

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DATE: 6TH MARCH 2019

SUBJECT: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update SACRE of the developments being made with regards to Religious Education.

B BACKGROUND

Welsh Government held consultation meetings with representatives from SACREs throughout Wales to consult on draft Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) and the proposal to produce a supporting framework for Religious Education. RE has been placed within the Humanities AoLE. The draft curriculum will be published in April 2019 for public consultation. The Humanities AoLE is currently going through the editing and translation process in preparation for the consultation. The RE consultant to Caerphilly SACRE, Paula Webber, has acted as Regional Vice Lead of the Humanities AoLE working group in her role as Adviser at the Education Achievement Service (EAS). A verbal update detailing progress in terms of Religious Education will be given to members at the SACRE meeting.

Following the Autumn Term Caerphilly SACRE meeting a response was made to the Welsh Government consultation on the proposed new supporting framework for Religious Education (attached at Appendix 1). Paula Webber and Libby Jones (RE Adviser Wrexham) are leading the development of the RE supporting framework. Paula Webber will provide a verbal update to SACRE on the progress of the RE writing group.

RE will remain statutory. However, Welsh Government are consulting on its intention to change legislation surrounding Religious Education and are seeking views on the right of parents to withdraw their children from Religious Education. These changes are set out in the government White Paper **Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum Proposals for a new legislative framework**

<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-01/consultation-document-transformational-curriculum.pdf>. Pages 29- 33 of the paper relate to Religious Education.

The deadline for responses is 25th March 2019.

C RECOMMENDATION

1. For SACRE to consider and respond to pages 29-33 of the White Paper which relate to religious education, SACREs, agreed syllabi and withdrawal from Religious Education.
2. For SACRE to receive a verbal update on the progress made in the Humanities AoLE and the RE supporting framework.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Appendix 1 SACRE Response to the WG consultation on the proposed new supporting framework for Religious Education

Background Information: White Paper **Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum Proposals for a new legislative framework**

<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-01/consultation-document-transformational-curriculum.pdf>. Pages 29- 33

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE NEW CURRICULUM QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Name: Paula Webber

SACRE Region: Caerphilly

What are your views on the proposed relationship between the agreed syllabus and the Humanities AoLE?

Caerphilly SACRE are in favour of the proposed relationship between the agreed syllabus and the Humanities AoLE as outlined in the Welsh Government consultation meetings. SACRE understands that the Humanities document is currently in draft and is looking forward to the formal consultation in 2019. SACREs approve of the way the draft Humanities AoLE document is evolving. Members previously feared that religious education would be lost in the New Curriculum and are comforted that this is not the case. SACRE appreciates the way in which Welsh Government has sought the views of RE specialists during the curriculum development process.

Caerphilly SACRE agrees that placing religious education inside curriculum would strengthen its position and that giving it parity with other Humanities disciplines and the statutory elements of the curriculum, relationships and sexuality education and Welsh language provision is important.

Would the supporting framework be a good way of supporting the Agreed Syllabus Conferences to fulfil their statutory role?

As religious education is locally determined, SACRE is mindful that the necessary and important role SACREs will play in supporting RE within the Humanities AoLE. All SACREs previously has adopted or adapted the National Exemplar Framework. Caerphilly SACRE hopes that they will be able to adopt or adapt the new supporting framework as the Caerphilly Agreed Syllabus in the same way. SACRE would, therefore, appreciate engaging in consultations on the supporting framework as part of the development process.

Is there anything we should consider when developing the supporting framework?

SACRE agree that the supporting framework should conform to the What Matters approach. SACRE representatives present at the consultation welcomed seeing the video of Professor Donaldson outlining his approach to RE within the New Curriculum. It is important that RE is visible within the curriculum, especially if the right to withdraw remains. SACRE representatives found the PowerPoint slides highlighting explicit and implicit RE within the Humanities AoLE very helpful. It is now important that the implicit elements are further developed in the new supporting framework, especially in terms of ensuring the key concepts of religious education are taught well.

Caerphilly SACRE appreciates the input of specialists into the curriculum development. RE plays a natural and significant role in addressing sensitive societal

issues and SACRE feels that specialist input in terms of advisers and teachers be developed and that expert opinion should be sought in developing the new supporting framework. SACRE wishes to engage in this process.

Caerphilly SACRE members are comforted that this approach will fit in with agreed syllabus and that the supporting framework would be useful. They feel that there is a need to ensure that teachers and schools are supported in teaching the complexity and diversity of religious and non-religious views in Wales today.

SACRE members feel that it is important that the framework considers pedagogies such as P4C to enable children and young people to explore their own philosophical viewpoints and the language skills to express their thoughts and opinions.

The supporting framework should include expectations, guidance and support for links and interdependencies across the curriculum. For example, there good religious education will have many links with Health and Well-being and Science.

What are the implications of these proposals for you?

It is important to consider how RE will be implemented in the New Curriculum. SACRE would like to highlight the need for specific training opportunities for both specialist and non-specialist teachers of religious education. The rationale of the WM looks good, but schools will need support in designing and implementing the RE properly. SACRE members feel that, because RE currently sits outside the National Curriculum and is not included within accountability measures it has suffered as a subject. There is a real need to build up expertise within the subject. SACRE is concerned that if there are less RE specialists than specialist from other Humanities AoLE disciplines within schools the subject may be lost notwithstanding being placed firmly within the curriculum. Teaching good RE requires a specialist workforce. Caerphilly SACRE strongly suggest there is a need to improve expertise within religious education at all levels, including initial teacher training; specialist classroom teachers; informed senior managers and school governors; specialist advisers to local authorities and SACREs; effective trained SACRE members; and informed Local Authorities. A programme of training for religious education should, therefore, be developed.

There is an implication in terms of funding for resources and training. As religious education is determined locally Local Authorities need funding, and/or support to fulfil this duty.

Caerphilly SACRE are pleased that Estyn is closely involved in the development of the Humanities AoLE and would greatly appreciate the involvement of ESTYN in the development of the supporting framework for religious education. ESTYN will play a significant role in monitoring that good quality religious education takes place in our schools in the future.

SACRE Members have concerns that schools will be sufficiently supported in terms of guidance, resources, digital RE, textbooks, skills and experiences. Schools should be supported in terms of curriculum design. Additionally, there will be a need for upskilling the workforce in terms of the plurality and diversity of religion within Wales as some teachers lack confidence in teaching religions other than Christianity as outlined in the recent Estyn thematic report.