



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 23RD OCTOBER 2019 AT 2.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E.M Aldworth, Mrs T. Parry, J. Ridgewell

Representing Teaching Organisations: Ms M. Jones (UCAC), Mrs T. Lloyd (NAHT)

Representing Religious Organisations: Mr K. Chamberlain (Wales Humanists)
Mr M. Gray (The Methodist Church), Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reformed Church)

Together with:

Ms P. Webber (RE Adviser – EAS), Mrs S. Evans (Healthy Schools Practitioner), Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and Caerphilly SACRE gave a warm welcome to Mr Ken Chamberlain (Wales Humanists), together with former councillor Mr Michael Gray (The Methodist Church), who had recently been appointed to SACRE as Committee A representatives.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G.D. Oliver and J. Simmonds, together with Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Church), Major P. Hubbard (The Salvation Army), and Mr P. Warren (CCBC Strategic Lead for School Improvement).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES - 20TH MAY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 20th May 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MINUTES – STANDING CONFERENCE (AGREED SYLLABUS) - 20TH MAY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE Standing Conference (Agreed Syllabus) held on 20th May 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No. 8 (Monitoring Provision and Standards – Caerphilly School Inspection Reports) - Ms Paula Webber (RE Adviser to SACRE) confirmed that congratulatory letters on behalf of SACRE had been sent out to the two schools following the results of their Estyn inspections during Spring Term 2019. There were no other matters arising.

7. SACRE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report, which summarised the details of the current Caerphilly SACRE membership as of August 2019 and highlighted any vacant positions within the Committee.

Co-opted places – Members were reminded that they had previously agreed to explore the co-option of youth representatives onto the Committee. Arising from this, Councillor John Taylor (SACRE Chair) explained that he had recently attended the Council's Youth Cabinet to talk about the work of SACRE and gather initial expressions of interest from the young people in attendance. The opportunity to participate in SACRE through co-option was positively received by the Youth Cabinet, and moving forward, they will highlight the co-opted places to its members studying RE at GCSE or A Level in order to seek expressions of interest and provide nominations to SACRE.

Committee A vacancies – Members noted the work undertaken to fill the vacancies across this committee group. Mr Michael Gray (The Methodist Church) was appointed in June 2019 to fill the Free Church vacancy, Major Paula Hubbard was appointed in June 2019 to fill the Salvation Army vacancy, and Mr Ken Chamberlain (Wales Humanists) was appointed in August 2019 to fill the non-religious group vacancy. Work is ongoing to fill the one remaining vacancy for the non-Christian faith representative.

Committee B vacancies – Members noted the work ongoing with the relevant unions to fill the four teacher representative vacancies.

Having fully considered its contents, SACRE noted the membership update and the progress made to date in filling the vacancies.

8. CAERPHILLY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

Consideration was given to the draft Caerphilly SACRE Annual Report which outlined the activities of SACRE during the academic year 2018-2019. SACRE were asked to comment on its contents and check the report for accuracy.

Members noted the executive summary of advice given by SACRE as set out in the report, which 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 Welsh Government by the deadline of 30th December 2019 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, Caerphilly SACRE unanimously agreed that subject to the inclusion of any minor amendments being sent to the Clerk to SACRE by 1st November 2019, the Annual Report for 2018-2019 be approved and circulated accordingly following its submission to Welsh Government.

9. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Ms Webber presented the report, which updated SACRE on the development of the Curriculum for Wales 2022 in relation to RE. The report also asked SACRE to consider the latest Welsh Government consultation “Ensuring Access to the Full Curriculum” on the right to withdraw from RE and a proposed name change for Religious Education.

By way of background, Members were reminded that in July 2019, Caerphilly SACRE worked collaboratively with other SACREs throughout the South East Wales region to provide feedback on the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 consultation. Curriculum pioneers are currently considering the feedback received from the public and are making amendments to the curriculum.

SACRE were advised that the work of the RE Framework Group is ongoing, with Paula Webber and Libby Jones (RE Adviser Wrexham) continuing to lead its development. The Framework will provide further detail about the relationship between Religious Education, the Agreed Syllabus, and the Areas of Learning and Experience. The Framework will be published in draft format for consultation in January 2020 and will coincide with the publication of the final version of the Curriculum for Wales 2022. This is because the RE Framework writing group need to consider changes made to the Curriculum following the redrafting process and because Welsh Government will consult with SACREs prior to its publication.

Ms Webber outlined the challenges in drafting the Framework to fit in with the new Curriculum and expressed the Group’s desire for reference to RE to be included in the overarching guidance. She also explained that a main aim of the RE Framework Group is to ensure that the status of RE is not lost in amongst the new curriculum.

Arising from the responses received on the earlier White Paper consultation (*Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum*) WG were now seeking views through their latest consultation “Ensuring Access to the Full Curriculum”, which proposed removing the right of withdrawal from RE (and RSE), and a change of name for RE to “Religions and World views”. SACRE were asked to consider the consultation and to respond to a number of questions posed by WG ahead of the closing date of 28th November 2019.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Ms Webber gave an overview of the key proposals set out in the WG consultation and SACRE discussed each of these elements in turn.

Proposal To Remove Parental Right To Withdraw From Re

SACRE were advised that WG envisage a fully inclusive education system where all learners have the equality of access to a broad, balanced curriculum and make progress towards the “4 Purposes” recommended in the Donaldson Review. As part of this equality of access, WG have proposed that there will be no parental right of withdrawal from RE and/or RSE under the new curriculum.

Ms Webber highlighted the inclusion of RE and RSE in the same consultation, and in reminding SACRE that their remit purely encompasses RE, suggested that it would have been more conducive to have held separate consultations on each of the two subjects, in order to avoid confusion and in view of the complexity of the issues surrounding withdrawal.

SACRE were reminded of the significant changes in society and the law since the introduction of the current curriculum, together with the increasing complexity of the world and the need to equip pupils for the modern world through the provision of pluralistic, neutral and critical education on those religious and non-religious world views. It is the view of WG that the state has a moral obligation to ensure that children in schools receive neutral and accurate information in these issues which pervade throughout society, and that not including the right to withdraw would also support the interdisciplinary approach being adopted in the new curriculum.

WG carefully considered the views expressed in the responses to the White Paper and recognised the concerns raised in a number of areas. However, WG are of the view that in a world where access to information and disinformation is uniform and instantaneous, the curriculum has a key role to play in helping children and young people navigate all this safely and be able to judge information. There is a strong principle-based case for all school learners to be guaranteed access to RE and RSE. There has been a clear message from practitioners that the way forward on these issues is for Government to decide at a national level and should not be passed to schools to manage. Additionally, pupils have a need and a right to receive consistent, factual and developmentally-appropriate learning about the issues covered in these subjects, which is important as part of the development of a more inclusive and tolerant society. High quality RSE and RE provision in schools supports children and young people to stay safe, to respect one another, and to build healthy relationships.

WG took into account a number of considerations around withdrawal from RE and concluded that the principle-based case for all children and young people to have access to learning on these issues is very strong. There would be practical difficulties in operating withdrawals in this much more integrated curriculum. There will be a focus on developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive teaching and learning. The emphasis on engagement with communities and recognising and responding to the background of learners in discussing these subjects, would provide appropriate safeguards for parents.

On balance, it is the view of WG that not including the right to withdraw best meets overall policy objectives, namely allowing all learners to be able to access a curriculum which enables them to progress in relation to the Four Purposes, for the education system to play its part in creating a more inclusive and tolerant society and maximise its contribution to the well-being goals in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to recognise the role of parents and families in guiding these children in relation to these issues, to recognise, and respond to the interests of all groups and promote equality, and not increase the burden on schools or the workload of teachers

WG have emphasised that whilst schools have a crucial role to play in supporting learners to develop tolerance, empathy and understanding of different people and communities, and of both their rights and the rights of others, this does not mean that this proposal will

replace parents' vital role in educating their children. The learning provided to children and young people through RSE and RE in maintained schools will be provided sensitively and inclusively to complement it. The guidance on these subject areas will make it clear that the information covered must be conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. SACRE discussed the proposal and expressed support for the vision of an inclusive education system and the integrated approach and broadening of the curriculum and agreed that RE for all learners will allow for a more holistic approach and enable them to better achieve the 4 Purposes. SACRE raised questions about whether there would be appeal rights for parents against the removal of the right to withdrawal and if this could present legal challenges in the European Court of Human Rights, and if so, where the responsibility would lie for dealing with such challenges.

