

# Minutes



## Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

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Date: 19 October 2017

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), T Holyoake and J Watkins

Officers: V Thomas (RE Consultant), M Dacey (Head of GEMS) and J Howells (Democratic Service Support Officer)

Faith Groups: N Baicher (Sikh), S Hunt (Church in Wales), P Landers (Roman Catholic), S Sharma (Hindu), and K Sperry (Church in Wales)

Teacher

Representatives: K Hicks (UCAC), S Northcott (NUT) and L Picton (ASCL)

Apologies: Cllrs I & R Hayat, H Stephens, J Crawley, N Huggleston and H Vaughan

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### 1 Time of Quiet Reflection

Members took part in a period of quiet reflection.

### 2 Apologies for Absence

As noted above

### 3 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.

### 4 Matters Arising

A reminder had been sent to those schools which had not responded to the letter enquiring whether statutory requirements for RE at all stages were being delivered and to confirm that they were. Another 3 primary schools had responded. In total 37 schools from a total of 47 had responded which was a good result. All secondary schools responded

### 5 Membership Report

Kath Sperry was welcomed to the meeting as a Church in Wales representative.

A Methodist representative needed to be found. The Clerk reported that a name has been suggested by a SACRE member to fill this vacancy and she was currently awaiting contact details. It was agreed that any appointment would need to be endorsed by the Methodist secretary.

Unfortunately despite several emails no reply had been received from the Salvation Army concerning a replacement for Major Christine Comely. The Clerk will continue to contact them.

**Agreed:**

Clerk to continue contacting the Salvation Army and also look into sourcing a Methodist representative.

6 **SACRE Annual Report 2016-2017**

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 informing members of the main points contained in the Executive Summary:

a) Monitoring of 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.

SACRE visits schools on an annual basis so that strengths and weaknesses can be identified and issues can be addressed directly. In 2016/2017 SACRE had visited one secondary school and one primary school when two acts of collective worships were observed.

As the curriculum is presently under review SACRE wrote to all schools reminding them that coverage of the programmes of study of the locally agreed syllabus remains a statutory requirement.

b) The Agreed Syllabus for RE

This is currently on hold as the curriculum is under review. SACRE is updated each term on the progress of this review and the shape of RE within that curriculum.

c) Teaching Materials

All schools had been informed of the resources available on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website to celebrate Holocaust Memorial Day.

d) Training for Teachers

With the current Welsh Assembly Government's emphasis on literacy and numeracy no subject specific training was on offer although training organised by the Church in Wales Diocesan Officer has been offered to schools.

e) Collective Worship

There were no issues identified regarding collective worship identified in the inspection reports so no follow up action was necessary.

f) Other Issues

SACRE members had received regular updates from the Independent RE Adviser on the review of the National Curriculum and its implications for RE and the development of the revised exam specifications.

**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 to liaise with the Education department and arrange for the report to be put on the NCC and schools website.

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

## **7 SACRE Development Plan 2014-2018 Progress Report (see Annual 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 gave dates of meetings and examples of when these aims had been addressed.

### **Agreed:**

The Development Plan was discussed and noted

## **8 Inspection Analysis Autumn 2016-Summer 2017**

During the academic year Autumn 2016 to Summer 2017 nine Newport schools had been inspected – seven primary schools and two secondary schools. Comments in relation to spiritual development was evident in all the inspection reports.

Estyn inspectors will only comment in reports when schools do not comply with statutory requirements. Therefore, as no comments were made relating to non-compliance, it was assumed that all schools inspected met statutory requirements in relation to collective worship. It was noted that five of the nine reports did receive positive comments on the quality of collective worship.

It was pointed out to members that in the current Inspection Framework evaluations inspectors use a four-point scale and although the new Inspection Framework still has a four-point scale the grade descriptions for those points had changed. The new framework had been used for one of the nine schools inspected.

All schools had received positive comments on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. None of the schools were identified as falling short in spiritual development or not meeting the statutory requirements for collective worship. The reports also made positive comments on schools celebrating diversity, providing good opportunities for global citizenship to be developed and having good links with local faith communities. This gives some indication of the RE elements in a school. No school was identified as not fulfilling statutory requirements for RE and therefore no follow up action was necessary.

Caerleon Comprehensive was one of the schools inspected and L Picton, the headteacher, explained that the inspectors had compiled their report after observing one RE lesson and a number of the school's 'Daily Reflections' undertaken during form time and year group assemblies. They also had access to RE schemes of learning and examination results.

**Agreed:**

The report was discussed and noted.

9 **RE and the National Curriculum: WG Newsletter/Update**

Professor Donaldson report 'Successful Futures - Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' had made a recommendation that Religious education should form part of the Humanities area of learning and experience (AoLE).

Manon Jones of Welsh Government is responsible for the pioneer schools and two areas of learning and experience (AOLE), Humanities and Language and Literacy.

As part of the development the six AoLE working groups had produced reports to both the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG) and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG). Both groups, along with Welsh Government expert groups, had provided feedback on the work so far, as part of the quality enhancement process. The reports can be viewed by way of the following link:

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170707-new-curriculum-for-wales-story-so-far-en.pdf>

The Humanities working group had recommended that the 'big ideas'/what matters approach, as exemplified within Wynne Harlen et als 'Working with Big Ideas in Science' be followed. It outlined a planning methodology to develop the AoLE by identifying the key concepts, skills and competencies for each discipline within Humanities and then 'building' the AoLE by identifying overarching 'big ideas'/what matters key concept that would be drawn across the disciplines.

An update from WG outlining the above information from the Welsh Government was discussed.

WG had agreed to work closely with WASACRE and NAPfRE and had commissioned WASACRE to write a paper regarding the position of RE within the Humanities discipline. The University of Exeter was also asked to write a paper and both these will be considered by WG and the pioneer Humanities group. SACRE will receive a further update from WG and their professional adviser at the Spring meeting.

**Agreed:**

The report was discussed and noted.

10 **Estyn RE Thematic Review Questionnaire**

Estyn have a remit from WG to conduct a thematic review of RE at key stages 2 & 3.

The rationale for reviewing KS2 & 3 is to consider continuity and transition.

Evidence gathering would be via schools visits, telephone information gathering and a brief questionnaire to Chairs of SACREs.

Approximately 20 schools will be visited, some of the schools having been identified by HMI as needing further exploration, both positively and negatively.

V Thomas went through the 10 questions which were:

1. What regular contact does your SACRE have with primary and secondary schools in your area?
2. What support and guidance do you provide for school staff?

3. Do you feel that teachers have sufficient access to training and support to enable them to reach RE effectively?
4. Do you feel that there are any issues with non-specialist teaching RE in secondary schools? How does this impact on pupil standards?
5. Do you monitor standards and provision for RE in local schools? If yes, in what ways and how often? What are your findings?
6. Have you considered the impact of Successful Futures on teaching RE in schools? Do you envisage any issues if RE is taught as part of a wider Humanities curriculum at KS3?
7. Overall how well do you feel that RE is currently being taught in schools? Do you feel that any particular aspect of RE is more often taught well or taught poorly? What evidence do you base this judgement on?
8. Do you feel that standards of RE in schools have generally improved or declined over the last 5 years? In what ways and why?
9. What do you feel are the main issues facing schools?
10. Is there any other information that you would like to share?

Each question was discussed and comments were forthcoming regarding training and non-specialist teaching of RE.

L Picton suggested that a formalised network for RE would be an ideal forum in which to share good practice with other schools. She was happy to put forward the school's conference room as a venue for this. It was acknowledged that it was difficult for teachers to leave their schools during class time but perhaps they could take place in an afternoon.

Discussion arose about the lack of professional development for teachers and V Thomas confirmed that there were two training establishments in Wales – Bangor and Swansea. However Welsh Government had reduced the number of training places on the courses in order to ensure that teaching places were available on qualification. There was a debate about teacher training and V Thomas reported that Trinity Saint David's University (Swansea Campus) would be making a presentation at the Spring WASACRE meeting and members would be updated on developments after the Spring meeting.

**Agreed:**

That the questionnaire be revised by VT and for the clerk to return to Estyn by October 2017. VT to draft a letter to all schools to seek interest in forming an RE network in order to discuss RE issues and share good practice.

**11 GCSE Religious Studies: Update**

SACRE had been regularly updated on progress with regard to the revised specifications for GCSE and A/AS level examination courses.

In July 2017 all Newport secondary schools and SACRE members had been forwarded information from Lynda Maddock at WJEC regarding the availability of the WJEC (Wales) RE textbook. The Hodder text book, written specifically for Wales, had been available from August 2017 and the WJEC had a link to the RS page on their website. Many schools had been using the EDUQAS text book in the meantime.

EAS had agreed to fund and support Rhian Davies role as a Lead Practitioner for the next year. Rhian's contact details were contained within the report.

Network meetings would continue to take place with the next one scheduled to happen in Lewis school, Pengam.

**Agreed:**

The Update was reported and noted.

12 **WASACRE**

Feedback from AGM at Wrexham on 7 July

Newport representatives at the AGM were Vicky Thomas and Sally Northcott.

Items on the AGM agenda had already been covered in this meeting.

Gill Vaisey, who Newport had supported to take a place on the Executive, had actually been elected as Vice Chair. Tania ap Sion together with Alison Lewis were therefore elected as Executive members.

Representation at Autumn meeting in Bridgend

Cllr L Lacey (Chair), V Thomas, H Stephens and M Dacey will attend

**Agreed**

Clerk to inform WASACRE of those attending the Autumn meeting in Bridgend.

13 **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Holocaust Memorial Day is an annual event that takes place on 27 January and was established in the UK in 2000 with the first HMD taking place on 27 January 2001. This date marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945. Schools are encouraged to participate in HMD in order to remember the victims of the Holocaust and more recent genocides.

Newport holds a service in St Woolos Cathedral each year and the event had gone from strength to strength with many schools attending the service and several schools having a role in the service.

There is a theme each year and the theme for 2018 is '**The Power of Words**'. The theme explores how language had been used in the past and how it is used in the present day.

Further information about the theme and free educational resources containing material suitable for primary to post 16 students is available on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website <http://education.hmd.org.uk>

**Agreed:**

Clerk to write to all schools informing them of the information and resources available on the HMDT website.

The Local Authority to inform school of the service at St Woolos Cathedral on 27 January 2018.

14 **Correspondence**

The Chair read out an email which was sent by Marilyn Priday, a retired interfaith worker. At the request of a relative who worked at Bedlinog Primary school, Treharris, Merthyr. Marilyn had visited the school with Neeta Baicher to speak to the pupils about Sikhism. The pupils had thoroughly enjoyed the presentation as they had little experience of mixing with children of other faiths. It had been suggested that perhaps the pupils could visit Maindee Primary school which enjoyed a rich and diverse mix of pupils. M Dacey had contacted Bedlinog Primary and was currently awaiting a reply.

With no further matters to discuss the Chair thanked everyone for their input into a well attended meeting.