

FLINTSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
4 JUNE 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire SACRE of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 4th June, 2014

PRESENT:

Councillors: **Dave Mackie (Chairman)**, Chris Bithell, Hilary Isherwood, Colin Legg and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

Religious Denominations: Dora Jones, Sue Jones, Delyth McIntyre and Rev. Huw Powell-Davies

Teacher Associations: Ron Keating

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke, Rita Price, Mr. H.E. Jones, Mrs. M. Madoc Jones and Ms. P. Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE:

Challenge Advisor and Committee Officer

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST: CODE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONDUCT

No declarations of interest were made.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Challenge Advisor introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for the following six schools inspected under the Estyn Framework between December 2013 and February 2014:-

Ysgol Bro Carmel, Carmel, Holywell
Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint Mountain
Brynford C.P. School, Holywell
Saltney Ferry C.P. School
Ysgol Derwenfa, Leeswood
Castell Alun High School, Hope

He said that there were no negative comments on Religious Education, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development or Collective Worship and as Estyn had

to report when Collective Worship was not meeting the statutory requirements, it could be assumed that this was being undertaken.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That a letter be sent to the schools congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the inspections.

4. PRESENTATION ON THE DELIVERY OF RE AT HOLYWELL HIGH SCHOOL

The Challenge Advisor explained that a discussion had taken place at the previous SACRE meeting on the provision of RE at Holywell High School and it had been resolved that Huw Jones, Head of RE at the school, be asked to provide information about delivery of RE to this meeting. As he had been unable to attend, he had provided a presentation for SACRE for delivery by the Challenge Advisor. The main features of the presentation were:-

- What is affective
- So what happens at Holywell
- Year 10 and 11
- Some clips which pupils had worked on

Councillor Chris Bithell raised concern that RE at GCSE level had been sidelined due to the views of the humanist leadership at the school and felt that pupils wanting to take the subject should be given the opportunity to do so. He felt that the fact that the course was not being provided needed to be raised. Councillor Hilary Isherwood concurred but said that the use of films to relate to RE issues, as was detailed in the presentation, was a superb approach and suggested that books could also be used.

The Challenge Advisor raised concern about the academic level of RE being provided at the school. Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer concurred with Councillor Bithell and said that he was impressed with the way RE was being promoted at the school but asked if SACRE could do anything about RE not being studied at GCSE level.

Mr. Ron Keating felt that it was difficult to make comments about other ways of teaching and suggested that the presentation had raised more questions than answers. He said that SACRE needed to be satisfied that the agreed syllabus was being delivered one way or another and he also raised concern about the rigour of the academic nature of the subject and whether RE was being undermined. He felt that pupils should be given equal opportunities and that concern should be raised that RE was not being offered at GCSE level because this had been determined by the leadership of the school. Mr. Keating said that the role and responsibility of SACRE was to ensure that standards in RE were achieved at the right level. He praised the work of the staff at the school for their delivery of RE but raised significant concern that the pupils were not being offered the opportunity to undertake RE at GCSE level. He commented on the short course in RE and the low outcomes and standards which were in place prior to the re-introduction of the short course. Councillor Steele-Mortimer

thanked Mr. Keating for the response but felt that it was the duty of SACRE to take the issue of non-provision further.

Councillor Bithell queried whether the lack of provision could be because of reduced numbers of pupils wanting to undertake RE studies and asked whether the school was meeting its statutory requirement. He added that a new School Head was to be in post at Holywell High School in the near future. Councillor Isherwood asked about the role of the Governing Body in the delivery of subjects in schools. Mr. Keating advised that schools had a statutory obligation to deliver RE with the dominant time being spent on Christianity and the remaining time to look at other faiths.

In response to a comment from the Chairman about the pupils not being to undertaken RE at A level at Holywell High School, the Challenge Advisor said that schools should be providing Post 16 RE, which was sometimes undertaken through the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, but he added that it was a difficult area to monitor. He spoke of a document which gave details of provision of RE through alternative means and advised that he would re-circulate the document to schools.

During the discussion, Councillor Bithell asked if a representative from Lifelong Learning could be invited to the next meeting of SACRE so that the issue could be raised. The Challenge Advisor suggested that SACRE ask for an audit of RE being undertaken in Holywell High School at the beginning of the new Headship at the school. Councillor Bithell also suggested that a letter could be sent to the Governing Body to express SACRE's concern about the lack of entries for the course at GCSE level and to query why this was the case and seeking clarification that the practice would not continue. The Challenge Advisor then suggested that a letter be sent to the Governing Body noting the concerns of SACRE that the school was not submitting entries for the GCSE exam in RE, and asking how the pupils were being evaluated for RE and how the school was meeting the statutory requirements to deliver the subject. Mr. Keating said that it was important to note that the concerns were not a reflection on the teachers delivering RE in the school and Councillor Isherwood said that SACRE wanted to provide support to those teaching RE in difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be received: and
- (b) That a letter be sent to the Governing Body at Holywell High School:
 - noting the concerns of SACRE that the school was not submitting entries for the GCSE exam in RE
 - asking how the pupils were evaluated for RE
 - and asking how the school was meeting the statutory requirements to deliver the subject.

5. SPEECH FROM HUW LEWIS TO REC

The Challenge Advisor introduced a report which was a transcript of a speech given by the Education Minister Huw Lewis to the Religious Education Council of England and Wales Annual Conference.

He said that the speech was positive on the issue of Religious Education in Wales and the WASACRE had written to the Minister to thank him for the speech. The Challenge Advisor spoke about a meeting, which he had submitted a question to, which was being arranged with Professor Donaldson to discuss RE.

RESOLVED:

That the document be received.

6. RE AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Challenge Advisor introduced the report by a Westminster 'All Party Parliamentary Group on RE'.

Councillor Chris Bithell raised concern about the content of the first paragraph.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

7. WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The Challenge Advisor explained that at the previous meeting, the issue of how to promote SACRE had been discussed.

A discussion had taken place about ways in which SACRE could support schools and could be seen to be doing more in the community in Flintshire. Denbighshire and Conwy SACREs had talked of creating a booklet that could be used by schools and churches and the Challenge Advisor asked whether Flintshire SACRE members also wished to pursue this.

Councillor Chris Bithell queried to what extent it was needed as the inspection reports undertaken indicated that visits to schools had identified that there were already good links between schools and churches.

The Challenge Advisor suggested that members of SACRE from Religious Denominations could take back to their faith groups details of what had been discussed at the SACRE meetings. He also suggested that case studies could be sought from schools and religious groups and a booklet be created which could assist in the sharing of good practice already being undertaken. Councillor Hilary Isherwood suggested that a way of promoting SACRE could be through a religious participant being on the Governing Body for Schools.

Reverend Huw Powell-Davies spoke on the links which were already in place between Welsh Schools and Churches and said that sharing of the good practices would be of benefit to many people. The Challenge Advisor suggested that case studies be sought from schools and religious denominations too but added that there would be a cost implication of approximately £400 for translation

costs. It was suggested that discussions on assistance with funding for translation be undertaken with Religious Groups.

The Challenge Advisor advised that he would create a letter requesting case studies about good practice to send to all schools which would also be circulated to all SACRE members to share with Governing Body's for Schools or Churches.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update be received; and
- (b) That a letter be sent to all schools and circulated to all SACRE members requesting case studies about good practice of links between schools and churches

8. WASACRE

- (i) To receive the minutes of the last meeting of the Association

Councillor Chris Bithell proposed that the minutes be received, which was duly seconded.

- (ii) To agree attendance to the next WASACRE meeting scheduled for 2nd July 2014 in Powys

The Chairman said that he would try and attend the next WASACRE meeting scheduled for 2nd July 2014 and the Challenge Advisor indicated that he would be able to attend.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes be received; and
- (b) That the Challenge Advisor attend the next WASACRE meeting on 2nd July 2014 in Powys

9. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed members that the next meeting of SACRE had been scheduled for 2pm on Wednesday, 1st October 2014 in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold.

The Chairman explained that this was his last meeting in the Chair and expressed his thanks to the members for their contributions to the meetings during his time as Chair.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.12 pm)

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Chairman