

Minutes



Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date:	14 June 2018
Time:	10.00 am
Present:	Councillors I Hayat, R Hayat and J Watkins
Officers:	Vicky Thomas (RE Consultant), Nerys Wherry (LEA representative) & Joy Howells (Governance Officer)
Faith Groups:	Neeta Baicher (Sikh), Rebecca Penn (Church in Wales) & Huw Stephens (Baptist)
Teacher Reps:	Nikki Huggleston (NASUWT), Sally Northcott (NUT) & Heather Vaughan (NAHT)
Apologies:	Councillors L Lacey & T Holyoake, J Crawley (ATL), S Hunt (Church in Wales), P Landers (RC) & L Picton (ASCL)

In Councillor Lacey's absence Neeta Baicher took the Chair

1 **Welcome and Presentation by Maes Ebbw School**

SACRE members attended the school assembly which was conducted by Sian Garwood. The theme was the Islamic celebration of Eid which took place after Ramadan. Children were encouraged to suggest items which would be evident at any celebratory event including presents, cards, decorations. A video was played which showed a Muslim family preparing for Eid. The assembly finished with the children accompanying a song being sang by a choir of children on the video.

Agreed:

That the clerk write to the school thanking them for hosting the meeting and their hospitality and also the presentation made to SACRE.

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 of 14 February 2018 were accepted as a true record.

5 **Matters Arising**

All action points agreed at the February meeting had been carried out.

6 **Schedule of Meetings - 2018/2019**

Paula Webber, Secretary to WASACRE, would be taking over from Vicky Thomas as the Adviser to Newport SACRE. Future dates of SACRE would therefore be discussed at the next meeting in the Autumn but the clerk will try to arrange a date for the autumn meeting with Paula.

7 **Membership Update - Request for membership from Humanist Associations**

The Salvation Army and Methodist positions were still vacant as no replies had been received to emails sent.

It was also noted that Kirsty Mabbot had left the area and therefore a replacement was required for Presbyterian Church of Wales/United Reformed Church.

Martin Dacey would be stepping down as the LEA representative and his place had been taken by Nerys Wherry who was welcomed to the meeting.

A request to be a full member of Newport SACRE had been received from Clare James, a member of Humanists UK. This would involve a change to the Constitution in order to admit a group not specified in the current Constitution. Therefore this request required SACRE to write a report to the Local Authority recommending that a Humanist representative secure a position on Committee A.

Previously Humanists could not be considered for a position on Committee A but only as a co-opted member and co-opted members had not previously been permitted on Newport SACRE. WASACRE had previously asked Welsh Government for a definitive answer as to the membership of SACRE and guidance had recently been received from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams. Welsh Government (WG) considered that to ensure compatibility with the Human Rights Act 1998 Humanists should be considered for a position on Committee A of SACRE although the final decision would rest with the Local Authority.

SACRE debated the issue of whether Humanists should be represented on Newport SACRE.

Several questions were raised in relation to the request:

- a. How many Humanist representatives there were in the Newport area.
- b. Whether it was a requirement of SACRE members to attend acts of collective worship which may take place when SACRE visit schools for their meetings.
- c. Whether other SACRE in Wales had Humanist representation and were they full or co-opted members.

In answer to these questions VT confirmed:

- a. A letter from the person requesting membership was read out that outlined there were approximately 3000 Humanists in Wales but this number only related to those who contributed to campaigning work done by Humanists UK. Many humanists did not feel the need to identify themselves as such by taking out a paid membership.
- b. All SACRE new members would receive a copy of *So you are joining your local SACRE* booklet and she suggested that all members current and future receive an induction session from the new Consultant in the next academic year outlining the requirements, duties and expectations of members.

- c. There are other SACREs in Wales with Humanist members, currently as co-opted representatives and some of those SACREs were moving to give full Committee A status as a result of the letter from the Cabinet Secretary, Kirsty Williams. VT stated that in her experience she had found input from Humanists on SACREs very helpful on occasions and delivered in a spirit of collaboration.

The matter was then voted upon by the three groups, local authority representatives, faith representatives and teacher representatives.

The vote was carried to recommend that a place on SACRE be allocated to a Humanist representative.

There were some comments which were to be recorded:

1. Whilst members could not go against legislation there was concern as to whether a humanist would be willing to witness acts of collective worship etc at schools. This could be checked with the WASACRE Humanist observer, Kathy Riddick.
2. As a representative of residents of Newport Cllr W wished to record that she represented all members of the public, irrespective of their beliefs.
3. It was important to acknowledge and respect all beliefs which is what SACRE was all about and it was suggested that a presentation be made at the next meeting to remind members of the purpose of SACRE.
4. It was pointed out that in the revised GCSE specification it is required for pupils to look at secular as well as religious views and this would be included in some parts of the exam paper and therefore a Humanist perspective on SACRE could prove helpful. .

VT recognised that there had been some discussion and dissent to the recommendation but that the correct voting procedure had been followed and a recommendation would be made to Council.

Whilst on the subject of membership VT queried whether members wanted to permit Co-opted members (who would not have voting rights) onto Newport SACRE. Whilst there was currently no request for this it was recognised that there might be occasion when someone who did not qualify as an LEA rep, faith rep or teacher rep might be invited to join as they possessed some particular expertise in RE. As there was presently no such request it was decided remain the status quo until such an occasion arises.

Agreed:

VT to prepare an outline report for the Local Authority confirming SACRE's recommendation that the membership of Newport SACRE be increased buy one member to include a Humanist representative.

That a presentation be made at the Autumn SACRE meeting on the purpose of SACRE and the roles and responsibilities of SACRE members.

8 Withdrawal from RE Survey

WASACRE had prepared guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education copies of which had been distributed to all schools.

A questionnaire had been prepared by WASACRE and circulated to all schools. 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.

Despite being sent several times the response had been poor but were as follows:

Secondary schools

5/9 schools responded (55.5%)
No parents exercised their right of complete withdrawal.
No parents exercised their right of partial withdrawal from RE

Primary schools

26/47 schools responded (55.3%)

Complete Withdrawal

4 schools responded that parents exercised their right of complete withdrawal from RE resulting in a total of 6 children being withdrawn. 4 of these pupils belonged to Jehovah Witness families. The parents of the remaining 2 pupils felt strongly about their own religious beliefs.

Partial Withdrawal

4 schools responded that parents exercised their right of partial withdrawal from RE resulting in 5 pupils being withdrawn. Once again the majority of those withdrawn belonged to Jehovah Witness families although the family of 2 pupils did not wish their children to learn about other religions.

As RE now sits within Humanities it was unclear how withdrawal from RE would be handled. WG were liaising with WASACRE on this matter and were keen to get a handle on how withdrawal could be managed if RE was incorporated into Humanities and had therefore requested as much feedback as possible from schools.

Agreed:

That headteachers be informed of the importance of completing this survey at the next headteachers' meeting and that the clerk once again send out the survey to schools who had not responded following that meeting, even if it is a NIL return.

9 CPD for Secondary School Teachers

At its autumn 2017 meeting it was brought to the attention of Newport SACRE that there were limited opportunities for teachers of RE to gain any form of professional development in the subject. SACRE agreed to contact schools for expressions of interest in forming a professional network in order to share ideas and resources, discuss any concerns they had and to use it as a medium of sharing good practice. SACRE agreed to organise the first meeting for secondary schools and that schools thereafter would be responsible for organising future meetings.

7 secondary schools responded and the first CPD session was held on 13 June 2018. N Huggleston had attended and confirmed that 5 schools had been represented and they had focussed mainly on GCSE requirements at the meeting. The information shared had been very useful and it was hoped that a meeting could be held each term – at a different secondary school each time.

Enquiries are still being made about acquiring a source of funding from the Culham St Gabriel Trust for CPD in RE for both primary and secondary teachers. This would require considerable organising through a co-ordinator who would submit the bid and organise training opportunities.

10 Update on National Curriculum Review

In his report 'Successful Futures – Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' Professor Donaldson had made the recommendation that Religious Education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE).

As discussed in previous SACRE meetings the recommendation of the Humanities working group was to follow the 'big ideas'/what matters approach as exemplified within Wynne Harlen et al's 'Working with Big Ideas in Science'.

In the latest newsletter from Manon Jones it was confirmed that the curriculum team at Welsh Government had focussed on developing an AoLE design model to clarify the various components that will form part of the six Areas of Learning & Curriculum within the new curriculum. M Jones had requested feedback to Pauline Smith by 1st July on the latest proposals from the Humanities AoLE group.

V Thomas confirmed that she had noticed differences from the draft she had seen in March.

VT went through the 'What Matters statements and their accompanying rationales' and also the progression steps for each statement and outlined the main changes and her observations. These included

Statement 1 – Whilst there was an RE 'hook' in the statement it was not evident in the progression steps.

Statement 2 – Whilst the progression steps referred to 'impact and influence' it was not referred to in the statement.

Statement 3 – This appeared to be a re-ordering of the March version and SACRE were happy with it.

Statement 4 – This statement was very weak on religious terms and concepts. In the March draft there was reference to '*contemporary and historical interpretations*'. The statement now failed to mention contemporary interpretations, which is very important in RE.

Members were also concerned about the level 3 progression statement about learners acknowledging the individual disciplines such as geography, history and RE which seemed to go against the Donaldson principle of the interconnectivity of the disciplines.

Statement 5 – Although this statement had changed from the March draft as it did not refer to *awareness of self and the views of others to deepen understanding* this though had now been included in statement 6 and SACRE were happy to see it included.

Statement 6 – SACRE were pleased that reference to *awareness of self and the views of others to deepen understanding* was now included in statement 6. There were good RE hooks in this statement and progression steps to pick up RE.

As RE is locally determined Members felt it important that there was specificity of the RE content which would signpost to teachers what they are going to teach.

There were still questions regarding how the translation from a more thematic Humanities approach at KS3 to a more discrete subject curriculum at KS4 and KS5 is managed.

WG had consulted with WASACRE on RE issues throughout this review and were keen to have SACREs onboard and it was important that each SACRE relayed their comments/concerns to WG before the review was finalised. WG would be holding a conference in September and a limited number of SACRE members would be invited to attend. VT suggested that the Chair and possibly 3 others (SACRE could decide if they wished to ensure representation from all 3 groups - a faith, teacher and LEA rep) attend. VT asked that members be vigilant for the date of the Conference and ensure appropriate representation as this was a very important time for RE.

Agreed

VT to respond to WG on behalf of SACRE by July 1st with the comments above

11 **Estyn Updates**

V Thomas went through the 2 recent Estyn Updates:

1. ESTYN: Update for inspectors (April 2018). Spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship

In the inspection of schools guidance handbooks inspection teams are required by Estyn to consider the provision of pupils' spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship. Whilst inspectors will comment on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils they are not required to report in a formulaic way. The team will weigh up the significance of any strengths and weaknesses in this area although they may report on acts of collective worship 'by exception' – where there are particular strengths or weaknesses.

Inspectors are required to report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils but not necessarily on collective worship. Members were therefore advised that if SMSC comments were missing from reports it should be flagged up to Estyn.

2. Estyn Thematic Review of Religious Education at KS2 & 3

This report was published on 12 June and will be discussed at the WASACRE meeting in July. The report will therefore need to be discussed at the next SACRE meeting in November.

Agreed:

That the Estyn Update for Inspectors on *Spiritual development and daily acts of collective worship* be sent to all schools for information only.

That the Estyn Thematic Review report be discussed at the Autumn 2018 SACRE meeting

12 **WASACRE Issues**

Feedback from Spring Meeting

The meeting in Swansea on 9 March had been attended by Vicky Thomas, Huw Stephens and Sally Northcott.

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

Representation at Summer Meeting

This will take place on 6 July in Anglesey. Vicky Thomas and Sally Northcott agreed to attend.

Executive Voting for the period 2018-21

There was only one nomination for the position on the Executive Committee and this was Kathy Riddick who was appointed in March 2016 as the Wales development officer for Humanists UK.

With regards to this nomination there was a variety of views which generated a lot of discussion. Unfortunately a consensus could not be reached by the committee about supporting the nomination of Kathy Riddick for the Executive position and therefore Newport SACRE abstained. The clerk to WASACRE would be informed.

WASACRE Revised Constitution 2018

The WASACRE Constitution had been revised and amended in light of experience and protocol. It will be considered at the WASACRE AGM in July 2018 and SACREs were invited to submit their comments in writing to the secretary.

Changes to the Constitution were evident as they were highlighted in red. VT drew members' attention to her concerns within the appendices:

Appendix 6 - Under the heading *Procedures* there was concern over the reference to any accuracy in minutes being raised by a motion. This was considered too prescriptive.

Appendix 6a – Regarding the code of practice for the conduct of elections there was concern over the lack of closing dates in relation to nominations for election to WASACRE Executive and also notification to SACREs of the nominations put forward. It was felt a specific date or a 'no later than' date should be inserted to prevent extremely tight timescales.

Agreed:

Clerk to inform WASACRE clerk of Newport members attending the WASACRE meeting in North Wales in July.

Newport SACRE to submit comments on the revised Constitution to the WASACRE secretary before the AGM on 6 July 2018

13 **Correspondence**

Heather Vaughan had been asked to pass on information about an interfaith event at the Cathedral in November.

Canon Mark from Newport Cathedral is organising an interfaith event based at the Cathedral in November, as part of Interfaith week. He hopes to have an event that focuses on the sharing of foods.

Any faith groups interested in were asked to contact Canon Mark on 07940 846494.

Finally the Chair made a presentation to Sally Northcott and Vicky Thomas as they were attending their final meeting of Newport SACRE.

Sally was thanked for 22 years of commitment and service to Newport SACRE, always being relied up to attend meetings. Sally had contributed to SACRE and WASACRE as a supply teacher representative, even after she had retired from full time teaching. She was also a regular attendee at WASACRE meetings.

Previous to taking up as adviser to Newport SACRE Vicky had been an advisory teacher for R for Swansea and then advisor with ESIS.

She has worked with 8 different chairs in Newport and during the 22 years her passion for improving the provision and standards of religious education had been evident. She had also provided training and support for an extensive number of teachers during her career which has had a major impact on the quality of RE for pupils. The years she have worked with SACRE had been marked by unsurpassed efficiency and excellence.

Both members were thanked for their long service and for their input into meetings which was invaluable.

The above comments were echoed by the members present.

With no further items to discuss the Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed.