

Minutes



Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 12 March 2024

Time: 9.30 am

Present: Councillor Deb Davies (Chair), Councillor Saeed Adan, Councillor Farzina Hussain, Hayley Jones (Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics), Huw Stephens (Faith Representative), Neeta Baicher (Faith Representative), Tanya Simmonds (Secondary Teacher Representative), Emma Keen (Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service) (GEMS), Sarah Morgan (Head of Education), Rebecca Penn (Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary), S Hawke-Williams (The John Frost School)

In Attendance: Simon Richards (Governance Officer) and Katharine Majer (Deputy Democratic and Electoral Services Manager)

1 Apologies for Absence

Mark Rowland and Tom Hills (Church in Wales Head Teacher and Church of Wales Representative)

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were held as a true and proper record. The Forum noted that Rebecca Penn was not listed as in attendance and asked for this to be amended.

3 Bassaleg School - A Secondary Approach to Religion, Values and Ethics

The Secondary Teacher Representative presented to the Forum. They described the key approach to Religion, Values and Ethics in Bassaleg School.

Key Points:

- Bassaleg School uses a process of continuous assessment and minimum expected grades (MEG). These changes to assessment have meant a mindset and culture change for students, staff and parents.
- There is a whole school assessment policy but also specific department level policies.
- Learner engagement is crucial and RVE should be perceived as integral to the curriculum and the purpose of everything we do in and outside the classroom should be considered.
- It is a unique subject area that reinforces what other subjects can offer but stands alone in its uniqueness and what it offers to learners.
- The study of RVE should be multidisciplinary, adopt a worldviews approach and include breadth and depth.
- RVE should be objective, critical and pluralistic and it should be relevant and inclusive of all.

- **The RVE curriculum should be built around ‘learner experiences’ and should allow opportunity for individuality, creativity and skill development.**
- **RVE requires a holistic approach.**

The following was discussed:

The Forum stated that some of the teaching techniques used are good for multi-lingual learners. They enquired whether when classrooms are turned into war zones this is handled sensitively. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that it is not an uncontrolled discussion and there are learners who have been directly affected by these issues who want to discuss their experiences.

The Forum queried where Bassaleg School are in terms of RVE. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that they are a pilot school, and all Key Stage 3 students are on the new curriculum.

The Forum enquired how Year 9-11 wellbeing works with the SACRE agreed syllabus. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that Year 9 and 10 complete three hours per fortnight and Year 11 do one hour per week. This is studied alongside wellbeing but makes for a programme that is better in terms of delivery as it used to be “stand down” which was two sessions of four hours within the year.

The Forum queried what was the approval rating from the children as short course had a good rating as they had a qualification. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that Year 9 have a high approval rating as they have come from the new curriculum. They are facing some difficulties with Year 10 when compared with Welsh Compulsory but what is being provided now does meet statutory requirements but no qualification at the end. The Forum stated that it would be useful for the Secondary Teacher Representative to return to the Forum at the end of the school year once there has been a chance to evaluate it.

The Forum enquired what opportunities were available in the cluster to develop progression steps to avoid repeating things and ensure that pupils develop knowledge over time. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that they have worked on the progression steps with Primary which feeds into Secondary. There is still work to be done and there are Quality Assurance procedures in place to ensure that work is being done in the department.

The Forum stated that they like the approach to capturing learning and understanding and feel this gives pupils more autonomy to demonstrate their understanding. They feel it is imperative that pupils have open minds and understand their place in the world and other people’s point of view and experience and there does not need to be accreditation attached to that. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that they do try things and see what is successful and what is not.

The Forum enquired how much of a link is there between History, Geography and RVE and how a humanities cluster works in the school. The Secondary Teacher Representative informed the Forum that Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE) meetings take place which have four areas of focus and there are representatives from each part of the AOLE. They informed the Forum that the links are made by the students, and they are asked at the end of each lesson to link it to other parts of the curriculum, and they work closely enough together to understand what each part of the curriculum is doing.

The Forum stated that children learning about the world and becoming ethical, informed citizens is important and this is one of the fundamentals that tie in with the Welsh Government’s anti-racism plan.

4 Cluster Conversations (Caerleon)

Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics presented to the Forum.

Key Points:

- A cluster Humanities Day was held at Caerleon Comprehensive which gave practitioners time to discuss their approaches to the Humanities curriculum, including RVE.
- Caerleon Comprehensive discussed what they do in Key Stage 3
- RVE is monitored through termly progress checks.
- Coming from Primary, the Comprehensive suggested that schools could develop learners RVE skills such as: describe and explain religious events, practices and traditions. This can then be further developed in Year 7 as they begin to analyse, interpret and evaluate. Discussion of non-religious world views need to be included too.
- Discussions with the primary school practitioners indicate that the approach to RVE is a mixture of integrated and discrete lessons to provide depth of religious knowledge across Humanities subjects as they explore a concept. However, RVE does not always lend itself to the concept with some discrete teaching necessary to understand the religious beliefs and practices.
- Initial discussions highlighted that a more pluralistic approach was needed when teaching RVE and to provide greater opportunities for inquiry. The school also felt that they needed to implement a greater variety of ways to capture learning within RVE.
- Practitioners across the cluster are more confident in the delivery of RVE and feel that they have 'something to work from'. When capturing RVE, practitioners are using a greater variety of resources, including videos.
- Schools report that learners are benefitting from capturing their RVE learning in a variety of ways, and enjoy different ways that RVE is being delivered. Planning and monitoring of RVE in schools shows that practitioners are beginning to think more about the pluralism within RVE and schools are reporting that learners are more confident to share what they think and give their opinion.
- Practitioners are also beginning to change their way of questioning and responding in lessons, ensuring that what they say is far more pluralistic, open-ended and allows pupils to think for themselves, developing different viewpoints.
- Collaboration with the schools in the cluster to discuss what the 3-16 curriculum should look like for RVE and gain shared 'vision'. The RVE Network was beneficial in talking to other colleagues and sharing what has been done in different school settings around RVE. Education Achievement Service (EAS) shared progression maps for RVE and Humanities to begin the process of concept driven curriculum design.

The following was discussed:

The Forum stated that having a curriculum that is mapped out to ensure it is progressive and based on values allows schools to be far more comfortable with aspects of RVE.

The Forum stated that they found that children who are taught about different faiths are more rounded. They queried whether it would be possible to display some RVE work in the reception area of the Civic Centre. The Chair noted that they will look into this with the Head of Education.

The Forum stated that they were surprised in terms of the comprehensive view of looking at one religion each year as the big questions cross all religions and non-religious views. They

enquired whether the Right to Withdraw still exists and if so, how would this work in primary schools. The Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics informed the Forum that the Right to Withdraw has been removed within RVE. In the wider school, values that cover all of the school is more of a grey area, for example, Christmas. Within an RVE lesson, there is no right to withdraw however a Christmas concert would fall under collective worship so the Right to Withdraw applies. They informed the Forum that schools are good at knowing their parents and pupils and adapting to what works for their current learners. Time is the major issue and the focus on one religion allows them to make best use of their time.

5 **Education / Religion, Values and Ethics updates**

The Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics presented to the Forum.

Key Points:

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- **Creation of webinars on the six main world religions and non-religious views.**
- **Work around Youth SACRE and Philosophy for Children. Looking to get representatives from five Gwent local authorities with a rotating Chair. It would involve tasks for the children and then getting them to feed back in the following meeting.**
- **Need to ensure there is a cross-section of ages, backgrounds and the inclusion of Welsh-medium schools.**
- **Anti-Racism Training taking place on the Thursday 18th April 2024 to encourage pupils to think about all different points of view and upskill teachers.**
- **Professional learning around statutory RVE and what will bridge the gap between short course and the new provision.**

6 **Wales Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (WASACRE) Business**

The Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics informed the Forum that she was not in attendance at the last meeting so is waiting for the minutes to be made available.

7 **A.O.B**

- The Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service) (GEMS) representative informed the Forum that GEMS is now Gwent Education Multi-Lingual Service (GEMS).
- The Faith Representative enquired when the next WASACRE meeting is taking place. The Teacher Adviser for Religion, Values and Ethics informed them that it is on the Saturday 13th July 2024 in Wrexham.
- The Head of Education informed the Forum that the date of the next meeting is Tuesday 2nd July 2024 at St Andrew's Primary.