

Minutes



Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date: 14 February 2018

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors T Holyoake, I Hayat and J Watkins

Officers: Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant), Martin Dacey (Head of GEMS) and Joy Howells (Democratic Services Support Officer)

Faith Groups: Rebecca Penn and Huw Stephens

Teacher
Representatives: Sally Northcott, Lana Picton and Heather Vaughan

Apologies: Councillor L Lacey, N Baicher (Sikh), S Hunt (Church in Wales), J Crawley (ATL) and N Huggleston (NASUWT)

In the absence of Councillor L Lacey, Councillor Tracey Holyoake took the Chair

1 Welcome & Presentation from Caerleon Comprehensive School

A presentation on Religious Studies at the school was made by Claire Whatley, Head of RE. Mrs Whatley was pleased to report that RE at the school had been allocated larger accommodation and extra time for tuition. Time allocated for the instruction of RE key stage 3 received 2 hours per fortnight, key stage 4 had just been increased from 2 to 3 hours per fortnight and key stage 5 received 9 hours tuition per fortnight at both AS and A level.

V Thomas was pleased that the school SMT were supportive of the subject which makes students aware of the importance of RE especially when accreditation could be gained at the end of the course.

With regards to the class settings KS3 are taught in their form groups (approx. 30 students per group). KS4 (yr10) consist of 3 bands with 3 sets in each band. Sets 1 and 2 of each band study for full course and set 3 study short course GCSE. All students in the current year 11 are studying for a full course GCSE.

H Stephens felt that on the evidence of the amount of students studying for RE it was obvious that the subject should be kept in the curriculum as he was concerned it was being squeezed out.

Yr 9 were now being introduced to the new specification and not solely Yr 10. C Whatley considered the new specification was very content heavy and alternative means needed to be found to keep the interest of the students. She had done this by using varied resources such as DVD clips, quizzes, television programmes etc. This demonstrated the need for schools to share ideas and resources to find ways to enthuse students.

V Thomas was interested in receiving comments on the new curriculum from schools as there was a lot of biblical content and the situation would need to be monitored. C Whatley agreed that pupils did not enjoy the content heavy curriculum but hopefully this would change when it became more philosophical.

The Chair thanked Mrs Whatley for an excellent presentation which had prompted many queries and comments.

Agreed: That a letter of thanks be sent to the head teacher for hosting the SACRE meeting.

2 **Time of Quiet Reflection**

The Chair informed SACRE Members that Councillor David Atwell, a previous Chair of SACRE, had recently passed away. 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 of 19 October 2017 were accepted as a true record.

5 **Matters Arising**

All actions points agreed at the October meeting had been carried out.

Item 3 Membership Report

The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted Reverend Les Jones of St Julians Methodist Church but was still awaiting a reply from him regarding the Methodist vacancy.

No response had been received from the Salvation Army despite several emails being sent to the organisation.

6 **Holocaust Memorial Day 2018**

The theme for this year's annual event was "The Power of Words" which explores how language has been used in the past and how it continues to be used in the present day.

Newport City Council held a service at St Woolos Cathedral officiated by the Venerable Lister Tonge. Pupils from St Josephs RC High school, St Marys RC Primary school, John Frost and Newport High school had all participated in various roles in the service. The service had been very well attended, over 300 were present. There were also pupils from 24 Newport schools and various dignitaries present.

V Thomas was pleased that the event had gone from strength to strength with Newport SACRE being one of the first to become active in this field.

7 **Analysis of Examination Results Summer 2017**

V Thomas went through the analysis of the religious studies results for GCSE full course, GCSE short course, A and AS level. She confirmed that each school would have received their own school examination results and this would have been discussed within the school. The analysis gave a summary of the 2017 results in comparison to the previous two years, the Consortia and the All Wales figure. The analysis also included the cohort percentage which had been introduced in 2016.

GCSE full course: This course is generally taken by pupils who have chosen to take RE in their options but also includes students who may be studying two short courses as part of their statutory RE studies.

The number of schools entering for this course remained the same as 2016 and average cohort entry was slightly better than 2016. Results for A*-A and A*-C were better than 2016, Consortia and All Wales figures. Results for A*-G were slightly below the previous two years and the All Wales figure but comparable with the Consortia figure.

GCSE short course: Entry figures for 2017 had dropped below the previous two years although the same number of schools had entered. The % cohort entry though was only slightly below 2016 and was significantly higher than both the Consortia and All Wales figures. There was an improvement in A*-A grades compared to the two previous years and also they were better than the Consortia and All Wales figures. A*-C grades were below previous performance but better than the Consortia and All Wales figures. A*-G grades were comparable with the previous two years but better than the Consortia and All Wales figures.

Some schools enter pupils for two short courses and the performance is reflected in the full course results. It is generally more able pupils that are entered for two short courses and the results would be reflected in the A*-A and A*-C.

A Level: Both the number of schools and entry figures had decreased in 2017 although the % cohort entry figure was comparable with the Consortia figure and slightly better than the All Wales figure. Results for A*-A has improved and was better than the Consortia figure and comparable with the All Wales figure. A*-C results were lower than the previous two years and slightly below the Consortia and All Wales figure. The pass rate for A-E was 95.4% which was below the previous two years excellent results of 100%. It was also below the Consortia and All Wales figures.

AS Level: There was a huge rise in entry figures in 2017 compared to 2016 and 2015. The % cohort entry figure also exceeded the Consortia and All Wales figures. The A grade result was an improvement on 2016 results and lower than 2015 results. It is below the Consortia and All Wales figures. A-C results were the highest over the last three years and were also better than the Consortia and All Wales figures. A-E results were also better than the previous two years, comparable with the Consortia figure and higher than the All Wales figure.

* Data includes only those who have cached in their results.

Agreed:

V Thomas to draft a letter to all Newport secondary schools enclosing the analysis which would be forwarded to the schools.

8 **National Curriculum Review: Update**

Cllr Hayat left the meeting during this item.

As part of the development work the 6 AoLE working groups had prepared and produced reports to both the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG) and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) for feedback. Both groups, along with Welsh Government expert groups, have provided feedback on the work so far as part of the quality enhancement process.

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

As discussed at the previous SACRE meeting the Humanities working group recommendation had been to follow the 'big ideas'/what matters approach as exemplified

within Wynne Harlen et al's' Working with Big Ideas in Science. WG is exploring how Humanities will look and how it supports the new curriculum.

WASACRE and NAPfRE were working closely with WG during this review and WASACRE had drawn up a paper on 'What Matters in RE' which was presented at the Humanities Planning Workshops in November 2017.

The WG SACRE newsletter which updated all SACREs of the progress to date and the revised timelines for the curriculum was discussed.

- April 2019: Draft curriculum available for feedback
- January 2020: Final curriculum available
- September 2022: All maintained schools and settings using new curriculum and assessment arrangements (roll-out starting with primary and Year 7 and then year by year)

Initial proposals for the 'What Matters' key concepts for the Humanities AoLE had been included with the newsletter. The proposals reflected the Humanities pioneer group's thinking. The group will continue to meet every three weeks and have begun developing progression frameworks to underpin each of these 'What Matters' statements.

As SACREs were invited to submit their comments to this paper V Thomas went through the paper highlighting those areas which were RE focussed. She was pleased to note that there were plenty of opportunities for RE teaching to be relayed and that there was much emphasis on spiritual development. There was a need for there to be RE specific continuing professional development (CPD) when the programme comes out. V Thomas will be at the next WG meeting in March and will highlight the importance of CPD in RE and the concern that the cost of future CPD for RE would put pressure on schools' budgets. L Picton believed that the training should be incorporated in initial teacher training.

R Penn spoke of the need to ensure that RE does not become 'humanist' as it is to be included under humanities.

There was also concern that RE would become 'dumbed down' when incorporated within humanities. V Thomas reminded everyone that the RE syllabus was agreed by the local authority. H Vaughan had recently been a member of a group that had met with Professor Donaldson. She reported that he did deliberate on keeping RE as a separate subject and still meets regularly with the Cabinet Member for Education at WG to address progress on what he feels should be included in RE.

Agreed:

V Thomas to submit comments to WG on behalf of Newport SACRE

9 Professional Development Opportunities: Feedback

At the last Newport SACRE meeting there was discussion about the lack of opportunities for professional development. A letter was sent from SACRE asking schools if they would be willing to form networks as an opportunity for discussion on RE curriculum matters and also to share materials and resources.

As regards secondary education the main concern of schools was with matters related to delivery and resourcing the new GCSE specification and several secondary schools had responded positively to the suggestion of sharing resources. Fewer responses had been received from primary schools. V Thomas had made enquiries and discovered that there were grants that could be accessed for curriculum development.

There is a Learn, Teach Lead RE initiative in England and a bid can be made for a Network Group. This can also apply to Wales. Colleagues working within EAS (Gill Vaisey and Paula

Webber) are willing to explore the facilitating of arrangements, make a bid and arrange Professional Development sessions for schools in the EAS Consortia. The monies can be used over two year period and would include the development and/or purchase of resources as well as training.

In addition Monmouth SACRE faith representatives are looking to develop their transition sessions with schools with the intention of organising an event soon on a Consortia basis. This will need to be organised in co-ordination with EAS CPD.

Agreed:

V Thomas to secure dates from Caerleon Comprehensive as to when the initial 'shared resources' session could take place. Clerk to send a letter inviting RE contacts at Newport secondary schools to attend the session.

10 Managing the Right of Withdrawal

WASACRE had prepared guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education. Copies of the document had been distributed to all schools. A pdf version of the document had also been circulated to all SACRE clerks. SACRE members received a copy of this document.

A questionnaire had been prepared by WASACRE which was to be circulated to all schools to discover the extent of the invoking of the withdrawal from RE clause from across Wales. The questionnaire related to instances of withdrawal from Religious Education, whether the withdrawal was 'complete' or 'partial' as WASACRE are currently unaware of the figures of withdrawal. An LA /Newport analysis can also be reported to SACRE.

Agreed

That the questionnaire be circulated to all schools and returned to the Clerk.

11 WASACRE Issues

Feedback from Bridgend meeting 10 November 2017

Newport had been well represented with V Thomas, H Stephens and M Dacey attending.

Much of what was contained in the WASACRE minutes had already been discussed by SACRE.

Representation at the SACRE meeting at Swansea on 9 March 2018

V Thomas, S Northcott and H Stephens confirmed that he would attend.

Cllr Laura Lacey, although unable to attend today's meeting, had confirmed previously that she hoped to attend.

Nominations to the WASACRE Executive

As H Stephens is a representative on the WASACRE Executive Newport SACRE are unable to nominate for the Executive places.

Agreed:

Clerk to inform WASACRE clerk of the Newport representatives attending the SACRE meeting on 9 March.

12 Correspondence

A letter had been received from the Secretary to WASACRE seeking recruitment of a Minutes Clerk for the Association. Anyone expressing an interest to inform Paula Webber clerk to WASACRE.

Vicky Thomas informed everyone that the Summer meeting would be her last as after 22 years with Newport she was retiring from the position of RE Consultant. She did not know at this stage who would be replacing her but EAS had been informed and were seeking a replacement.

Sally Northcott confirmed that she too would be leaving Newport SACRE after the Summer meeting. She had been representing the NUT on the group for over 20 years. She will contact the Secretary of the NUT in order to seek a replacement.

The Chair was saddened to hear of the retirements as there was a wealth of knowledge between them. M Dacey thanked Vicky on behalf of the officers as her knowledge in the field of RE had been extremely helpful to them. H Stephens was concerned that Newport SACRE would be losing Vicky and there was a need to ensure that her replacement was up to speed on all matters.

The next meeting is scheduled for 14 June 2018 at Maes Ebbw school.

Agreed:

Clerk to distribute the WASACRE letter regarding the Minutes Clerk to all members.