

**Attendance**

<p><b>Ynys Môn / Anglesey</b> Owen Davies (OD) Arfon Wyn (AW)</p> <p><b>Blaenau Gwent</b> Chris Abbas (CA) Hayley Jones (HJ) Kathy Riddick (KR)</p> <p><b>Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / Bridgend</b> Edward Evans (EE) Alice Parry (AP) Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Caerffili/ Caerphilly</b> Hayley Jones (HJ)</p> <p><b>Caerdydd / Cardiff</b> Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Sir Gaerfyrddin / Carmarthenshire</b></p> <p><b>Ceredigion</b></p> <p><b>Conwy</b> Phil Lord (PL)</p>	<p><b>Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire</b> Jennie Downes (JD) Phil Lord (PL)</p> <p><b>Sir y Fflint / Flintshire</b> Vicky Barlow (VB) Dave Mackie (DM) Catherine McCormick (CM)</p> <p><b>Gwynedd</b> Paul Rowlinson (PR) Meryl Roberts (MR) Menna Baines (MR)</p> <p><b>Merthyr Tudful / Merthyr Tydfil</b> Donna Graves (DG)</p> <p><b>Sir Fynwy / Monmouthshire</b> Louise Brown (LB) Hayley Jones (EAS)</p> <p><b>Castell-nedd Port Talbot / Neath and Port Talbot</b> Nia Jenkins (NJ) Rachel Samuel (RS)</p> <p><b>Casnewydd / Newport</b> Hayley Jones (HJ)</p> <p><b>Sir Benfro / Pembrokeshire</b></p>	<p><b>Powys</b> John Mitson (JM) Fiona Thomas (FT) Caroline Davies (CD) Michael Williams (MW)</p> <p><b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> Mathew Maidment (MM) Martin Silezin MS Donna Graves (DG) <b>Dave and Jane</b></p> <p><b>Abertawe / Swansea</b></p> <p><b>Torfaen</b> Hayley Jones (HJ)</p> <p><b>Bro Morgannwg / Vale of Glamorgan</b> Donna Graves (DG) Kathy Riddick (KR) Tyler Saunders</p> <p><b>Wrecsam / Wrexham</b> Tania ap Siôn (TS) Libby Jones (LJ)</p> <p><b>NAPfRE</b> Paula Webber (PW)</p> <p><b>EFTRE</b> Phil Lord (PL)</p> <p><b>Central South Consortium</b> Donna Graves</p> <p><b>EAS</b> Hayley Jones</p>	<p><b>Observers:</b></p> <p><b>REMw WJEC</b> Chris Owens (CO) Andrew Pearce (AP)</p> <p><b>ESTYN</b></p> <p><b>Welsh Government</b></p> <p><b>REC</b> Kathy Ruddick (KR)</p> <p><b>Church in Wales</b></p> <p><b>Catholic Education Service</b></p> <p><b>Qualification Wales</b> Kate Russell (KRU)</p> <p><b>Interfaith Network</b></p> <p><b>ADEW</b> University Of Wales</p> <p>USW Trinity St David</p> <p><b>Minutes (from recording)</b> Jo Nicholls (JNI)</p>
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## **Minutes of the meeting**

### **1. Introduction and welcome**

TaS welcomed members to the Autumn meeting and introduced Martyn Silezin the 14-19 Strategy Officer at Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

Martyn introduced the meeting with the following:

Like you all, RCT has been very busy over the last year supporting schools with the changes that have been brought about by the Curriculum for Wales and the changes in the local, national, and international events. On a practical level, we have created a bank of resources for our RVE practitioners, for both the Curriculum for Wales and other events, such as the Interfaith week and Holocaust Memorial Day. We have established professional learning programmes for leading and teaching humanities and RVE in primary and secondary schools. We have also created several network opportunities.

Recently, we have undertaken several projects, and this has included our Philosophy for Children and RVE project in collaboration with SACRE. We have also introduced a digital humanities project, where we explored how to embed that in the humanities curriculum. We have also run courses on curriculum design for humanities and RVE. We have secondary peer working collaboration projects. and we have just completed a project on objective critical and pluralistic RVE, which was in collaboration with the Church of Wales.

I'm very excited this year that we have commenced a project in conjunction with the Faraday Institute, and the Science and Technology Advisor at Central South Consortium. Schools from the area have met. We are hoping to deepen the understanding of how science fits into the world of RVE and vice versa and develop materials in line with the needs of the Curriculum for Wales. If you contact us after this meeting, we're more than happy to tell you in more detail what's going on at RCT.

We're also very determined this year to set up a Youth Forum. This is something that we consider as essential to support the learner voice and to help us to consider how young voices can be heard in relation to issues affecting their education in religious education, religious studies, religion, values and ethics, spiritual development, and on matters relating to collective worship. Following the isolation of Covid I think that there is no better time for us to begin this.

Sadly, I will be retiring in a week's time. I am leaving you to a world with many uncertainties. You face a very difficult time ahead, where events both national and international will leave you with many challenges. I've been a professional educator for 43 years, and I've worked in some of the most impoverished areas and schools in Great Britain and I have never known a time like this with food banks at schools.

Meetings like this are so important to ensure the best possible education system that offers balanced education for all our learners still exists.

TaS thanked Martyn and wished him a wonderful retirement. The important aspect about our local SACs hosting these meetings is that we hear about the wonderful work that is being carried out. If you want to hear more about those exciting initiatives happening in RCT, please contact Donna Graves, the RCT advisor.

### **2. Quiet reflection**

TaS led a quiet reflection to focus on the meeting ahead. Once again, in this termly meeting, we're gathering from across Wales with a common purpose to work together to help best serve our local young people and schools, and through those our local communities. May we be mindful of the opportunities that are being presented to us today and see the value of our own contributions within them.

### 3. Apologies

None received and none recorded in the meeting chat.

### 4. Minutes of the last meeting, Zoom, 19 June 2023

TaS ran through the minutes for accuracy. Any matters arising from the minutes are to be discussed separately on the agenda.

A discussion arose around non-religious philosophical convictions on page 3, fourth paragraph from the bottom. It was agreed that this discussion should take place outside the current meeting.

PL: Page 4 states that the Leah Crimes presentation would be sent to WASACRE members. Has this happened?

LJ: The presentation was requested, but not received. This will be followed up.

**ACTION:** LJ to remind LC to send the summer meeting's presentation for onward circulation to the members.

Page 5: 'CARDARG' to be changed to 'CYDAG'.

With the CYDAG correction made. It was confirmed that the minutes are an accurate record of what was said in the last meeting. TaS will sign the minutes and send to AP for filing.

### 5. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Any matters arising are covered on the agenda.

The question about philosophical and non-philosophical convictions from the previous minutes can be discussed outside this meeting.

### 6. Welsh Government matters

LJ reported on this item. Welsh Government (WG) colleagues met with WASACRE officers on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023. In attendance from WASACRE – TaS, AP, RS and LJ and from Welsh Government - Lloyd Hopkin, Ceri Davis, and Caitlin Doyle.

The **first agenda item**, the summary of legislation, has been carefully worked through with legal colleagues in WG. This document does a slightly different job than the rest of the guidance. Its purpose is to state the legal position rather than guide teachers and there is a careful balance. It is not policy. There was an update in January 2023, where minor amends were made, certain things were held on to by legal services, just to be safe. WASACRE raised the question as to whether corporal punishment should be included as an example of a philosophical conviction. This has been kept in because legal services feel that it illustrates the breadth of a range of convictions for the purpose of RVE. Lloyd Hopkin mentioned that if WASACRE knows of any adverse effects of corporal punishment being included, then we need to provide that evidence for WG. The inclusion of Alevism has also been kept in to show that it's not just major religions that schools can explore with their learners. Legal services mentioned this could also be a belief locally for some schools. All examples come from European Convention of Human Rights case law.

WASACRE has asked LH to go back to legal services regarding the definition of religion. LJ has emailed LH for an update on this internal discussion with legal services and is awaiting a response.

The **second item** on the agenda was the informal review of agreed syllabi. WG has agreed to contact all LAs to say thank you. LJ will chase today as to when this thank you will be sent. WASACRE has agreed to present a report on the positives from this review and share with SACREs and SACs.

The **third item** on the agenda was the review of annual reports. Welsh Government has asked WASACRE to support them with this process. WASACRE agreed to do this. LJ has emailed WG colleagues to request an update on this work and is waiting for a response.

The **final item** on the agenda was sharing of data, there was some confusion as to what can be shared to SACS and SACREs and what can be shared by SACS and SACREs in the annual report. WG stated that it depends on the purpose of the data, for example, to support learner progress, to support school improvement, etc. Following the meeting, WASACRE sent an email request for more clarity. LJ received an email from Sarah Angel from WG which LJ summarised for clarification:

*The Welsh Government restarted reporting of key stage four outcomes at a school level in 2023, using the approach adopted in 2019. Information on the headline measures, which are all based on point scores, will be publicly available in Welsh Government statistical reports and on the 'my local school' website. The headline measures included the capped 9 measure, literacy measure, numeracy measure, science measure, and the Welsh Baccalaureate skills challenge certificate measure.*

*The Welsh Government also resumed the provision of all Wales core datasets to all schools and local authorities. These arrangements will be for an interim period, beginning with outcomes data from the academic year 2022 to 2023.*

*The Welsh Government's expectation is that this information will be used to support schools and local authorities to understand their own contexts and improve their own offer. This should not be used in isolation to judge performance or compare schools. Decisions around sharing these resources, and the appropriateness of doing so will rest with schools and local authorities. Consideration should be given to the security of any potentially disclosing information with the datasets in terms of identifiability of individual learners. The advice to SACs and SACREs is to have that conversation with their LA reps to ensure that the data they share in meetings and in their annual report does not identify individual learners and is not used in a way that compares schools or to judge schools' performance.*

LB: Could I ask where corporal punishment comes in because it doesn't seem to be on any list on the legislative guidance.

LJ: Agreed to check this outside the meeting and report back.

**ACTION:** LJ to share the WG's response with SACRE clerks.

**ACTION:** LJ to check whether corporal punishment is still on the list in the legislative guidance.

## **7. National Professional Learning resources**

TaS: The National Professional Learning resources are being created and published on Hwb as part of a collaboration between WASACRE and the Welsh Government (WG). WASACRE worked very hard to present a case to WG for creating resources to support practitioners delivering RVE. The resources and the areas covered have been identified as needed and created by the practitioners themselves from across Wales. These are practitioner-led resources and WASACRE subject specialists have been supporting the practitioners during this process.

LJ: The governor playlist is to go live in November the module can be accessed by anybody but is specifically tailored to school governors. Currently, the cross curricular modules are delayed and dependent on the reference group comments. WG has had to recruit new teacher members to the reference group as it was difficult to retain teachers that had the capacity to continue in the group. WASACRE has supported WG with this recruitment. We don't have a date for the publication of the cross curricular modules yet, possibly early 2024.

WG colleagues have discussed the immediate professional learning priorities both internally and with education consortia. WG has stated that it is not currently able to commit to further modules at the moment, particularly while they consider their team's capacity, budget implications, etc. WG is going to continue to monitor engagement with the current modules and look at ways to further promote these particular modules. WG is considering a blog piece, which highlights how schools have been using the modules, along with other new professional learning, such as the UNCRC and DARPL modules. They would like to showcase these to practitioners to show how they might wish to use them within their schools.

WASACRE will raise this as a particular issue as WG promised that there would be further modules and WASACRE believes there is a need for further modules. If member SACs agree with that, then this is something WASACRE could raise with WG.

TaS: All the modules that are currently being worked on should be completed and published. In the original plan, though, there was going to be a humanities module and a progression module, various things happened, and they became conflated. It is important to make sure that we still have the progression module and to say to WG that this is part of the original package.

PW: Suggest we need to keep a watching eye on any professional learning that's been developed for other mandatory subjects in the curriculum. Is RVE being treated fairly?

TaS: Confirmed that members agreed with LJ's suggestion of arguing strongly for additional modules. The WG are looking at the usage of the playlists. The figures look good on Hwb, but it does put some responsibility on us to ensure that our schools and practitioners are aware of them. A huge amount of work has gone into creating these resources. They are of a high quality; they are locally relevant because of the way they've been set up and constructed. Practitioners critically engage with them, and make them relevant, or interrogate them from their own local contexts. It would be great if we could promote them in our local authorities and into our local schools and try and increase the usage numbers.

**ACTION:** All members to promote the playlists which can be found using this link: <https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/eef7e399-93bb-4d7c-ab68-145c93f4c6d3/en/overview>

**ACTION:** WASACRE to discuss with WG the requirement for further modules.

## **8. WASACRE conference**

TaS: WASACRE in collaboration with NAPfRE are organising a substantial conference for 2024. The conference is going to be an opportunity to celebrate religion, values and ethics and the value and distinctiveness of what we are doing in Wales. The conference is also going to provide a significant professional learning opportunity for our member SACs and for all their schools. In addition to having an in-person day conference in the summer term of 2024, there will be a series of interactive online seminars, which will happen both prior and post conference day.

A WASACRE working group has been set up and has invited Jeremy Miles, the Minister for Education and Welsh language to be a keynote speaker for the physical conference. We are waiting for a response. We have put forward to him the month of June. WASACRE will confirm as soon as a response has been received.

TaS shared the conference logos to be used for promotion. TaS thanked JD for her work on creating the logos.

The working group is looking to identify potential areas of focus for the free interactive online seminars. Several suggestions have been received some of which have come from local SACREs and SACs and their advisors. However, we would like to engage with SACs

more fully in this process, to have a real idea of what your local needs are and your responses to some of the suggestions already made.

TaS ran through an online survey which will be distributed to all members to obtain feedback on the ideas for the conference seminars. There will be seminars for several different audiences. Links to survey for onward distribution to SACs and practitioners:

Welsh: <https://forms.office.com/e/23GF0c9RUG>

English: <https://forms.office.com/e/u6HV5uNHY2>

Deadline for completion of the survey will be end of November.

DG: We are having quite a few inquiries regarding daily acts of collective worship. With the inspections, it is on people's radar.

LB: It looks like a comprehensive questionnaire. In terms of the curriculum, it is basically Christianity and other principal religions and non-religious philosophical convictions. There was a question about philosophy for children, I don't think that is necessary as it is not part of the RVE curriculum. Regarding collective worship, the legislation had no changes on collective worship, which should still be broadly Christian in nature.

PW: Very good questionnaire. Philosophy for children is a well-established pedagogical approach to teaching. We will be looking at pedagogies as well as curriculum and because we do need to drill down now into how the curriculum can be delivered, this is just one of the methods that could be used.

PL: Is there an opportunity to put forward names for people to conduct the seminars?

TaS: All suggestions are well received and can be detailed in the survey.

**ACTION:** AP to email the links to all SACRE clerks before half term.

**ACTION:** Links in the chat document to be distributed to members.

## 9. Qualifications

- **Qualifications Wales**
- **Equality and diversity qualification (ncfe)**

RS gave a presentation bilingually on the current situation and next steps. The presentation will be distributed to the members.

LJ: As there won't be an examinable assessment for RVE once there is no short course between 2025 -2027, there is an option with the Agored qualification 'Exploring World Views' where coursework units are assessed. Level 1 qualification is GCSE D-G and level 2 qualification A\* to C. It is an option for schools now and up to 2027. It is not an exam qualification, but it has been designed specifically for RVE and RE using both the legacy and new agreed syllabi.

MM: We will look at the Agored qualification. It is disappointing that they're not having the short course anymore. We would let all the pupils sit the short course, and those who did well, and could cope, go on to do the full course. We had a curriculum, which was very much pupil centred, and was fit for each pupil.

I feel there is a need for some sort of qualification, which will motivate pupils in terms of mandatory religion, values, and ethics. The worry I have is that it might then deter pupils from opting for the GCSE course. How are schools going to manage their curriculum for those who have opted for the GCSE? Do they not complete the mandatory obligation? I'm assuming that the humanities skills qualification has an RVE element but isn't enough to fulfil the mandatory RVE requirements.

With the Agored coursework elements, it may not make it available to all pupils because you only have a few teachers to mark the coursework and it could become unmanageable.

RS: From my understanding from the consultation, the mandatory qualification will be available to level one but not to level two.

TaS: WASACRE consultation response asked for up to level two for RVE which is important.

LB: Only had a quick glance through this consultation but it seems a very generalist type of curriculum and doesn't seem to cover the statutory requirements in terms of Christianity and other principal religions and range of non-philosophical convictions. I can't even see Christianity and other principal religions mentioned at all. So, I think it's not meeting the statutory RVE requirement. I can't understand why it's changed from the original consultation which set out specific subject areas that were being covered.

RS: We need more time to review the consultation in detail. We must be aware that this is a consultation and a document developed by WJEC, whereas the consultation on the approval criteria was led by Qualifications Wales. The two documents serve different purposes.

PW: Not having the old short course has a knock-on effect on A level, undergraduate, and then ITE numbers. Who is responsible for the response to the consultation?

TaS: Confirmed WASACRE will draft a response and circulate to local SACs.

KR: I think there's a real disconnect between this statutory requirement for RVE and the RS GCSE. Neither will meet the statutory requirements, nor will it deliver a subject that's available to all children at 16. I feel if the design of the new GCSE had full regard to the RVE guidance, and provided a qualification that met that RVE guidance, just as the other subjects have, we wouldn't be in this position where we are now. I know that's the feedback that we gave from the consultation that came from Qualifications Wales. This seems to have taken now to another level. I suggest WASACRE needs to ask for an audience with WJEC or Qualifications Wales to discuss the matter. I'd like to see WASACRE being proactive in this matter.

RS: Suggests that the Executive Committee meet to discuss this initially. It is important that WASACRE keeps the lines of communication open with Qualifications Wales, WJEC, and all other relevant parties to navigate a way forward.

TaS: It is complicated and there are strongly held views. Agree to meet with members of the Executive Committee to discuss further. The closing date of the consultation is the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**ACTION:** RS to send out an email to the Executive Committee requesting a meeting.

PW: As the consultation document was only published this morning. I haven't looked at it in depth. However, I am deeply concerned about a footnote that is found in the documentation that states '*specification content will be driven by an emphasis of beliefs, teachings and practices of religious rather than non-religious content due to the nature of the subject.*' I would urge WASACRE to have a look at that footnote and ensure that equity of religious and non-religious aspects is considered as per the European Court of Human Rights legislation.

KRU: Emphasised that Qualification Wales hasn't made a decision yet. We are working through the summer responses and conducting additional work.



LB: I think that Christianity and other principal religions is an important aspect of RVE. I think it needs to emphasise that there must be a range of non-philosophical beliefs because it doesn't say, a range of religious beliefs in the legislation.

TaS: it's important to highlight this consultation with your local SACs and SACREs. WASACRE will share a draft response.

#### **10. Presentation by Alice Parry: Through the eyes of a teacher: Report from the Conference of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE)**

Alice Parry, Head of Department at Llanishen High School in Cardiff reported back from her attendance at the 15<sup>th</sup> EFTRE conference in Rome which was titled 'Bridges over troubled waters – RE in changing times':

Conference introduction: *Current times in Europe easily feel as if several storms are raging at once, with increasing nationalisms, polarisation, and pluralization. As well as the pandemic climate change and not least war in Ukraine, no calm seas seem incite. A challenge for all and especially for the young children and adolescents growing up in these demanding times. One can easily feel overwhelmed disorientated, as if pushed under the water by the waves of these developments. At the EFTRE conference together, we are looking for safe bridges to find a path into a brighter future, you'll have opportunities to analyse how are we can and must adapt to this new scenery and contemporary European societies.*

There were a variety of different lectures, different workshops, and different visits that participants were able to choose from. It was an opportunity to connect with teachers and other professionals all over Europe. I attended three key lectures and workshops, and I would like to share what I learnt.

First session - there was a research project conducted by five researchers across five countries about the impact of COVID and what really matters in RE. The purpose of the project was to allow teachers to share their experience and to stimulate a reflection on religious education, especially after the COVID pandemic. It was heart-warming to me as a teacher seeing that other practitioners across Europe were also finding similarities in the experience of moving online, experiences about both student and staff wellbeing, life questions that were arising, understanding of religious education, teacher situations, relationships, the importance of networking, co working, but also the importance of teacher/student relationships that you have in the classroom.

The challenges also brought existential matters where students were enabled to explore life's big questions. But also, there are sensitive topics that just can't be taught and approached in the same way through the online space. Covid did force people to stop, pause and think about the nature of the subject and what that value has for students. It was reported that philosophies become more popular, there's a surge in interest and in people questioning their purpose.

What was nice about attending this conference was meeting teachers from across Europe, and sharing experiences of what teaching is like in different settings, not just RE but with general logistics of the school in the calendar year day, and how things operate in different contexts.

Another workshop I attended was led by Marlene Printz Jellesen (MPJ) who works in Denmark and did her PhD thesis on secularisation and the implications that particular narratives of secularisation can have for religious education.

MPJ presented four narratives of the secularisation hypothesis:



The idea that when teaching, religion it is solely a private matter, this could be seen as having no purpose in society and could have implications for religious education becoming a taboo subject, as she experienced in Denmark. MPJ said if religion is seen as a private matter, it can be difficult to legitimise the place and value of our country. In that instance, the school wouldn't provide students and prepare students for the pluralistic society and the wider the wider scope.

The idea of religion and faith being the opposite of knowledge and a danger that can be posed. MPJ mentioned how conflicts can arise between religion and faith and knowledge. And the implications for RE narrative is that religion could be seen as outdated and a thing of the past where people knew less rather than offering a multifaceted and rich approach to our worldviews. Under this narrative teaching secularisation religion could be constructed as contradictory to science and science is seen as factual with truth, whereas religion would not be. That would be a problem for religious education teachers with that narrative.

The idea that religion could be weakened and that there would be a decline in membership of religious institutions and increase in the number of people with no religious affiliation. In that case, the implications for RE would be that pupils might gain a conviction that religion is an outdated phenomenon, that's going to disappear, and a risk of passing that narrative on to students and being an overly simplistic view.

The idea that religion is a phenomenon of deprivation. This linked to a study that she shared from Phil Zuckerman in Denmark and Sweden, which was the Deprivation Theory, the idea of a society without God. The study looked at Danish people who could have a very good quality of life or could be happy, even without God. So that could lead to a one-sided deprivation approach to religion. MJP shared that religious students criticise their teachers for supporting the stereotypical presentation of religion as a historically outdated phenomenon and emphasise the importance of giving students that pluralistic and multifaceted approach to understanding religion and non-religion through that.

The third session that I would like to share with you was one based on art. This was presented by a lecturer at University of Glasgow, Leon Robinson, about what makes life worth living and using artwork in lessons to add some depth and richness to the curriculum.

LR asked us to think of three things that you love in life, but it couldn't be people, it couldn't be pets. It had to be objects or scenery or something like that and he asked us to share that with the person next to us.

The purpose of this was that LR wanted us to understand and reinforce the importance and the richness of objects and that can start with the personal and then you can allow students to appreciate religious objects and how we teach that through the curriculum.

LR mentioned that this starts with Hippocrates, who was talking about the craft that takes a long time, the mastery of work and how we need to ask ourselves, what is our craft? And what do we want to master. And he linked to Japanese tsukumogami which is the idea that when an object has been used for 99 years, in Japanese culture, it's believed that they develop kami and come alive.

We visited the Vatican and with LR we were able to explore the art at the Vatican. The artwork that we were able to see was captivating, and really did help me to, to think about how I'm going to use some pieces in my lessons going forward.

I feel extremely lucky to have had that opportunity to be part of the EFTRE conference to meet with colleagues and to learn from others from different backgrounds, different contexts, different settings and bringing that back to my classroom.

TaS: Thank you Alice. LJ and TaS also attended conference, it was extremely worthwhile.

PW: I hope the WASACRE conference in the summer will be equally as inspiring to the teachers that attend. Maybe we can learn something from the delivery because it sounded fantastic. Thank you, Alice.

VB: Thank you, Alice, it's wonderful to capture those moments of joy and to bring a little bit of joy to everybody on the call.

### **11. Estyn: 2024 – 2030 inspection plans**

The Estyn representative was unable to attend the meeting. This item has been carried forward to the next meeting.

### **12. Up-dates:**

#### **- Report from the Executive Committee held on 4 October 2023 (Tania ap Sion)**

No update provided. Items covered in meeting agenda.

#### **- WJEC (Christopher Owens)**

During the summer, candidates were entered for all papers for GCSE religious studies, except for Sikhism, where there were no entries and there was only one entry paper the previous year. Entries remain stable, but I'll have more information in March 2024 when I have the final entry. Interestingly, there were very few requests for review of marking. We see this as a positive, in that perhaps people were very happy with the results that they had in terms of the consultation, which is a WJEC qualification outline, it is not a specification. It doesn't go into detail about content in terms of Christianity, world faiths, non-religious viewpoints etc. This is a WJEC qualification outline based on the agreed criteria which has been produced by Qualifications Wales. We will look at any comments that come in from teachers and other interested parties. The process of writing the specification will begin after this consultation is concluded. We have had feedback that we will take into consideration. It has already been said that the short course will finish what will become the legacy GCSE finishes. I was asked to mention that there is a humanities entry pathways course offered by the WJEC it's not a GCSE, it's all NEA based, but could be used as an option,

There are WJEC professional learning events taking place this term on 8<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> November, and 7<sup>th</sup> December and a CYDAG event in North Wales on the 8<sup>th</sup> December.

The only other thing I'd say about the GCSE consultation is that we've produced a GCSE Religious Studies course. It was never intended and has never been intended to fulfil any statutory obligation, following on from the RVE.

KR: It just seems to be a real missed opportunity. Under the new curriculum, there's a RVE statutory requirement as an academic subject. It is one of the subjects in the humanities suite alongside Geography and History and Business Studies, which each have their unique GCSE linked to that subject. So why is RVE being treated different in that it's not being given a respective GCSE that meets the requirement to study? It being that it is the only humanities area that has that requirement to study.

CO: The GCSE RS sits within the humanities option subjects. GCSE RS in this context has always been an option subject. Obviously RVE is statutory, but the GCSE option sits outside that, the same as History and geography, pupils don't have to do history or geography in year 10 or 11.

TaS: Added that there has been much consideration over this, and many meetings have been held to discuss this matter with various relevant parties.

LB: There is going to be an issue if it doesn't cover the mandatory requirement. It is going to dissuade learners from doing that option because they will have to do the mandatory requirement as well. It will be double the teaching.

AP shared feedback from the summer's GCSE. A high percentage of candidates A-C at A level and AS level. Good to see entries for all world religions. RS has had a massive hit in terms of AS numbers. during the COVID years, I think there's several reasons for that. One being I think RS is not the sort of subject you can learn by zoom at home. You need interaction with your teacher in a way that perhaps you don't need in other subjects such as history or geography.

Entries for GCSE have fallen massively. I think they will reduce by about 6000 this summer. The issue of non-specialist teachers teaching both key stage three and key stage four. The disappearance of the short course will have an effect. There are competing courses such as criminology. Many of the people who would have taken RS and are taking criminology instead. If AS numbers are going down, the A level numbers are going to follow.

PL: Is there a reduction in the number of centres in that popular schools that would have entered are no longer entering and / or are those centres reducing the numbers of those pupils that they're entering?

AP: It's not a reduction in centres as such, it's more of a reduction of the numbers within each centre. Whereas in the past, they would have been, high teens or 20s, we're getting numbers under 10 in many centres now.

PL: In comparison with the GCSE, I presume there are less centres that are entering because of the issues with the old short course, for example. I was wondering, is that not necessarily affecting the centre's entering for A level, but it will affect the numbers that are doing it?

AP: To some extent as well. However, if you have 6000 less entries this summer for GCSE, then less AS numbers. There was a slight increase in AS this summer by 100, this is good because that obviously will lead through to year 13. Whether that pattern continues this year, will be interesting to see.

TaS: PW and I are having conversations, we are very much aware of the wider issues which you've raised in terms of teacher recruitment, specialists and so on. I think the benefit of what we have heard today is raising this on the agenda of SACs and on WASACRE agenda. We need to talk further with NAPfRE about how we tackle this kind of crisis. What steps are we going to take and what can we do?

TaS: Thanked CO and AP for the updates.

- **REC (Kathy Riddick)**

There haven't been many meetings since WASACRE last met. The co-opted position that was advertised for a specialist in RVE to sit on the board of the REC is currently being considered. The Board are going to decide next week as to who will be appointed in that position. It is a new position created to make sure that the REC pay more attention to what's happening in Wales and have somebody who's an expert in RVE. This is a real improved position, as the REC sees itself as wanting to continue to be a representative body of England and Wales. In the first term of next year REC are publishing the new religion and worldviews draft resource, and they continue to lobby the Department of Education in England to change the name of the subject to religion and worldviews.

- **EFTRE (Phil Lord)**

Resources for the conference can be found on the website: <https://eftre.net/conference-in-rome-2023-15th>.

- **REMW (Paul Morgan)**

No updated provided.

- **NAPfRE (Paula Webber)**

The NAPfRE meeting has been delayed until after half term. NAPfRE are engaging with WASACRE in the organisation of the WASACRE conference. Met with Deborah Weston from the REC and had discussions about GCSE, A level and ITE take up. Also note that RS was representing NAPfRE as well as WASACRE at the Welsh Government meeting. PW now sits on the advisory group for the development of the new Quals with WJEC. NAPfRE intend to organise additional meetings this year.

- **IFN (Libby Jones)**

Interfaith week is the 12th -19th of November 2023. [Interfaith week resources.](#)  
TaS: An email was received from Gethin Rhys (GR) of Cytûn and Inter Faith Council Wales. With the new curriculum, schools need to know how and when to contact to their faith groups. GR is keen to work with WASACRE and local schools. There was a specific request for WASACRE to consider joining the Inter Faith Council of Wales? Also, a request from Cytûn as to how best they can help in WASACRE's work. The Executive Committee welcome the offer and will take this forward.

**13. Local matters / enquiries**

TaS: This is a new agenda item. We know that WASACRE carries out an incredible amount of national and international work on behalf of SACs. WASACRE also provides support at a local level too. This local work is not necessarily visible, having this agenda item is a way of providing a space to focus on this area of our work.

We receive many inquiries and questions from local SACs and advisors about a whole range of things. Our advisors on the Executive Committee spend time in discussion and respond to them. These are all very local nature, but they're also relevant more widely.

TaS shared a document which showed a range of questions that have been asked recently. The aim is to put together a frequently asked questions document that can be displayed on the website.

Questions included managing requests to withdraw from the mandatory RVE on religious grounds, looking at professional learning and what's available to access as a RVE advisor, what alternative qualifications are available to learners in Key Stage Four? SAC / SACRE meetings. We have quite a few requests for templates of forms.

WASACRE have decided to allocate time at each termly meeting to focus on one or two questions and share them more widely.

LJ: Gave an example of one question. A question was sent from a school that had received a parent request for withdrawal of their child from RVE based on their religious identity. The question was how to manage this with the parent, because obviously for another year, there is no right to withdraw.

WASACRE are still working with that local authority to find a solution, but we have given various pieces of advice on what can be done. WASACRE are listening to that local authority and keeping in touch with them about how that translates and what transpires.

WASACRE will raise this with Welsh Government in one of the regular meetings. This could be a wider issue and not isolated. Has any other SACRES / SACs or LAs had a question about this from any of their schools?

TaS: Welsh Government are keen to find out about this with the curriculum roll-out. From the chat one parent in Ceredigion has made a similar request and the same in Powys.

PL: Conwy SACRE Chair asked me this yesterday. We had to do a report for the local authority regarding the agreed syllabus, one of our questions was going to be about writing withdrawals for travellers' children and the impact that might have on removal from school completely. How do we go about finding hard data to this question? Is there data for within a local authority on the removal of children from education? Are there any links between that and RVE?

VB: It's not an area I cover but I think when parents give a reason as to why they might be removing their children to educate at home, I don't think RVE would be an option that would come up and possibly it would be registered under the 'other' option. There is a statistical release by WG every year on this data, but I am not sure it identifies RVE as a cause to remove from education.

KR: This is a slightly different query that came up with us from a non-religious parent who had been requested by a VC school that they withdraw their child so that they could use RVE lessons to teach comprehension. This is obviously not correct, because RVE is not for that purpose and the agreed syllabus should be followed. Following a conversation with the Diocesan rep in the local area, the matter was resolved, because the school just needed some extra support. When these issues are coming up, it's important that the level of dialogue is there to make sure that we're supporting schools and helping them get this right.

#### **14. Correspondence**

None other than correspondence already mentioned in meeting.

#### **15. Any other business (to be agreed in advance of the meeting with the Chair)**

Caroline Davis joined us today. Caroline is a humanist observer and is on Powys SACRE.

TaS: Thank you very much for turning up for the meeting today and for your full participation. A big thank you to RCT the local authority for hosting. We look forward to seeing you or as many of you as possible at our next meeting.

#### **16. Date for next meeting**

No date or host details available at the time of the meeting.