



CAERPHILLY STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY, 9TH MARCH 2015 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

D.G. Carter, W. David, Mrs M.E. Sargent

Representing Teaching Organisations: Miss H. Bartley (ATL), Mrs N. Boardman (NUT), Mrs B. Davies (UCAC), Mrs L. Strange (NASUWT)

Representing Religious Organisations: Lieutenant C. Di-Palma (Salvation Army), Mrs E. Hawthorn (United Reform Church), Mrs J. Jones (Church in Wales), Mr M. Western (Roman Catholic Archdiocese), Rev E. Williams (Baptist Union of Wales)

Co-opted Members: Ms R. Bradshaw (St James' Primary School), Mr E. Mushayanyama (VALREC)

Together with:

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

Also present:

Mr K. Chamberlain (British Humanist Association)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and opened the meeting with a poem of reflection entitled "Mover of Mountains" by Helen Steiner Rice.

Introductions were made around the table, with recently appointed members Ms Rhianna Bradshaw, Mr Eddy Mushayanyama and Mrs Laura Strange attending their first meeting of Caerphilly SACRE.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs G.D. Oliver and Miss H. Marsh (ASCL), together with Mrs K. Cole (CCBC Manager for Learning, Education and Inclusion).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement of the meeting. During the course of the meeting, a declaration of interest was received and is minuted with the respective item.

4. MINUTES – 6TH NOVEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly SACRE meeting held on 6th November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. ACTION PLAN RHYDRI PRIMARY SCHOOL – ACTS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

At the Autumn 2014 meeting of Caerphilly SACRE, Members considered the main RE findings derived from the Estyn inspection of fourteen Caerphilly schools between Autumn 2013 and Summer 2014. SACRE noted that Rhydri Primary School had failed to meet its statutory requirement for acts of collective worship. Members had requested that a copy of the school's action plan, detailing how they intended to meet this statutory requirement, be made available so they could monitor the progress being made.

A copy of the action plan was included with the meeting papers, and Mrs Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant to SACRE) explained that following contact between Mrs Keri Cole of Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC), the South East Wales Education Achievement Service (EAS) and Rhydri Primary School, the school were now complying fully with the statutory requirement and providing a daily act of collective worship.

Following discussion and consideration of the action plan, Members noted the progress made by Rhydri Primary School in respect of the statutory requirement for acts of collective worship.

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

During the course of the debate on this item, Councillor W. David declared an interest as the gentleman was known to him. Following advice and in noting that it was personal and not prejudicial, he remained in the meeting and took part in the debate.

At the Autumn 2014 meeting of Caerphilly SACRE, Members had been advised of a request received from Mr Ken Chamberlain, on behalf of the British Humanist Association. Mr Chamberlain had asked for the opportunity to address Members in order for his request for humanist representation within Caerphilly SACRE to be considered. It had been agreed by Members that Mr Chamberlain be invited to speak at this meeting, and a short summary paper that he had submitted which outlined the role of the British Humanist Association was attached to the meeting papers.

Mrs Thomas explained the current membership status of SACRE (a list of which was attached to the report) and composition of a SACRE to those Members present. SACREs in Wales are made up of three committee groups, and each committee has equal voting rights (one vote per committee). Caerphilly SACRE also has two additional co-opted Members who do not have voting rights, and both co-opted places are currently filled. SACRE were advised that if they were minded to agree that Mr Chamberlain be co-opted as an additional Member, due process would then have to be followed in line with the Constitution of Caerphilly County Borough Council. This process would include a request from SACRE to Council to agree that the Terms of Reference for Caerphilly SACRE be amended, in order for the amount of co-opted places to be increased.

Mr Chamberlain was welcomed to the meeting, and the Chair outlined the process that would be followed by Caerphilly SACRE during consideration of the request. Mr Chamberlain was then invited to present his case for humanist representation within Caerphilly SACRE.

During his representations, Mr Chamberlain outlined the reasons why his request to join Caerphilly SACRE should be considered, and referred to a number of English SACREs where humanists had been included as full voting members within Committee A.