SACRE were of the view that there is a need to put mechanisms in place to safeguard schools, local authorities and WG from legal challenges. This could include an extensive Professional Learning package to all those who have a responsibility for RE, together with the raising of public awareness and engagement in dialogue with learners and parents. Particular emphasis was put on the need to minimise the burden on schools and for WG to provide guidance and training to headteachers for managing situations for where learners would normally be withdrawn. It was also suggested that if the proposal to remove the right of withdrawal is implemented, WG will need to provide advice to schools on how to manage any cases of existing withdrawals.

SACRE split into their three respective committee groups to vote on the proposal, and following discussion, unanimously agreed with the proposal that the parental right of withdrawal from RE lessons be removed, and that this view be conveyed to WG.

Proposed name change for Religious Education

Ms Webber gave an overview of this proposal and explained that WG believe the subject name should reflect what learners will be taught through RE, and were therefore proposing to change the name of Religious Education to "Religions and World Views". This name change would appropriately reflect teaching practice within the new curriculum, and allows for the exploration of all religious and philosophical beliefs, as well as other beliefs and world views, including nonreligious world views.

Ms Webber highlighted the term "World Views" and explained to SACRE, that this should be one word "Worldviews" and not two as suggested in the consultation document, and should also be rectified in the Humanities AoLE guidance.

SACRE discussed the proposal and were of the opinion that referring to religion in plural reflects a misconception about the nature of religions as separate entities and begs the question 'which religions should we teach?' which could potentially cause division and exclusion and implications for community cohesion. It was advocated by the majority of SACRE Members that "Religion and Worldviews" would be a more appropriate name and would allow for all religions to be encompassed and would reflect objective, critical and pluralistic RE. This is also the name put forward by the group of expert commissioners who worked on the Final Report of the Commission on Religious Education in England report. One SACRE Member expressed an alternative opinion in that the term "Religions and Worldviews" would sufficiently cover all religions/non-religious groups.

SACRE were also asked to note that an alternative name had also been suggested by WG, which was "Religions, Values and Ethics". Ms Webber explained that this could lead to a misconception that the curriculum promotes religious values and ethics. Additionally, as outlined in the Four Purposes, it is the responsibility of all subjects in the curriculum to enable learners to develop values and ethics and not solely the role of teachers of religious education. She explained that RE is an umbrella term for several different disciplines, and

RE has always been a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary area of learning. Values and ethics are only two of many aspects of RE, and to name it Religion, Values and Ethics would diminish the subject. It also runs the risk of not including non-religious worldviews which seems to be a clear aim of the proposal.

Having discussed the proposal, and by the majority present (and in noting there was one against), Caerphilly SACRE agreed that the name "Religion and Worldviews" be submitted to WG as their preferred name change for Religious Education in the new curriculum.

The Chair thanked Ms Webber for her detailed overview of the WG consultation, who confirmed that she would prepare a draft response to WG based on the discussions at the meeting, and would circulate this to Caerphilly SACRE for comment and final approval ahead of submission to WG by the closing date of 28th November 2019.

10. MONITORING PROVISION AND STANDARDS – CAERPHILLY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORTS

The report outlined the main RE findings derived from the Estyn inspection of three Caerphilly schools between March 2019 and July 2019 (one primary school, one secondary school and one special school). The analysis focused on information in relation to spiritual development, collective worship and any comments made in regards to religious education in the inspection reports of the schools inspected during Summer Term 2019.

It was noted that all three schools inspected met statutory requirements in relation to collective worship. There was reference to the quality of collective worship in two inspection reports and good features were highlighted. Estyn made no recommendations with regards to Spiritual Development, Collective Worship or Religious Education.

SACRE were very pleased to note the positive comments derived from the inspection reports, and requested that congratulatory letters be sent to all three schools on behalf of SACRE. Members were particularly pleased to note that Trinity Fields School received the status of 'Excellent' across each of its inspection areas, and were of the opinion that the school is an example of best practice in their provision of RE.

Having considered and discussed the report, SACRE noted the update in respect of Estyn inspection reports for the Summer Term 2019.

11. LEARNING NETWORKS SCHOOLS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Ms Webber presented the report which highlighted details of the Learning Network Schools (LNS) RE meetings for 2019-2020.

SACRE were advised that the EAS has invested in building the capacity of schools and educational settings within the region to enable more collaborative ways of working. This approach enables teachers and leaders to learn from each other, and there are several well-established networks of professional practice across the region. The approach has recently been refined through investment in a cluster model approach, which will enable schools to build capacity and increase collective ownership for the development of effective teaching, learning and leadership. This model will become the main driver to ensure the realisation of the new curriculum and the delivery of professional learning, and will support the national changes in accountability and self-evaluation.

Ysgol Gwynllyw (Torfaen) and Bassaleg Comprehensive School (Newport) have been appointed as the two EAS lead schools for LNS RE for 2019-20, and will provide

Professional Learning and support to secondary schools across the region. The main focus of the LNS for RE is GCSE and will include a need to raise standards at Key Stage 3. SACRE were advised that several Learning Network School events have been organised by the EAS over the coming months to be hosted by the two lead schools. Further details were set out in the report and places for practitioners and HODs can be booked via the EAS CPD online portal.

Arising from the report, Ms Webber also outlined the professional RE support she is able to offer to both primary and secondary schools. She explained that she has written to EAS Challenge Advisors to highlight her findings derived from the raw data of GCSE results for 2019, and is due to meet with one Caerphilly school shortly to offer advice and support in relation to RE.

Members noted the details of the LNS events and discussed how they could raise the profile of SACRE and the support that they offer to schools. It was noted that a number of SACREs promote themselves through their local authority website and Ms Webber suggested that this option could be explored for Caerphilly SACRE. A faith representative added that they are more than willing to visit schools to support the teaching of RE or the delivery of collective worship in schools.

Having considered and discussed the report, SACRE noted the update from Ms Webber.

12. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2020

The report informed Members of the resources available to schools in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2020

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust produces materials specific to the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day. SACRE were advised that the theme for 2020 is **“Stand Together”** and explores how genocidal regimes throughout history have deliberately fractured societies by marginalising certain groups, and how these tactics can be challenged by individuals standing together with their neighbours and speaking out against oppression. HMD 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which is a significant milestone and is made particularly poignant by the dwindling number of survivors who are able to share their testimony. It also marks the 25th anniversary of the Genocide in Bosnia.

It was noted that the Clerk to SACRE has already written to all schools to make them aware of the resources available through the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, and to encourage them to commemorate the event.

SACRE were also advised that the Council's Communications Team are seeking contributors from local schools towards their main commemorative event. A Member suggested that it might be beneficial for Communications to approach local secondary schools who may be able to assist in this regard.

SACRE noted the details of the update in relation to Holocaust Memorial Day 2020.

13. SACRE NEWS BULLETIN

Ms Webber gave a verbal update on the SACRE News Bulletin and explained that this needs to be translated before being circulated to Caerphilly schools, with avenues for translation currently being explored. SACRE thanked Ms Webber for the update.

14. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020

SACRE noted the details of the proposed meeting dates for the coming year as set out in the report and sought offers for a host venue for the Summer Term 2020 meeting. One Member indicated that a local primary school might be willing to host this meeting

It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would liaise with the school in regards to meeting requirements, and that once confirmed, details of the venues and times for the meetings would be circulated to SACRE Members.

15. CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE

Members were updated on items of correspondence circulated on behalf of SACRE. This included details of an AREIAC Conference on plurality in RE (July 2019) being sent to all schools, communication with Committee A organisations to fill a number of vacancies, and submission of the collaborative response on the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 to WG. Schools were sent notification that they should continue with the Agreed Syllabus until further notice. All schools were sent details of a Candlelit Interfaith Event in Cardiff being held on 11th November 2019, together with details of RE Ideas Teaching Resources developed through Religious Education Movement Wales (REMW). A number of schools were also sent letters regarding the RE findings from their Estyn Inspections.

SACRE noted the details of the correspondence update.

16. FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN CONWY ON 28TH JUNE 2019

SACRE were updated on the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at its meeting in Conwy on 28th June 2019. Amongst other items, WASACRE were advised of the outcomes of the meeting with WG representative Dr Kevin Palmer to discuss professional learning support needed in light of RE and the new curriculum. There has now been funding agreed for a suite of resources specifically for RE, plus training for all those involved in teaching RE and training of ITT students. The need for training for non-maintained settings specifically was also recognised.

Caerphilly SACRE noted the details of the update.

17. REPRESENTATION AT FORTHCOMING WASCRE MEETINGS

Caerphilly SACRE noted the date of the next WASACRE meeting in Ceredigion on 21st November 2019, and also the locations for future meetings (Spring Term 2020 in Merthyr Tydfil and Summer Term 2020 in Gwynedd). It was confirmed that the Clerk to SACRE will email all SACRE Members nearer the date to seek nominations for attendance and will circulate the agenda papers when 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 12th November 2020, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR