

FLINTSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
17 OCTOBER 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held at County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 17th October, 2012

PRESENT:

Councillors R.C. Bithell, A.J. Davies- Cooke, H. Isherwood, C. Legg and D.I. Mackie

Religious Denominations: G.W. Jones, S. Jones, Rev. H. Powell-Davies and R. Price

Teacher Associations: H.E. Jones, R. Keating and M. Madoc-Jones

Education Officers: J. Dickens

APOLOGIES:

Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer and C.A. Thomas
Y. Barker, L. Harkin, H. Hughes, D. McIntyre, D. Morgan and P. Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE:

Senior Learning Adviser RE and Committee Officer

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY CHAIRMAN

The Chairman announced that the representative from the British Humanist Association had not responded to the invitation to attend this meeting and was therefore not present for agenda item 4.

The Chairman also congratulated the Senior Learning Adviser RE on the recent birth of his baby son.

2. POST OF CHAIRPERSON

The Chairman, Mr. H.E. Jones, advised that Ms. H. Hughes was due to take the role of Chair until the end of the academic year 2012/13, however she was unable to attend this meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Ms. H. Hughes become Chair until the Summer of 2013.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR (FROM THE LEA COUNCILLORS - TO BECOME CHAIRMAN FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/14)

The Chairman sought nominations for the post of Vice-Chair from the LEA Councillors. Councillor R.C. Bithell nominated Councillor D.I. Mackie and this was duly seconded.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor D.I. Mackie be appointed as Vice-Chairman until the Summer of 2013 and become Chairman for the academic year 2013/14.

Councillor Mackie took the chair for the remainder of the meeting, in the absence of the Chair.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2012 were submitted.

MATTERS ARISING

Minute number 21 – Monitoring and Supportive Review

The Senior Learning Adviser RE referred to the third line in the second paragraph and said that the word 'area' should be replaced with the word 'school'. Councillor C. Legg referred to the ninth line in the same paragraph and said that the letter 'c' in 'practiced' should be replaced with an 's'.

Minute number 23 – Presentation by Helen Hughes, CIW Representative

Councillor R.C. Bithell referred to the fourth line in the second paragraph on page 4 and suggested that the word 'pupils' should be replaced with the word 'students'.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the foregoing, the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2012 be approved as a correct record.

5. PRESENTATION ON THE CURRENT ESTYN FRAMEWORK

The Senior Learning Adviser RE provided a presentation on the current Estyn Framework and detailed the changes within the Framework.

The presentation included the following areas:-

- Key features
- Inspection Process
- Inspection Teams
- Judgement Scale
- The 2010 Framework

Members of SACRE thanked the Senior Learning Adviser RE for the presentation. Ms. J. Dickens explained that the inspections now focussed on specific subject areas such as English, Maths, Sciences and Welsh where it was a first language and said that not all areas, such as RE, would be reported on. The Senior Learning Adviser RE said that if the statutory requirements were not being met, a comment would be made within the inspection report.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

6. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Senior Learning Adviser RE introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for five schools inspected under the new Estyn Framework between February and July 2012:-

Ysgol Merllyn, Bagillt
Drury CP, Buckley
Ysgol Terrig, Treuddyn
Ewloe Green CP, Ewloe
St. Mary's RC, Flint

He detailed the positive comments made in Key Questions 1, 2 and 3 for all five schools and highlighted those made in the areas of standards; wellbeing; learning experiences; care, support and guidance; learning environment and partnership working.

Councillor C. Legg welcomed the report but he raised concern that there was little or no mention of Religious Education (RE) within the report as he felt that a basic knowledge of the bible should be taught. In response the Senior Learning Adviser RE said that the Estyn Framework was based on the school self evaluation and added that RE and Collective Worship were still continuing in schools but that Estyn did not necessarily focus on it. If the school put in their self evaluation that RE was being taught to the required standard, then Estyn would not report on it but would include a comment if it was not being taught. Ms. J. Dickens queried whether the report was now of value to SACRE and that consideration should be given to a different way of reporting RE provision to SACRE. Mr. R. Keating agreed that the report was bland but this was because of the constraints put on Estyn. He felt that it was for SACRE to look at how the required information could be obtained and spoke of visits which had been undertaken by London SACRE to see the good practice in schools and to celebrate it.

Councillor H. Isherwood asked whether it was possible for Estyn to be asked to include comments about RE in their reports. Ms. Dickens responded that all schools had to follow a statutory curriculum which included RE but that it was not always monitored to the same degree as other subjects. Mr. G.W. Jones spoke of an inspection which was due to take place at his school before Christmas and prior to this a departmental self evaluation form had been completed; he queried whether SACRE should ask to see the self evaluation forms. The Senior Learning Adviser RE reminded the members that this item had been included on the agenda for SACRE for a number of years to allow for monitoring of RE, however the new Estyn framework had reduced the content of the reports. He added that comments would be made by Estyn if RE and Collective Worship were not being met statutorily, so if SACRE continued to review the reports, they would be able to see where RE or Collective Worship were not being undertaken.

Ms. R. Price welcomed the discussion and in querying how Welsh Government (WG) viewed RE, said that WG had produced a booklet in the summer term for every parent about the curriculum; it did not include RE. She said that the only references to RE were that schools taught the subject and that parents could withdraw their children from RE. Councillor R.C. Bithell felt that how WG viewed RE in the curriculum as a whole was an issue which should be pursued.

Mr. R. Keating spoke of the agreed syllabus which indicated that Christianity was the predominant religion taught in schools. Mr. H.E. Jones agreed with the suggestion made earlier by Mr. G.W. Jones that SACRE should see the self evaluation forms; the Senior Learning Adviser RE did not agree that the forms from schools should be requested. Mr. H.E. Jones suggested that schools be contacted to find out what they were undertaking for RE and Collective Worship as it was a statutory obligation. The Senior Learning Adviser RE felt that SACRE was in place to support schools and that asking for this information may give the impression that SACRE did not trust what was being undertaken in the schools. Ms. Dickens felt that another questionnaire in schools would not be welcomed and Ms. M. Madoc-Jones added that the visits undertaken by the Senior Learning Adviser RE were more valuable than information obtained by a questionnaire. Councillor Bithell said that in the past, schools had attended a SACRE meeting to give a presentation and queried whether this could be undertaken in the future.

Following a discussion, Ms. S. Jones suggested that a letter be sent to Head Teachers to reinforce the role of the Senior Learning Adviser RE and to raise the profile of SACRE with schools so that they were aware of the support provided by SACRE.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received: and
- (b) That a letter be sent to all Head Teachers to reinforce the role of the Senior Learning Adviser RE and to raise the profile of SACRE with schools.

7. MONITORING AND SUPPORTIVE REVIEW

The Senior Learning Adviser RE introduced the report and detailed the good features, areas for development and recommendations reported for each of the following schools:-

St. David's High School
Wood Memorial CP School
Saltney Ferry CP School

He explained that he visited secondary schools and the feeder primary schools for a half or whole day visit to observe lessons and collective worship; a summary of the visit was produced and submitted to SACRE for consideration.

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the report and the explanation provided by the Senior Learning Adviser RE. In response to a query from Councillor H. Isherwood about how old the children were when they were taught about other faiths, the Senior Learning Adviser RE said that a story about Divali could be read to the reception pupils.

Ms. R. Price felt that it would be helpful if the report could indicate whether the school complied with the agreed syllabus. In response to a question from Councillor R.C. Bithell about the recommendation of collective worship for Saltney Ferry CP School, the Senior Learning Adviser RE explained that it was because it was not being undertaken at the school. He advised them of a document entitled 'Practical Inspirations' which could be used to assist them in Collective Worship.

Mr. H.E. Jones queried whether collective worship was being reviewed as it should be and the Senior Learning Adviser RE responded that Collective Worship was a statutory requirement but that if it was not being met, then a recommendation in an Estyn report would be included to ensure that they meet the statutory entitlement for collective worship.

The Senior Learning Adviser RE reminded SACRE that in the past, a letter had been sent to the schools to congratulate them on the positive outcomes of the inspections. He asked whether he should send a letter to the schools and this was agreed. Ms. J. Dickens asked whether the letter could also include a reminder that collective worship was a statutory requirement.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received; and
- (b) That the Senior Learning Adviser RE send a letter to the schools to congratulate them on the positive outcomes of their reports and to include a reminder that collective worship was a statutory requirement.

8. SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

The draft annual report of Flintshire SACRE 2011-2012 had been circulated to members with the agenda.

The Senior Learning Adviser RE explained that the word 'DELLS' at section 3.b.ii on page 15 should read 'DFES'. Councillor R.C. Bithell also suggested that the word 'pray' on the second bullet point on page 20 should read 'prayer'.

Mr. H.E. Jones commented on the teacher training undertaken at Chester and Bangor Universities, and asked whether there was an opportunity to reform the links between SACRE and the students to reinforce SACRE's support.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments suggested above, the report be received.

9. WASACRE

The Senior Learning Adviser RE highlighted the NAPfRE presentation by Leslie J Francis on Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity. The project set out to capture the views of 2,000 pupils from each of the five nations across the UK. The Senior Learning Adviser RE explained that for this project, London was taken out of the figures for England and included as a nation in its own right, along with England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It was felt that the project could be extremely useful as a basis for discussion in the RE classroom.

The Senior Learning Adviser RE reminded the members of the project that he had undertaken in Bangor Cathedral during December 2011 which was attended by 450 children. He explained that at the workshop, children had been able to take photographs of the nativity scene made out of lego, play with puppets and dress up. St. Mary's Centre had undertaken a research project based on the day and a questionnaire had been circulated. The outcome of the questionnaire had indicated that the children understood the religious side of Christmas as a result of the workshop at Bangor Cathedral.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

10. LITERACY/NUMERACY WITHIN RE COMPETITION FOR SCHOOLS

At the meeting of SACRE held in March 2012, the Senior Learning Adviser RE had provided details of the competition to promote literacy/numeracy within RE and had advised that information on the competition would be sent to all schools in Flintshire.

This had been undertaken following the meeting, but the Senior Learning Adviser RE advised that only four entries from schools in Flintshire had been received. He suggested that the closing date for the competition be extended to Christmas to allow more entries to be submitted. The Vice-Chairman agreed with the suggestion as he felt that it was important to obtain a larger response. Councillor R.C. Bithell asked the closing date could be moved to Easter 2013 as the run up to Christmas was a busy time for schools.

Ms. R. Price referred to a paper by Leighton Andrews, the Welsh Government Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning, which had been circulated recently to schools on literacy and numeracy. Ms. J. Dickens said that all schools were looking at the literacy framework and suggested that the ideal time to undertake the competition could be January to February half term.

The Senior Learning Adviser RE advised that he would send a letter to inform schools of the change in the closing date for the competition.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the competition closing date be extended to February half term 2013; and

- (b) That the Senior Learning Adviser RE send a letter to all Flintshire schools to advise of the extension to the competition closing date.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed members that the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, 6 March 2013 at 2.00 p.m. in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold.

12. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and ended at 3.38 p.m.

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Chairman