

Minutes



Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date: 9 November 2016

Time: 10.00 am

Present:

LEA Representatives Councillors G Giles (Chair) and D Williams

Officers: V Thomas (RE Consultant), A Powles (Assistant Head of Education) & J Howells (Democratic Services Support Officer)

Faith Groups C Comely (Salvation Army), H Stevens (Baptist) & S Hunt (Church in Wales)

Teacher Representatives: N Huggleston (NASUWT), S Northcott (NUT) & L Picton (ASCL)

Apologies: Councillor A Morris, N Baicher (Sikh), G David (Pentecostal), P Landers (RC), K Mabbott (URC), J Crawley (ATL) & L Stevens (NUT)

1 **Agenda - Cym**

2 **Time of Quiet Reflection**

Members took part in a period of quiet reflection.

3 **Apologies for Absence**

As noted above.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were submitted.

Agreed:

That the Minutes of the SACRE meeting were accepted as a true record.

5 **Matters Arising**

Members were reminded of the dates and venues for the next two meetings. It was confirmed that all action points in the minutes had been carried out.

6 **Membership Update**

Lana Picton was welcomed to the meeting as the ASCL representative. As there was also now a full complement of councillors all positions on Newport SACRE were now filled.

7 **SACRE Annual Report 2015-16**

By law an annual report has to be provided for each SACRE which is then brought to the SACRE meeting for approval and following its approval is distributed to the relevant organisations. The Annual Report is a synopsis of what took place in Newport SACRE last year. V Thomas was particularly interested in going through the main points contained in the Executive Summary:

a) Religious Education

SACRE considers and analyses school inspection reports and follows up on any comments made by the inspectors. During the last academic year no RE subject specific issues were identified in the reports and therefore no follow up action was necessary.

SACRE also analyses examination results over a 3 year period and identifies trends in performance which is benchmarked against the All Wales data. Schools are informed of the outcomes of this analysis.

Two out of three SACRE meetings are held at schools during an academic year. In 2016/16 one primary and one secondary school were visited with each school making a presentation on RE which helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of RE at the school.

b) Agreed Syllabus for RE

In June 2013 Standing Conference endorsed the re-adoption of the Newport Agreed Syllabus for RE but the syllabus would be reviewed following further information being received in relation to the assessment and national curriculum review.

SACRE had been regularly updated on developments with the national curriculum review and are awaiting further details from Welsh Government and WASACRE before beginning any RE agreed syllabus review.

c) Teaching Materials

SACRE ensures that schools are informed of suitable teaching materials and in the last academic year Newport schools had been informed of the HMD theme for 2016 and the free resources available from the HMD Trust website.

SACRE had also circulated to secondary schools a copy of a presentation by Mary Parry together with an accompanying DVD. The resource was entitled 'Muslim Footballers in the Premier League' and was aimed at addressing the issue of raising the attainment of boys.

d) Training for Teachers

It was agreed that continuing professional development (CPD) training was focussed on Literacy and Numeracy. Training organised by the Church in Wales Diocesan officer had also been offered to schools.

e) Collective Worship

Part of SACRE's role is to ensure that schools fulfil the statutory requirements for Collective Worship. SACRE monitors the sections of inspection reports that are concerned with collective worship and SMSC and the LA follows up on any non-fulfilment of statutory requirements by requesting their action plan. There had been no issues identified in the inspections carried out in the 2015/16 academic year.

SACRE had arranged for schools to host two of its meetings each academic year to observe an act of collect worship or receive a presentation by the RE department.

Schools had been informed by SACRE of appropriate resources and websites that support collective worship in schools.

f) Other Issues

It was also the aim of SACRE to provide regular updates on local and national issues.

SACRE received termly feedback from the meetings of WASACRE.

Over the academic year SACRE had received three presentations:

- *Achieving the Religious Education Quality Mark Bronze Award* by the RE Coordinator at Langstone school
- *RE in the Secondary school* by the Head of RE at Duffryn High School
- *RE in the Primary school* by the RE Coordinator at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon

When discussing appendix 4 , *Newport examination analysis 2014* H Stephens voiced his concern about the drop in A*-G results compared to previous years and wondered whether this had been due in part to the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate. V Thomas confirmed that 92.1% was still comparable with the All Wales data benchmark. She added that the introduction of the Welsh Bacc would be discussed later in the meeting, under item 13.

The Chair thanked V Thomas for a very detailed and informative summary of the annual report. She appreciated the work that had been done.

The report was moved and seconded. A discussion ensued on its distribution. A Powles confirmed that the report would be published on the Council website and also the schools website.

Agreed:

No comments or questions were received on the SACRE Annual Report. The report was therefore approved and seconded.

Clerk to arrange for the report to be translated into Welsh. Both English and Welsh copies of the annual report to be forwarded to WASACRE for publication on its website.

Clerk and A Powles to liaise on putting the report on the NCC website and schools website.

Clerk to send the electronic link to the circulation list on appendix 5 of this report.

8 **SACRE Development Plan 2015-2018: Progress Report**

It is necessary for Newport SACRE to discuss the elements of the Development Plan in order to ensure that the business with which they deal is current and future developments are identified. V Thomas highlighted the progress that had been made on each of the aims

The aims set by SACRE in the development plan are:

- a. To monitor standards in RE & Religious Studies
- b. To review the agreed syllabus and supports its implementation
- c. To monitor provision and provide support for collective worship
- d. To ensure a more informed SACRE through providing regular updates on local and national issues related to RE and collective worship in schools.

All of the above aims had been covered by Newport SACRE.

V Thomas highlighted point 2.1 – *To review the agreed syllabus for RE*. SACRE had received termly updates and are currently awaiting further details from Welsh Government on the shape of RE in the curriculum and advice from WASACRE before beginning any RE agreed syllabus review.

Agreed

No comments or questions were received on the Development Plan. The report was therefore approved and seconded.

9 Inspection Report Analysis Autumn 2015-Summer 2016

V Thomas presented this report. As no inspection reports make judgements on subjects - including Religious Education – it is necessary to look at areas such as celebrating diversity, links with local community faith groups and global citizenship to identify comments that link to what RE is like at the school.

In Newport five primaries and one special school had been inspected during the 2015-16 academic year. All bar one of the reports received comments on the quality of collective worship. Comments made in the inspection reports gives a flavour of the standard of RE teaching at the school.

The Estyn Common Inspection Framework states that inspectors should only report on instances where the school does not comply with statutory requirements. As Estyn had not noted any instances of non-compliance it is assumed that all six schools inspected met statutory requirements for collective worship and for RE.

V Thomas was pleased to note that all schools had received comments on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. This was an area where in the past inspectors had been inconsistent in making comments and the point had been raised with Estyn by WASACRE resulting in inspectors now making comments on SMSC development in schools.

Agreed:

The report was discussed and noted.

10 RE and the National Curriculum: Update

In October 2015 '*A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*' document was released which outlines plans for taking forward Professor Donaldson's recommendations which he made in his report '*Successful Futures*'. One of the recommendations made in that report was that religious education should form part of the Humanities area of learning and experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception stage.

Pioneer schools and stakeholders will have a say in the shape of the curriculum. The first stage for Curriculum Pioneers would be a high level definition of an Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) Framework.

New Deal Pioneers would focus on the pedagogy and leadership needed to deliver the requirements of the new curriculum.

A meeting took place on 13 September 2016 between Welsh Government (WG) and WASACRE officers.

Manon Jones (WG) is responsible for the pioneer schools and 2 areas of AOLE, Humanities and Language and Literacy. There are three strands.

Strand 1: Pioneer school representatives have already attended a few induction events.
Strand 2: Between October and Christmas 2016 pioneer school representatives will work within areas of AOLE in order to consider the role of AOLE in the curriculum development. They will investigate the scope and connections of each subject within the Humanities AOLE.
Strand 3: Representatives from pioneer schools will consider the strands within each AOLE. This is where in depth subject specific knowledge will be needed.

WASACRE have been asked to support WG by:

- Reading material

- Attending meetings in both North and South of Wales
- Identifying schools exemplifying good practice in RE

VT was concerned that schools on the Pioneer schools lists had volunteered their services and their interest could be numeracy and literacy and not necessarily RE so it was important that WG seek advice from WASACRE to identify schools exemplifying good practice in RE.

She was also aware that the Church in Wales were looking to compile a list of their schools exemplifying good practice in RE which they would submit to the pioneer schools.

A seminar on the New Curriculum for Wales took place in October. It was organised independently from WG and the Chair of WASACRE, Phil Lord, had been invited to attend. Unfortunately, due to other commitments he was unable to attend but had hoped to send a substitute. V Thomas hoped that there would be feedback from this seminar at the WASACRE meeting in Carmarthen.

NAPfRE have begun drawing up a guidance document 'What makes good RE' for submission to the pioneer network for consideration when developing the shape of the RE curriculum.

H Stephens raised the following questions with the teachers present:

Q: Whether they were concerned that RE would now become part of Humanities.

A: L Picton agreed that there was concern for specialist subject teachers.

Q: Had they made any change to their RE courses.

A: L Picton and N Huggleston confirmed that it was 'business as usual' with the teaching of RE as they had not received any advice regarding changes impacting on the curriculum at secondary level.

S Hunt confirmed this was also the case with the infant school as it was part of the foundation Phase curriculum

Agreed:

The report was discussed and noted

11 GCSE Religious Studies: Update

It had been agreed previously that schools be advised of any updates on the progress regarding the revised specifications for GCSE and A/AS level examination courses. This would assist RE departments in preparing their course work for teaching the revised specifications.

The A/AS level specifications have been approved and in place for teaching from September 2016.

GCSE specifications were delayed and therefore deferred by Qualifications Wales until September 2017. However, some schools start GCSE courses early and need to begin their teaching for the new specification in September 2016 and will therefore require an outline of the new specification for GCSE by Autumn 2016.

In September SACRE wrote to secondary schools advising them of the most up to date information received from the WJEC.

The revised GCSE specification for RE was approved by Qualifications Wales on 12 October and will be implemented from September 2017.

There was concern that the new specifications were far more contextually based with more emphasis on religious texts. Discussion ensued about whether teachers are sufficiently trained to be able to handle a more contextually based curriculum in RE. It was agreed that as the courses would be more textually based some pupils may struggle and there may also be a need for teachers to upskill themselves.

A discussion ensued on the context of the long and short course. Both N Huggleston and L Picton confirmed that they had dropped the short course in year 10 for the time to be given to Welsh Baccalaureate. A discussion ensued about the importance of pupils being able to do the short course as a means of meeting statutory requirements at KS4. The short course has always dealt with contemporary issues that pupils could identify with and this was the most suitable course for those pupils following statutory RE lessons. However, the new specifications have lost some of the contemporary issues approach and this could make it more difficult for some pupils.

Agreed:

The report was discussed and noted

12 Inclusive SACREs Award

All SACREs were being encouraged to apply for the 2017 Accord Inclusivity Award by Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, Chair of the Accord Coalition for Inclusive Education. This was the first time SACREs had been invited to apply for the award which would be given to SACREs that work hardest in their area towards boosting the growth of inclusion, cohesion and mutual understanding between those of different religions and beliefs.

V Thomas believed that Newport were in a good position to apply because of all the work done by SACRE and also by GEMS in Newport and its surrounding areas, which was evident in comments made by Estyn during their inspections. Although there is no cost in applying for the award it does involve compiling quite a lot of information which she agreed to complete following consultation with the head of GEMS, who was keen for Newport to apply.

Every winner of the Inclusivity Award would receive national press coverage for their success.

Agreed:

It was agreed that Newport would apply for the award.

13 WASACRE

Feedback from AGM at Rhys, June 2016

H Stevens had represented Newport at the meeting and had submitted Newport's vote for the Executive Committee and had been successful in his application to sit on the Committee.

V Thomas confirmed that much of what was contained in the WASACRE minutes had already been discussed although she wished to discuss further the results of the Welsh Baccalaureate survey as she felt some schools might have misread the questions in the survey and some schools had not responded.

WASACRE had offered advice which had been supplied to them by WG in the event of schools not meeting their statutory requirement for RE at KS4 as a result of the new Welsh Bacc qualification. The advice given was:

- In the first instance SACREs are advised to formally inform/advise the Local Authority.
- If the situation remains the same and the school or schools involved continue to not meet the statutory requirement for RE, SACREs are advised to inform the Wales Association of SACREs.

- WASACRE is advised to write to the Local Authority involved to advise/remind them of their duty.
- WASACRE is advised to pass the information on to Welsh Government.

V Thomas suggested that a letter be sent to schools informing them of the statutory requirements for RE and enquiring whether they were fulfilling those statutory requirements. A reply slip should be attached to the letter enabling the school to respond to the LEA. The contents of the letter were discussed and it was agreed that two letters be drafted, one for primary and one for secondary schools.

Representation at next meeting in Carmarthen on 18 November 2016

VThomas, H Stephens and S Northcott agreed to attend. Anyone further wishing to go should submit their names to the Clerk.

Change of date of Spring WASACRE meeting

The Spring WASACRE meeting will take place on 3 March 2017 and will be hosted by Monmouthshire, the meeting taking place in Usk. As the meeting is taking place in Usk V Thomas asked that as many people as possible attend to ensure Newport was well represented.

Agreed

1. V Thomas to draft letters for primary and secondary schools which would be sent from the LEA.
2. Clerk to inform WASACRE of those attending the 18 November meeting in Carmarthen and forward the papers to those attending - V Thomas, Huw Stephens and Sally Northcott

14 Holocaust Memorial Day 2017

Holocaust Memorial Day was now part of the events calendar for Newport City Council taking place at St Woolos Cathedral. Previous HM days had been very well attended by local schools.

The theme for 2017 HMD is 'How Can Life Go On'. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has a wealth of material available specific to the theme of HMD. A letter would be sent to schools asking them to commemorate the event is some way and also advising them of the website address of the Trust for resources to support them.

It was confirmed that the Events office would send out invitations to schools and all SACRE members next week.

Agreed:

Letter to be sent to all schools encouraging them to participate in HMD and reference the website for appropriate resources www.hmd.org.uk

15 Correspondence

Information had been received from N Baicher explaining the meaning of Diwali day which was being celebrated by Sikhs and Hindus. The information was circulated.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.