Mrs Thomas sought clarification as to which of the committee groups within SACRE Mr Chamberlain was seeking to join. She explained that the situation regarding SACRE membership differed in Wales to that of English SACREs, and that in line with Welsh Government legislation 10/94, humanist representatives cannot not be considered for membership of Committee A (Christian denominations and other faith groups) within Welsh SACREs. However, they can still be considered for co-option to SACRE as additional members, which was the opportunity that would be afforded to Mr Chamberlain.

Discussion took place between SACRE Members and Mr Chamberlain regarding a number of matters, including the role of secular views and beliefs within religious education frameworks, and the act of collective worship in schools. Mr Chamberlain was also asked a number of questions relating to the role of a SACRE member and the qualities that he could bring to the committee.

Mr Chamberlain was thanked for his representations and he left the meeting room at that point to await the decision of Caerphilly SACRE.

After a lengthy discussion to consider the request for co-opted membership of SACRE by Mr Chamberlain, on behalf of the British Humanist Association, Members split into their three respective committee voting groups to discuss the matter further.

Upon regrouping, the Members of Caerphilly SACRE, voting within their three committee groups, unanimously agreed that they did not wish to offer a specific co-opted place to a representative of the British Humanist Association and therefore would not seek to increase the number of co-opted places available within SACRE.

The Chair, RE Consultant, and Clerk to SACRE left the meeting room for a brief period in order to inform Mr Chamberlain of Caerphilly SACRE's decision.

7. ANALYSIS OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2014

The report informed Members of the attainment at GCSE, AS and A Level of Caerphilly pupils in Religious Studies and Religious Education for 2014.

SACRE were advised that the figures represented raw scores and as such did not necessarily reflect the selectivity of the entry and in some cases the numbers were too small to be statistically significant. Further information detailing the attainment results for each Caerphilly school was also tabled to Members at the meeting.

The results for the GCSE (Full Course) were confirmed and it was noted that there were 656 entries from 14 schools. Entry numbers are below previous levels but the number of schools entering candidates have increased this year. A*-A grades for Caerphilly are similar to 2013 but below the 2012 performance and the All Wales figure of 31%. Members were advised that the level of A*-C grades at 73% was the best result of the last three years and above the Wales figure. 98.8% of pupils entered achieved a grade A*-G, which is comparable with the previous two years' results and the All Wales figure of 98%.

The results of GCSE (Short Course) were confirmed and it was noted that there was a significant decrease in entries this year, with 866 entries from 13 schools. Unfortunately there

was a marked decrease in performance this year, with A*-A grades and A*-C grades falling below 2013 performance and the All Wales figure. However, the overall percentage of A*-G grades was 95%, which is comparable with the All Wales figure of 94%. The findings are similar to the WJEC All Wales data which found that pupils perform better at Full Course than Short Course. Discussion ensued about factors that impact on this.

Mrs Thomas explained that an Estyn survey reported that those pupils following an examination course such as Short Course, as part of their statutory requirement at Key Stage (KS) 4, were more motivated than those who did not. Those not following an accredited course were found to lack motivation and be more disaffected with their statutory RE course of study. On a more positive note, a significant number of pupils continue to be entered for short courses, which is very encouraging because it provides the opportunity for accreditation at KS4. Members were also asked to bear in mind that pupils do not usually opt to follow the short course, in that it is delivered as part of the statutory requirement for RE. It was suggested that the examination results data be shared with schools to allow for self-evaluation and the opportunity to make improvements to course availability.

The results for A Level Religious Studies were confirmed, which showed a slight decrease on last year's performance at A*-A grades, but is comparable with the All Wales figure. At A*-C, candidates achieved a pass rate of 89.1%, which is the best result of the last three years and exceeds the All Wales figure of 79%. It was noted that 100% of the pupils entered at A Level achieved a grade at A*-E, which is an excellent result and exceeds the All Wales figure of 98%.

The results for AS Level Religious Studies were confirmed and showed a decrease in entry levels for this year, with 19 entries from 6 schools. 21.1% of students achieved an A grade, which is the best performance of the last three years. 47.4% of students achieved A*-C grades, which is below 2013 levels but an improvement on 2012 grades. It was noted that across A-E grades, there was a 100% pass rate which was the best performance of the last three years.

Members were asked to note that the AS Level data only includes those students who have cached in their results. For example, if a student sat an AS Level during 2014 but have not yet cached the result in, then they would be included in next year's data when the results have been cached in. This avoids the same results being counted twice.

Having fully considered the report, SACRE noted the analysis of examination results for Religious Education and Religious Studies for 2014.

8. WJEC PRESENTATION TO WASACRE ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2014 – “WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?”

The report outlined the key points contained within a presentation that was made to WASACRE on 26th November 2014, which detailed the WJEC Religious Studies data feedback for GCSE, AS and A Level courses.

Mrs Thomas outlined the GCSE specifications and the requirements for short course and full course qualifications, together with the main data findings for both areas.

In the last three years there has been a move away from Specification A to Specification B, with a greater number of candidates being entered for a Full Course Specification B at GCSE, although this has seen a decrease in the percentage of candidates achieving each grade point A*-C across this specification. There is an approximate 60/40 split in favour of girls studying across both specifications, with results indicating that that girls are achieving higher grades than the boys at A*-C grades across both specifications. Religious Studies GCSE Full Course pass rates were equivalent to or higher than the national average A*-C pass rate across all subjects, with the comparable pass rate across A*-G grades slightly below average.

With regard to GCSE Short Courses, pass rates are below the national average A*-C and A*-G pass rates for all subjects, although this is less so in Specification B. However, it was found that a very high proportion of those pupils entered for either specification will end up taking the exam as planned.

Mrs Thomas then outlined the AS and A Level specifications and the subject areas for each qualification, together with the entry levels for each area across the last three years. The most popular subjects across AS and A Level were Eastern Religions, Religion and Ethics and Philosophy and Religion, with the number of students increasing year on year. At AS Level and A Level, there continues to be a move away from more traditional options (such as Christianity/Biblical Studies).

The entry profile across AS and A Level has changed slightly, with a higher percentage of further education and independent establishments now taking Religious Studies. There is an average 70/30 split across AS and A Level in favour of girls. Across the last three years, there has been a 10% increase in the number of AS Level entries and a 4.6% increase in the number of A Level entries. The figures indicate that WJEC Religious Studies AS and A Level candidates have generally performed above the national average pass rate across all subjects over the last three years

Teaching Union Members asked for it to be noted that the WJEC provide a wide range of data analysis for each Religious Education subject, which can be extremely helpful in terms of self-evaluation by teaching establishments.

Following consideration of the WJEC Religious Studies data feedback for GCSE, AS and A Level courses, SACRE noted the contents of the report.

9. REVISED CRITERIA FOR GCSE AND GCE SPECIFICATIONS: UPDATE

The report advised SACRE that a number of changes were being currently being proposed to specifications and assessment practices for Religious Studies at GCSE and GCE (AS and A) Level, and Mrs Thomas provided an update in respect of this matter.

Members were informed that a number of meetings had already been held on these proposals and Mrs Thomas outlined the main proposed changes under discussion in further detail. These included a change to assessment objectives, changes to specifications at GCSE and GCE levels and the retention of a non-tiered system at GCSE level. Mrs Thomas also outlined the process and timescale by which consultation and implementation relating to these changes would take place. There will be a variety of models proposed at both GCSE and GCE Level and teaching establishments will be consulted on these.

The WJEC is due to circulate a questionnaire to all Welsh teaching establishments to consult on the specification proposals in the first instance, with a response time of 3-4 weeks, prior to a detailed development process relating to these new specifications. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will be implemented from Autumn 2016.

Mrs Thomas also explained that the Welsh Government and WJEC have agreed for a statement to be published in the first section of every new AS/A Level specification for Wales, which will allow for a Welsh dimension and perspective to be incorporated into the subject matter where appropriate.

Members noted the update relating to the revised criteria for GCSE and GCE specifications.

10. NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

The report detailed a review of assessment arrangements and the National Curriculum in Wales, which was announced by the Minister for Education and Wales on 1st October 2012. The review includes two phases and is led by Professor Graham Donaldson, who recently reported his findings to the Education Minister regarding Phase 2 of the review.

This section of the review focused on curriculum design at each phase/stage of education to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum which is fit for the 21st century, and included consideration of the Basic Curriculum (which incorporates Religious Education).

Mrs Thomas updated Caerphilly SACRE on the main findings of the review applicable to Religious Education. The review recommended a radical change to the curriculum, and suggested six areas of learning and experience which would combine the core and non-core subjects currently in existence. Mrs Thomas explained that the review endorsed the position and significance of Religious Education in modern-day education in that it was included under the “Humanities” remit of the suggested curriculum.

The review also recommended replacement of the four key stages of education with a series of “progression steps” which would result in a pupil’s time in school becoming a more seamless process.

Mrs Thomas explained that following the publication of the review, the Welsh Government have launched a ‘Great Debate’ on the curriculum. The first phase of this Great Debate will include a series of events held across Wales, attended by Professor Donaldson, to allow the people of Wales to engage with the pressing issues outlined in his report. SACRE were also advised of an online resource produced by the Welsh Government which encourages educational organisations to have their own debate regarding the curriculum review.

Members noted the contents of the report.

11. ESTYN REPORTING OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The report summarised the background to this matter, when at the Autumn 2014 meeting of Caerphilly SACRE, Members considered the main RE findings derived from the Estyn inspection reports of fourteen Caerphilly schools between Autumn 2013 and Summer 2014. It was noted that two 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).

SACRE agreed at that meeting that the RE Consultant would write to Estyn to highlight these issues regarding reporting procedures within the inspection reports. It is important to SACREs that there is consistency in reporting and that all reporting inspectors make a comment on the contribution of SMSC.

A response letter had recently been received from Anne Keane, Chief Inspector at Estyn, and its contents summarised to Members by Mrs Thomas. A copy of this letter had also been circulated to SACRE Members via email. The letter assured SACRE that inspectors would be reminded to report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development on pupils. The reminder from the Chief Inspector was evident in the latest bulletin sent to inspectors, which also offered advice regarding the SMSC requirement for Church of Wales and Catholic schools.

SACRE were pleased to note the report and the response from the Chief Inspector at Estyn.

12. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk to SACRE advised Members of a number of recent correspondence items. In addition to the response received from the Chief Inspector at Estyn, Members were advised of two letters that had recently been sent on behalf of Caerphilly SACRE. These consisted of a letter to all secondary schools advising of the forthcoming revised specifications for GCSE and A Level, and a letter making all schools aware of the RE resources available via the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service (GEMS) website.

13. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN TORFAEN – 26TH NOVEMBER 2014

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberation of WASACRE at its meeting in Torfaen on 26th November 2014. A copy of the draft minutes was included in the meeting papers.

Reference was made to three invaluable presentations given at the meeting (*WJEC Religious Feedback – Data Feedback, SACRE and Consortia Arrangements, and Monmouthshire SACRE – Celebrating RE Day*). Members were directed to the resources available on the WASACRE website and encouraged to view these presentations.

SACRE noted the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at the Torfaen meeting.

14. WASACRE - FEEDBACK FROM THE WASACRE MEETING IN PORT TALBOT – 6TH MARCH 2015

Members were updated on the discussions and deliberation of WASACRE at its meeting in Port Talbot on 6th March 2015. Mrs Thomas attended this meeting and informed Members that she had observed two excellent presentations, one of which (*Raising the achievement of boys by engaging them in RE issues and using thinking skills approaches*) she hoped to share with Caerphilly SACRE at their Summer Term meeting.

SACRE noted the discussions and deliberations of WASACRE at the Port Talbot meeting.

15. NOMINATIONS TO THE WASACRE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SACRE were informed of the correspondence received from WASACRE in relation to nominations for new Members to the WASACRE Executive Committee.

It was noted that a nomination form for Councillor D.M. Gray (who had faithfully represented Caerphilly SACRE in the past) had been forwarded to WASACRE by the Clerk to SACRE.

16. REPRESENTATION AT FORTHCOMING WASACRE MEETINGS

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

With regards to the next meeting of WASACRE on **25th June 2015** (Flint), it was noted that Councillor D.M. Gray would be in attendance. Councillor J. Taylor advised that he might be able to attend, subject to other commitments. Members were asked to notify the Clerk to SACRE should they be interested in attending. They would then be contacted with the agenda papers nearer to the meeting date and asked to confirm attendance.

The Chair thanked the Members of Caerphilly SACRE for their attendance at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.03 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR