



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT YSGOL Y LAWNT, RHYMNEY ON THURSDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.M. Gray - Chair
Councillor J. Taylor - Vice-Chair

Representing Teaching Organisations: Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs B. Davies (UCAC)

Representing Religious Organisations: Mrs J. Jones (Church in Wales), Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales)

Together with:

Mrs V. Thomas (RE Consultant), Miss R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), Mrs E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present:

Mrs A. Godfrey (Caerphilly Schools Worker)

1. WELCOME

The Chair thanked Miss Bethan Davies, RE Co-ordinator at the school, for giving SACRE such a warm welcome to Ysgol y Lawnt, and opened the meeting with a poem of reflection entitled "Faith Is A Candle" by Helen Steiner Rice.

Introductions were made, with Reverend Eryl Williams, Minister for Zoar Baptist Church, Pontlottyn, welcomed to the meeting as the newest Member of Caerphilly SACRE. A warm welcome was also extended to Mrs Alison Godfrey, who was attending the meeting in an observational capacity in her new role as a Caerphilly Schools Worker.

The outgoing Clerk to Caerphilly SACRE, Mrs Emma Sullivan, introduced the new Clerk, Miss Rebecca Barrett, to those present.

The Chair also voiced his appreciation to Councillor J. Taylor for chairing the previous meeting of Caerphilly SACRE in his absence.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Keri Cole, Manager for Learning, Education and Inclusion. It was noted that Mrs Cole conveyed her sincere apologies for being unable to attend the meeting but had not received advance notification of the meeting and was therefore unable to attend owing to a prior commitment.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillors D.G. Carter, W. David, Mrs G.D. Oliver and Mrs M.E. Sargent, together with Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Ms R. Bradshaw (Co-opted Member), Lieutenant C. DiPalma (Salvation Army), Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reform Church) and Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 12TH JUNE 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 12th June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Mrs Thomas, RE Consultant to SACRE, referenced the recently compiled distribution list comprising of RE contacts for each primary and secondary school within the borough, explaining that this will assist in ensuring that the relevant information reaches the correct person.

Reference was made to the recent letter circulated to all schools that detailed the keynote speech made by the Minister of Education at the Religious Education Council of England and Wales Annual Conference 2014. It was noted that a number of positive comments had been received from schools in relation to this. Information relating to the RE Quest resource and website had also been circulated to all schools.

6. PRESENTATION – “RE AT YSGOL Y LAWNT”

Miss Bethan Davies, RE Co-ordinator and teacher at Ysgol y Lawnt, welcomed Members to the school on behalf of Mrs Sharon Davies (Head Teacher), and Miss Katherine Scott (Deputy Head Teacher).

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Miss Davies delivered to SACRE Members an insight into the teaching of RE at the school, entitled “RE at Ysgol y Lawnt”. It was explained that the presentation would detail the school’s links with the local community, share data derived from parent, teacher and pupil questionnaires, and share the school’s vision for the future of RE at Ysgol y Lawnt.

The RE scheme of work taught at Ysgol y Lawnt was outlined to Members, which follows guidelines outlined in the Caerphilly Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Subjects studied at Foundation Phase are Judaism, Christianity and a Christian Celebration (wedding or christening), with Judaism, Christianity and Islam studied at Key Stage 2. In addition to these, many different religious and traditional festivals are also celebrated by the school throughout the year, including Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Diwali, St David’s Day, Chinese New Year, Ramadan and Rosh Hashanah.

In regard to the specific subjects studied at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, it had been felt that one lesson a week was not conducive to learning about these religions, and hence a schedule of themed study “weeks” had been arranged, with pupils studying the subject over three RE lessons during the course of that week. This is in addition to their timetabled RE lessons and enriched the curriculum for pupils. The school had recently completed a successful “Judaism Week” in September, with examples of topics covered and the work completed by the children displayed to SACRE. It was explained that “Christianity Week” is scheduled for late March 2015.

Miss Davies informed SACRE that daily acts of collective worship were held in the school hall, with a class assembly for parents arranged on a termly basis, providing the opportunity for parents to attend to observe the children participating in this event.

The links between RE and the local community were outlined, with it explained to SACRE that Ysgol y Lawnt have very strong links with St David’s Church, Penuel and Moriah Church in Rhymney. A generous Harvest collection had been undertaken for the Rhymney Valley Food Bank, and the school had received a visit from the Bible Explorers team. Key Stage 2 pupils had also undertaken a trip to a synagogue, mosque and cathedral in Cardiff.

Details of a parent questionnaire circulated in May 2014 and the results of this were outlined to Members. The questionnaire covered a number of areas relating to Religious Education, including the school’s communication with parents, satisfaction levels regarding the syllabus, availability of parents to attend acts of collective worship, satisfaction levels relating to religious and community links, and pupil reference to RE lessons when at home. The results of the questionnaire (with a 40% response rate) were generally very positive and staff were able to identify a number of areas for improvement as a result. The pupils had also received a questionnaire, which indicated that they wanted more RE experience and had enjoyed the themed weeks to date.

With regards to the way forward, it was explained that the school intends to produce a termly RE newsletter to inform parents of what is happening within the school. The school will continue to work toward the RE Quality Mark (REQM) Bronze Award, and will provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their role as global citizens, in line with Estyn 2014 requirements.

Discussion of the presentation ensued and Members were pleased to note the questionnaires as an excellent example of school and subject self-evaluation, together with the follow-up actions derived as a result. SACRE were also pleased to hear the news that Ysgol y Lawnt were striving to achieve the REQM Bronze Award

With regards to the themed weeks, it was suggested that photographs could be taken during these to document examples of how the themed weeks are administered. It was also suggested that details of the themed weeks be submitted to the RE News website as an example of good practice in RE and to exemplify how Caerphilly schools are delivering the RE syllabus.

SACRE thanked Miss Davies for her informative and interesting presentation.

7. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2014-15

In order to accommodate a request from a member of the public to attend the next meeting and address SACRE, it was agreed that the venues for the March 2015 and June 2015 meetings be switched over. The following dates and venues were agreed, with details of these to be sent to the relevant persons:-

The Spring Term meeting will be held on Monday 9th March 2015 at Penallta House Council Offices, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach.

The Summer Term meeting will be held on Wednesday 10th June 2015 at Newbridge School, Bridge Street, Newbridge.

8. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2014-2015 AND HUMANIST REQUEST FOR CO-OPTION

The report updated Members on the current membership of Caerphilly SACRE and highlighted the current position in terms of vacant places.

The efforts made to secure nominations from Teaching Trade Unions were noted. In regards to Teacher representation, a letter recently circulated to Caerphilly primary schools seeking nominations had resulted in Ms Rhianne Bradshaw (RE teacher at St James' Primary) securing a vacant co-opted position as a primary school representative to SACRE.

With regards to the other co-opted position, it was noted that this had previously been held by Mr Darren Ralph of VALREC, who brought his experience of working with different communities to the work of SACRE. He has since resigned and a replacement VALREC representative is currently being sought.

Reference was made to a request received from Mr Ken Chamberlain in regards to Humanist representation on SACRE, with a supporting paper attached to the report. The RE Consultant explained that as Humanism did not fall under the Group A section of SACRE membership consisting of faith representatives, it would thus fall under the co-opted section, which is currently filled. It was advised that Mr Chamberlain had asked for the opportunity to address SACRE in order for his membership request to be considered.

Discussion of the report ensued and SACRE agreed that Keri Cole, Manager for Learning, Education and Inclusion, be asked to take the matter of Teaching Trade Unions representation to her next head teacher meeting to request a NAHT representative to SACRE. It was also agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would send a letter to schools seeking a NASUWT representative to SACRE.

With regards to Mr Chamberlain's request for Humanist representation within Caerphilly SACRE, it was agreed that he be invited to speak at the next meeting, and that his supporting information would be resubmitted within the agenda papers for that meeting.

SACRE noted the contents of the report.

9. CAERPHILLY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013-14

Mrs V. Thomas, RE Consultant to SACRE, presented the draft SACRE Annual Report for 2013-14 for Members' consideration and approval prior to its submission to the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by 31st December 2014.

The Annual Report outlined the activities of SACRE during the academic year 2013-14 and Members' comments and amendments were welcomed. The RE Consultant referred Members to the Executive Summary of advice given by SACRE, and highlighted specific issues and the actions taken by SACRE to ensure it met all its statutory requirements.

Members were asked to check the Annual Report for accuracy and amendments were noted to the Membership of SACRE listed within Section 1 of the report. It was agreed that the final version of the Annual Report be submitted to DfES and circulated electronically to WASACRE (who will include the Annual Report on their website), together with schools and other relevant parties.

Subject to the above amendments, it was unanimously agreed that the SACRE Annual Report for 2013-14 be approved.

10. SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2012-2015

The report detailed the Caerphilly SACRE Development Plan for the academic years 2012-2015, with the actions required, outcomes and progress made outlined for Members' information.

Members were referred to the action plan as detailed in the SACRE Annual Report and the progress that SACRE had made in relation to the different elements contained therein were examined. SACRE's monitoring of standards through the reviewing of inspections reports and school self-evaluation was summarised and the progress made was outlined.

Having fully considered the report, Members noted the content and progress of the Development Plan 2012-2015 to date.

11. ANALYSIS OF CAERPHILLY SCHOOLS INSPECTION REPORTS AUTUMN 2013 - SUMMER 2014

The report outlined the main RE findings derived from the Estyn inspection of fourteen Caerphilly schools between Autumn 2013 and Summer 2014. The analysis focused on comments in relation to spiritual development and collective worship. The context of the report was explained to SACRE in that it only focuses on RE findings and not the general inspection results of the school, which could significantly vary in other areas.

The RE Consultant provided a detailed summary of the findings for each of the inspected schools, including details relating to spiritual development, the quality of collective worship and whether the school met statutory legal requirements in relation to collective worship. Other comments and issues were also outlined in the findings.

The report explained that the Estyn Common Inspection Framework notes that inspectors should only report on instances where the school does not comply with statutory requirements relating to collective worship. The inspection report for Rhydri Primary School stated that the school does not comply with the statutory collective worship requirements. It was thus assumed that all other schools inspected met statutory requirements in relation to collective worship.

Two further schools had no comment made by the reporting inspector regarding acts of collective worship or the schools' development of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development). A number of positive outcomes were derived from the analysis and detailed to SACRE Members, including the finding that pupils develop respect for their own cultures and other cultures. School assemblies also provide a wide range of benefits, namely the celebration of pupil progress and achievement and the opportunity for pupil reflection, and an understanding of morality and sense of fairness.

The report made two key recommendations:-

- (i) The action plan from Rhydri Primary School be requested to show how they intend to meet statutory requirements for acts of collective worship;
- (ii) That SACRE consider writing to Estyn to raise the issue of two school inspection reports making no mention under the Care Support and Guidance section of the report of whether a school promotes SMSC and the contribution of acts of collective worship to SMSC, and also about the lack of comments regarding the quality of acts of collective worship.

Consideration of the report ensued and discussion took place in relation to a number of the inspection findings detailed within the analysis regarding religious and community links.

Members noted the analysis of the inspection reports and it was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would ask Keri Cole for an update in relation to the action plan for Rhydri Primary. It was also agreed that the RE Consultant would write to Estyn to raise the issues outlined regarding reporting procedures within the inspection reports.

12. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2015

The report informed Members of the resources available to schools in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2015.

The RE Consultant advised that the theme for 2015 is "Keep The Memory Alive" and confirmed that further information on the theme and free educational resources were available through the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) website at www.hmd.org.uk/content/for-educators.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Auschwitz-Birkenau liberation and Members were advised that 70 special candles will be sent out to 70 selected HMD activities across the country. Schools were encouraged to access the website and nominate their HMD activity to host a candle.

Members noted the theme and resources available to schools in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2015 and it was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would write to all schools to make them aware of these resources and encourage them to commemorate the event.

13. RE NEWS WEBSITE

The report outlined details of the RE News website, which was previously administered by the Welsh National Centre for RE. The website had been supported by contributions from Local Authorities, Bangor University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. However, from September 1st 2014, the website will be solely funded by the two universities, and will now be available free of charge to anyone who wished to use it.

All articles for inclusion on the website are to be submitted to the editor, Sali Roberts (Sali@patshyn.fsnet.co.uk). The last day of the month is the deadline for all submissions, with articles to be sent bilingually if possible. Bangor University will translate the articles if required but this will result in a delay in the article being published on the website.

Members noted the contents of the report and it was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would email schools with a letter containing details of the website and arrangements for article submission. It was explained to SACRE that a direct link to the RE News website would also be included in the email to schools.

14. CORRESPONDENCE – FARMINGTON FELLOWSHIPS FOR TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND HEAD TEACHERS ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-16

Members noted the correspondence with regard to the Farmington Fellowships offered by the Farmington Institute, Oxford.

Details of the eligibility and composition of the Fellowships were outlined and Members agreed that this information be circulated to all schools in order to raise awareness of the opportunities provided by the Institution. It was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would circulate a PDF version of the information leaflet to all Head Teachers and RE contacts.

15. WASACRE – FEEDBACK FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT POWYS – 2ND JULY 2014

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberation of WASACRE at its Annual General Meeting at Powys on 2nd July 2014.

Reference was made to the Donaldson Review outlined at the AGM, together with the presentation given by NAPfRE, which explained the new arrangements for each consortia and how SACRE are now supported in each Authority as a result of the changes. An activity took place following this presentation which involved Members working in groups to discuss a number of issues relating to SACRE membership. It was explained that the feedback from these questions was in the process of being collated and sent to each SACRE clerk for wider distribution.

SACRE noted the discussions and deliberations of SACRE at the AGM.

16. APPOINTMENTS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members were provided with a list of appointments to the WASACRE Executive Committee as of September 2014.

At the SACRE meeting of 12th June 2014, it had been moved and seconded that Councillor D.M. Gray and Mrs V. Thomas be put forward as Caerphilly SACRE's nominations to the WASACRE Executive Committee. At the WASACRE Annual General Meeting of 2nd July 2014, Mrs V. Thomas was elected to serve on the Executive Committee for another three years.

Members noted the list of WASACRE Executive Members as of September 2014.

17. REPRESENTATION AT FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETINGS

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

With regards to the WASACRE meeting of **26th November 2014** (Pontypool), Councillor J. Taylor advised that he might be able to attend, subject to other commitments. It was noted that Councillor D.M. Gray and Mrs V. Thomas would be in attendance. Mrs J. Jones and Rev E. Williams also expressed an interest in attending and it was agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would contact them with the agenda papers nearer to the meeting date and to confirm attendance.

With regards to the WASACRE meeting of **6th March 2015** (Neath Port Talbot) Councillor D.M. Gray advised that he might be able to attend, subject to confirmation at a later date. Mrs Thomas confirmed that she would be in attendance. Mrs J. Jones and Rev E. Williams again expressed an interest in attending, with it agreed that the Clerk to SACRE would contact them nearer to the meeting date to confirm attendance.

The RE Consultant added that WASACRE were looking for schools to pilot Religious Education learning materials at Foundation Phase, and Miss Davies confirmed that her school was participating in this scheme.

The Chair thanked the Members of Caerphilly SACRE for their attendance at the meeting and thanked Miss Bethan Davies for her kind hospitality and informative presentation.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR