrawal from RE (2 sets of parents and 2 pupils), and 2 schools where parents exercised their right of partial withdrawal (2 sets of parents and 4 pupils). The reason given was the same for all withdrawals in that the families were Jehovah's Witnesses.

SACRE discussed the analysis of responses and were disappointed to note the low response rate from schools, given the importance of the survey and its value to both SACRE and WASACRE in understanding the withdrawal situation across the county borough. Members were advised that Caerphilly had one of the better response rates across the local authorities who were surveyed, and it was suggested that perhaps there was some complacency amongst schools about responding if they had no instances of

withdrawals.

Having discussed and noted the survey findings, SACRE agreed that it would be beneficial for the Clerk to SACRE to carry out a final email trawl, and that all schools be asked to respond even if they had no withdrawals. Mr Paul Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement) confirmed that if the trawl does not produce more responses, he would explore other avenues in the autumn to encourage a higher rate of returns. A Member also queried if headteachers have a duty to report any instances of withdrawal to the LA and Mr Warren confirmed that he would make some enquiries in this regard.

10. UPDATE ON NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW

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 latest implementation timescales and 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.

A copy of the Welsh Government's May 2018 update newsletter to SACREs was appended to the report, which set out the latest proposals from the Humanities AoLE group and invited SACRE to comment on the work completed to date. It was noted that further information, as well as the proposals for all six of the AoLEs will be published shortly on the WG website. During the coming months, the AoLE pioneer group will be further developing their proposals and concentrating on outlining the knowledge, skills and experiences that are essential to supporting the What Matters statement, and developing Achievement Outcomes for ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16. WG will also be focusing on clarifying the relationship between the Humanities AoLE and the local syllabus. In addition, they will be working closely with representatives from WASACRE and NAPfRE to develop proposals as well as an engagement process to seek the views of SACREs during the Autumn term.

SACRE were referred to the 6 What Matters statements appended to the report, together with the rationale and progression frameworks against each statement and each of these were discussed in turn. During the course of the discussion, Mrs Thomas highlighted a number of instances where statements in the rationale of the March 2018 version of the proposals had been omitted from the latest version, explaining that this was detrimental to RE and that she was of the view that these should be reinstated.

SACRE's main point of discussion focused around the rationale for the **What Matters Statement 1 (Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by physical processes and human actions)**. SACRE acknowledged the need for the rationale to include **terms** that are specific to the RE discipline (e.g. religion, belief, ethics, spirituality, values, philosophies) as they provide 'hooks' on which to latter attach RE content and provide some direction to teachers by acting as 'signposts' to the disciplines. There is reference in this rationale that the natural world "*can be influenced by diverse beliefs, practices, ethics and philosophies*" and SACRE were pleased to see such references. However, these terms are not evident in the progression statements that follow although other references in the rationale (that relate easily to Geography and History disciplines) do become reflected in the progression statements as well as the rationale.

It was also noted that there appears to be very little discernible RE associated content

across the progression statements for this item and this is remiss as RE is a very good contributor to the topic of the Natural World and can provide some very valuable learning opportunities. Also this topic of the natural world is an excellent one for the Humanities subjects to show their interconnectivity (which is very much a Donaldson principle) and to not identify the RE contribution is an opportunity missed.

Members were taken through all 6 What Matters statements and it was agreed that comments be noted and sent to WG as requested.

During the course of the debate, Members referred to the challenges that the new curriculum will present for schools and expressed a need to view the subject content in order to understand how RE will fit into this. There was an emphasis on the level of staff training that will need to be arranged and support to schools that will need to be given regarding the implementation of the new curriculum. Members discussed how the translation from a perhaps more thematic Humanities approach at Key Stage 3 to a more discrete subject curriculum at Key Stages 4 and 5 can be managed. SACRE spoke of a need to identify teacher strengths within the Humanities area and also spoke of the need to identify the RE aspects in order to ascertain how the withdrawal from RE clause will operate in the future.

Mrs Thomas also confirmed that in line with ongoing engagement with SACREs regarding the new curriculum for Wales, WG are seeking to organise workshop meetings in the Autumn on a regional basis. Members were advised that representatives from each SACRE would be invited to discuss Religious Education and the new curriculum, and that details would be circulated in due course.

Following discussion of the report, SACRE noted the developments relating to the position of RE in the curriculum and thanked Mrs Thomas for her comprehensive analysis of the proposals. Members stressed the importance of continuing involvement and feedback by all SACREs at all stages of the process, in order to identify any problems well in advance and allow for smooth implementation of the new curriculum. It was agreed that the discussions on this item be included in the collective response being prepared by Mrs Thomas on behalf of her 4 SACREs and submitted to WG.

11. ESTYN – UPDATES ON SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS AND THEMATIC REVIEW

The report detailed an Estyn information update to all inspectors on Spiritual Development and Collective Worship, which reminded inspection staff of the requirement to consider the provision for pupils' spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship.

Members were reminded of the letter previously sent to the Chief Inspector for Estyn on behalf of SACRE back in 2014 to highlight inconsistencies regarding the reporting of acts of collective worship or the schools' development of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development). Estyn's response at that time gave assurances that inspectors would be reminded to report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development on pupils.

Mrs Vicky Thomas explained that the latest update from Estyn was a timely reminder for inspectors in order to keep the reporting requirements fresh in mind. SACRE were advised that inspectors may report on acts of collective worship 'by exception' (where there are particular strengths or weaknesses) but that they must always report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

SACRE also noted that Estyn have recently issued an update on their Thematic Review of Religious Education at Key Stage 2 and 3, which is on schedule for publication in June.

The review is due to be discussed at the WASACRE meeting on 6th July 2018.

Following consideration of the report, SACRE unanimously agreed that the Estyn update on Spiritual Development and Collective Worship for inspectors be circulated to all schools. It was also confirmed that a copy of the Thematic Review would be circulated to all Members when available and would be placed on the agenda as an item for the Autumn Term meeting.

12. CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE

Members were updated on correspondence circulated on behalf of SACRE. This included a letter to the Caerphilly branch of the NUT seeking teacher representative nominations at their Spring meeting, a second email trawl regarding the WASACRE Withdrawal from RE questionnaire, details of an AREIAC Conference for RE teachers taking place in Bristol in July 2018, the annual letter to secondary schools in respect of GCSE RE examination, and a letter and questionnaire to A Level schools regarding the dip in RE performance for 2016-2017.

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

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

SACRE were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Swansea on 9th March 2018. Having discussed these throughout the course of the meeting, SACRE noted the contents of the minutes as contained in the meeting papers.

14. REPRESENTATION AT THE FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETING IN ORIEL MON, LLANGEFNI, ANGLESEY ON FRIDAY 6TH JULY 2018

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

Mrs Vicky Thomas confirmed that she would be attending and Councillor John Taylor indicated that he might be able to attend subject to other commitments. 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.

15. WASACRE REVISED CONSTITUTION 2018

The report outlined the draft revised WASACRE Constitution, which had been amended in the light of experience and protocols, and asked SACREs to make comments on its contents so that these can be considered at the WASACRE AGM on 6th July 2018 in Anglesey.

SACRE discussed the requirement under *Section 6: Procedures* for any queries about accuracy by minutes to be raised by motion. SACRE felt that this is an unreasonable demand given that the correction could be a minor misspelling of a name or a typo. Members were also of the view that any inaccuracies that refer to them specifically warrant a right of reply and they highlighted the comprehensive and almost verbatim account of the discussions recorded in the WASACRE minutes. As some comments are ascribed to

individuals by name, SACRE were of the view that this might cause some members to be reluctant to express their views. It was felt that minutes should preferably be a flavour of the discussion and any decisions reached, and SACRE therefore suggested that this should be the format for future WASACRE minutes.

Members also discussed the revised section on *Code of Practice for the Conduct of Elections* in respect of nominations to the WASACRE Executive Committee, and were of the view that there should be an actual deadline date specified for receipt of nominations to WASACRE

Having considered the revised WASACRE Constitution, it was agreed that Mrs Thomas would relay the comments of Caerphilly SACRE to WASACRE.

16. EXECUTIVE VOTING 2018-2021

SACRE were informed of the correspondence received from WASACRE in relation to the nomination for a new Member to the WASACRE Executive Committee.

Having fully considered the pen portrait of the nominated person, SACRE unanimously endorsed the nomination of Kathy Riddick to the Executive Committee and agreed that WASACRE be informed of this before their Annual General Meeting on 6th July 2018.

17. RETIREMENT - MRS VICKY THOMAS, RE ADVISOR TO SACRE

In closing the meeting, the Chair congratulated Mrs Vicky Thomas on her forthcoming retirement after 20 years of service to Caerphilly SACRE, and Members wished her every health and happiness for the future. Warm tributes were paid to Mrs Thomas' professionalism and the manner in which she had carried out her duties. Reference was made to the support that Mrs Thomas had given to SACRE over the years and the Committee agreed that she would be an extremely hard act to follow.

In return, Mrs Thomas thanked SACRE for their kind words, stating that it had been a pleasure to serve the Committee, and that she would be leaving with treasured memories of the many friends she had made during her years of service.

The meeting closed at 4.00 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 14th November 2018, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR