

Public Document Pack

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Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol a Democraataidd



To:

Councillors: Chris Bithell, Adele Davies-Cooke,
Hilary Isherwood, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie,
Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas

CS/NG

29 May 2014

Tracy Waters 01352 702331

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS:

Mrs. H. Hughes, Mrs. D. Jones,
Mr. Gareth Wyn Jones, Ms. S. Jones,
Mrs. D. McIntyre and Rev H. Powell-Davies

TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS:

Ms. D. Westaway, Mrs. Y. Barker,
Mr. R. Keating, Mrs. L. Harkin, Mr. H.E. Jones,
Mrs. M. Madoc Jones and Ms. P. Walsh

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Rita Price and Mr. D. Morgan

Mr. Philip Lord (Challenge Advisor)

Dear Sir / Madam

A meeting of the **FLINTSHIRE SACRE** will be held in the **CLWYD COMMITTEE ROOM, COUNTY HALL, MOLD CH7 6NA** on **WEDNESDAY, 4TH JUNE, 2014** at **2.00 PM** to consider the following items.

Yours faithfully

Democracy & Governance Manager

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawau gohebiaeth yn y Cymraeg neu'r Saesneg

AGENDA

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST: CODE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONDUCT**

Members are reminded that they must declare the **existence** and **nature** of their declared personal interests.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 8)

To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014 (copy enclosed).

4 **ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS** (Pages 9 - 12)

To receive the analysis of recent Inspection Reports (copy enclosed).

5 **PRESENTATION ON THE DELIVERY OF RE AT HOLYWELL HIGH SCHOOL**

To receive a presentation.

6 **SPEECH FROM HUW LEWIS TO REC** (Pages 13 - 22)

To receive the transcript of a speech given at the REC's AGM in Cardiff by Education Minister Huw Lewis (copy enclosed).

7 **RE AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS** (Pages 23 - 26)

To receive a report by a Westminster 'All Party Parliamentary Group on RE' report (copy enclosed)

8 **WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES**

To discuss the possibility of SACRE creating a resource to encourage closer community links between schools and faith groups.

9 **WASACRE**

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

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

10 **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held at 2pm on Wednesday, 1st October 2014 in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold.

FLINTSHIRE SACRE
5 MARCH 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, 5th March, 2014

PRESENT:

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

Religious Denominations: Mrs. D. Jones and Ms. S. Jones

Teacher Associations: Mr. R. Keating

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Carolyn Thomas

Mrs. H. Hughes, Mrs. Y. Barker, Mr. Gareth Wyn Jones, Mrs. M. Madoc Jones and Mrs. D. McIntyre

IN ATTENDANCE:

Challenge Advisor and Committee Officer

20. DECLARATION OF INTEREST: CODE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONDUCT

No declarations of interest were made.

21. URGENT MATTERS

The Chairman indicated that there were no urgent matters for consideration. Councillor Chris Bithell queried whether this item needed to be included and following a discussion, it was agreed that it would be removed from future agendas.

RESOLVED:

That the agenda item on Urgent Matters be removed from future agendas.

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2013 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to page 4 and asked if Mr. Keating had been able to raise the issue of the role of SACRE to support RE in schools with the Secondary Heads Federation. Mr. Keating responded that he had asked for the issue to be included on a future agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

23. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Challenge Advisor introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for the following two schools inspected under the Estyn Framework between July and September 2013:-

- Ysgol Gynradd, Trelogan
- Ysgol Bryn Coch C.P., Mold

He detailed the positive comments made in key questions 1, 2 and 3 for the schools and highlighted those made in the areas of Standards; Wellbeing; Learning experiences; Care, support and guidance; Learning Environment and Partnership working.

Councillor Chris Bithell welcomed the positive inspection report which did not contain any negative comments and suggested that a letter be sent to the schools to congratulate them on their results.

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.

24. EXAMINATION RESULTS 2013

The Challenge Advisor presented an analysis of examination results for Religious Studies at GCSE (Full Course and Short Course) and Advanced levels for consideration. He provided full details of the results for schools where pupils had taken the full course and said that the increase of 165 from 2012 to 2013 should be celebrated.

Councillor Chris Bithell welcomed the report and the increases in pupils taking Religious Studies and suggested that a letter be sent to the schools to congratulate them on their success. In response to a query from Councillor Hilary Isherwood about why some schools had not submitted any pupils for the full course, Mr. Ron Keating said that some schools did not offer the full course but offered the short course as a way to deliver RE which was a statutory requirement. He also spoke of the problems that may occur when pupils were choosing their options due to clashes with other subjects and in commenting on variations in schools, said that at St. Richard Gwyn Catholic High School, all pupils were entered for the full course.

The Challenge Advisor detailed the results of the short course in Religious Studies and it was highlighted that numbers taking the course had reduced from 2012 to 2013. He said that Tudor Thomas was to submit a presentation to WASACRE on examination results and that he could express the concerns about the short course data on behalf of Flintshire SACRE.

Councillor Bithell welcomed the results and the overall transformation in RE and gave thanks to Gavin Craigen, the former RE Advisor, who had been instrumental in launching the examination for the short course. He highlighted the entry for St. Richard Gwyn High School and congratulated the school for the results that had been achieved.

Mr. Keating raised concern that no pupils had undertaken the short or full course for 2012 or 2013 from Holywell High School and asked for further information on why this had occurred. He also queried whether pupils were being given the opportunity to take the course and whether the school was meeting its statutory obligation to deliver RE. From the data provided, the Challenge Advisor indicated that pupils at Holywell High School had last undertaken the full course in 2006, the short course in 2010 and the A level course in 2007. Councillor Hilary Isherwood spoke about the Welsh Baccalaureate and Mr. Keating said that it would provide an opportunity to deliver part of the unit about faith through the RE departments but added that it was important to ensure that it was not classed as a replacement for RE. A discussion ensued about the statutory requirement to deliver RE and the importance of encouraging good standards in RE. Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer suggested that a report be submitted to the next meeting on the issue at Holywell High School. Following a discussion the Challenge Advisor suggested that Mr. Huw Jones, Head of RE at Holywell High School and a member of SACRE, be asked to provide information about the situation at the next meeting of SACRE.

In referring to the short course data, the Challenge Advisor said that the information had not been available on the Learning Wales website and that he had been advised that the results were not published but could be made available on request. He suggested that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government to ask that the short course data be published along with the full course data. Councillor Chris Bithell suggested that a copy of the letter also be sent to the Welsh Local Government Association Education Advisor. The Challenge Advisor explained that the short course was undertaken in one hour per week and a full course would be taken for 2 to 3 hours per week.

The Challenge Advisor provided details of the A level course entries and results. Councillor Bithell raised concern about the low rate of entries for Mold Alun High School and the Challenge Advisor responded that he was aware that, in the past, the A level course had been taught during lunch breaks and after school. Councillor Isherwood raised concern about this due to possible transport issues for pupils whose parents did not drive.

Councillor Bithell proposed that the schools who had obtained results over the national average be congratulated on their results and this was duly seconded.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the analysis of examination results be noted;
- (b) That a letter be sent to congratulate the schools that had obtained results above the national average;

- (c) That Mr Huw Jones be asked to provide information to the next meeting about delivery of RE at Holywell High School; and
- (d) That the Challenge Advisor raise the issue of the reduction of pupils taking the short course with Tudor Thomas at the next WASACRE meeting.

25. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUALITY MARK

The Challenge Advisor provided a detailed presentation on the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM).

The presentation covered the following key areas:

- Introduction
- Preparation
- Comparison
- Assessors Visit – before, during and after

He explained that information and material was available on the REQM website for free but that an application for the REQM would cost £475.00 and that the award was for a period of three years. The REQM was a way of becoming a better RE department and was not just a 'rubber stamping' exercise. The REQM was split into five areas such as learners & learning and teachers & teaching which mirrored the Estyn framework and there were three award levels which were bronze, silver and gold. The Challenge Advisor felt that it was a powerful tool to develop RE and he spoke of a pilot scheme for the REQM which had been undertaken at the Mold Alun School (achieved a silver REQM), John Bright school in Conwy (achieved a gold REQM) and two primary schools in Denbighshire (both achieved a bronze REQM).

In response to a comment from Councillor Hilary Isherwood about the cost of the REQM, the Challenge Advisor explained that the materials could be downloaded free of charge from the REQM website and that schools would only have to pay if they chose to apply for the quality mark. Councillor Chris Bithell felt that it was important that funding was found so that schools could receive the REQM if they were achieving the required standards and added that the sharing of good practice was also important which he felt the REQM could encourage.

Councillor Bithell asked if a press release could be prepared on REQM to give credit to the schools that had taken part in the pilot scheme and to highlight the importance of the information to encourage other schools to undertake the REQM in the future. The Challenge Advisor said that it was hoped that the presentation to SACREs would promote the REQM and that information on the numbers of schools undertaking and achieving the award would be shared when it was available.

Mr. Ron Keating commended the Challenge Advisor for the excellent presentation and thanked him for his work on the pilot scheme which he felt would inspire other schools to apply for the award in the future.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be received; and
- (b) That a press statement be prepared to give credit to the schools that had taken part in the pilot scheme and to highlight the importance of the information to encourage other schools to undertake the REQM in the future.

26. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUALITY MARK ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The Challenge Advisor introduced the report to provide members with the detailed form for the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) assessment criteria.

In the past, discussions had taken place about how SACRE could monitor RE in schools and the Challenge Advisor felt that the criteria would allow SACRE to do this and may help with standardising what was classed as good RE. He provided full details of the criteria within the document and the three levels of bronze, silver and gold that could be awarded.

RESOLVED:

That the assessment criteria be received.

27. WASACRE

- (i) To receive the minutes of the last meeting of the Association held on 10th October 2013

The Chairman indicated that the minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 10th October 2013 had been submitted to members with the agenda.

- (ii) To agree attendance to the next WASACRE meeting on 27th March 2014 at Caerphilly

The Chairman indicated that he would no longer be able to attend the next WASACRE meeting. Mrs. Delyth McIntyre would also not be able to attend but the challenge advisor confirmed that he would be attending.

The Chairman requested that any members who wanted to attend the next WASACRE meeting contact the Challenge Advisor following this meeting.

- (iii) Nominations for WASACRE Executive Committee

The Chairman sought nominations for the WASACRE Executive Committee but none were forthcoming.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes be received;

- (b) That the Challenge Advisor attend the next WASACRE meeting on 27th March 2014 in Caerphilly; and
- (c) That Flintshire SACRE not submit any nominations for the WASACRE Executive Committee.

28. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed members that the next meeting of SACRE would be held at 2pm on Wednesday, 4th June 2014 in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold.

Mr. Ron Keating queried whether the meeting time could be reconsidered as he felt that 2pm was not suitable. Councillor Hilary Isherwood felt that meetings should be held outside of school hours. Councillor Colin Legg asked that a letter be sent out to each member to ask for their preference for a meeting time. The Chairman explained that an exercise had been undertaken prior to the previous meeting about ideas to improve attendance at SACRE meetings which included proposals to amend the start time. Following the exercise, it had been agreed at the meeting on 27 November 2013 that the start time remain at 2pm.

Councillor Isherwood suggested that information about SACRE could be included in the press release which had been proposed about the REQM to encourage nominations from Religious Denominations and Teacher Associations onto SACRE. The Challenge Advisor advised that members of Conwy SACRE were asked to consider sending a substitute if they were unable to attend the meeting and suggested that this be encouraged at Flintshire SACRE. Following a comment from the Challenge Advisor about the creation of a booklet by Denbighshire SACRE for use by schools and churches, Councillor Hilary Isherwood said that she did not think that many people were aware of the existence of SACRE. Mrs. Sue Jones spoke of a programme that had been created by the congregation of St. Deiniol's Church in Hawarden which included a visit to the Church by each class in the juniors at the local school.

On the issue of encouraging other nominations for SACRE members, Councillor Isherwood suggested that an open evening be held to provide information on the work of SACRE. The Challenge Advisor said that another way to promote SACRE was by holding youth SACREs and following other comments, the Chairman suggested that an item be included on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the meeting time be noted;
- (b) That an item be included on the agenda for the next meeting on how to promote SACRE; and
- (c) That a request for substitutes be included on future agendas if members are unable to attend meetings.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.48 pm)

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Chairman

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Analysis of Inspection Reports Flintshire SACRE

Summer 2014

(reports published in the Spring term)

6 Schools

School	Dates	Reporting Inspector
Ysgol Bro Carmel – Carmel, Holywell	03/02/2014	Edward Goronwy Morris
Ysgol Maes Edwin – Flint Mountain	27/01/2014	Jane Williams
Brynford C.P. School, Holywell	27/01/2014	Anthony John Bate
Saltney Ferry C.P. School	13/01/2014	Penny Lewis
Ysgol Derwenfa, Leeswood, Mold	13/01/2014	Richard Lloyd
Castell Alun High School, Hope	02/12/2013	Robert Davies

POSTIVE COMMENTS

Current Performance

- The school is a happy, inclusive community that promotes positive attitudes to equality and diversity. (Bro Carmel)

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Wellbeing

- They show respect, care and concern for others. (Bro Carmel)
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the local community, for example through the recent centenary celebration of the opening of the school. (Maes Edwin)
- They show courtesy, care and concern for each other and respect for staff and visitors. (Brynford)
- Nearly all pupils behave well. They show respect and care for each other and for all adults in the school... Many pupils actively support the local community, for example to raise... valuable funds for charities including a local children's hospice. (Derwenfa)

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Learning experiences:

- The requirements of the Foundation Phase, National Curriculum and religious education are met fully through exciting contexts, which build on previous learning successfully. (Bro Carmel)
- The school provides all pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of the wider world, for example through their recent study of Botswana in key stage 2. (Bro Carmel)
- Pupils' understanding of different cultures and lifestyle is developing well, for example through the study of life in Botswana (Maes Edwin)
- A good range of educational visits to relevant locations and visits from local clergy, local business and the police enrich pupils' experiences. (Saltney Ferry)
- The school plans effectively for global citizenship within the curriculum. (Saltney Ferry)
- The school provides a rich and varied curriculum that meets statutory requirements. (Derwenfa)
- They also provide pupils with suitable opportunities to learn about their role as global citizens through events such as Fairtrade Fortnight. (Derwenfa)

Care, support and guidance:

- Learning experiences promote pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. (Bro Carmel)
- Staff provide a suitable range of experiences that support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Whole school assemblies emphasise moral values, such as sharing and respecting others. Visits to the local church, chapel and Flint Castle effectively promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development. (Maes Edwin)
- The school provides a range of valuable experiences that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Acts of collective worship enable pupils to reflect on their own, and other people's lives, and they take part in a range of services and performances in the local community and beyond. (Brynford)
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually and morally through regular assemblies, which provide time for pupils to reflect on a range of issues. (Saltney Ferry)
- There are comprehensive plans and policies in place to support the care and wellbeing of pupils. As a result, the provision for healthy living and pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. (Derwenfa)
- The school provides well for pupils spiritual development through a good range of topic work and strong relationships with local places of worship. (Derwenfa)
- The school provides a respectful, caring and supportive environment that has a very positive impact on many aspects of pupils' wellbeing and personal development. (Castell Alun)

- Assemblies and tutorial sessions provide good opportunities for reflection and help promote pupils' spiritual and moral development effectively. The extensive provision of extra-curricular activities, with high rates of participation, makes a very worthwhile contribution to pupils' sporting, cultural and social development. (Castell Alun)

Learning Environment:

- The school is a happy, welcoming and inclusive community where staff place a high emphasis on the wellbeing of their pupils. (Bro Carmel)
- The school promotes and reflects a very inclusive ethos and this is evident within the happy and friendly atmosphere within the school. Through whole school assemblies, and within the classroom, achievements are regularly celebrated. (Brynford)
- The school is a caring, learning community that promotes respect towards adults and pupils. This is one of the school's strengths. In line with its motto, the school fulfils its aim of treating all pupils equally. (Brynford)
- Overall, the school takes appropriate account of the pupils' different backgrounds and it promotes an inclusive ethos. (Saltney Ferry)
- Staff provide frequent opportunities for pupils to show care and consideration for others in the school and in the wider community. This promotes tolerant attitudes well. Pupils have equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. (Dewernfa)
- All pupils take great pride in belonging to the school and demonstrate high levels of empathy and consideration towards peers, staff and the wider community. In particular, pupils carry out a range of extremely worthwhile activities in the community, for example providing valuable support for a local hospice centre. The school effectively supports pupils from all backgrounds and ensures that they have equal access to the school curriculum and other wider opportunities to succeed in all aspects of school life. (Castell Alun)

Key Question 3: How good is leadership and management?

Partnership working:

- Extensive links with churches and groups in the local community enrich pupils' learning experiences. (Bro Carmel)
- Links with the local community are diverse and include using places of worship for school events and working with the local football club. The inclusion of members of the community in the recent school centenary celebrations is a good example of successful links with the community. (Maes Edwin)
- The school plays an active role in the local community, for example by visiting the local chapel and church for various seasonal activities. Close co-operation with members of the local community has led to the implementation of well-planned curricular projects, for example the establishing of a memorial to local copper workers. (Brynford)
- The school has strong links with the local community. (Derwenfa)

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Religious Education Council of England & Wales Annual Conference - 07 May 2014 - Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today at the Religious Education Council of England and Wales Annual Conference.

I am delighted to welcome your Conference to Cardiff this year at a time of such significant change in the Welsh education.

It is these changes that I want to speak to you about today.

How we are improving our schools in Wales.

How we are raising the standard of literacy and numeracy of all pupils, and lifting the educational attainment of pupils from deprived backgrounds.

I want to then go on to discuss how I see Religious Education as part of this reform programme.

I want to then finish by touching briefly on the future of Education here in Wales.

Let's begin with school improvement.

I believe that we are making progress on our school improvement agenda.

Some of it – on the Literacy and Numeracy Framework for example – is genuinely ground-breaking and worthy of celebration.

In other related areas - like the day-to-day teaching of maths - I know that progress is too slow.

Too patchy.

In order for Wales to develop the world class education system we all want to see, our goal must be to extend the **best** that is possible to **all** pupils in **all** schools.

Equality must be at the heart of everything we do.

This of course has to start in our schools.

There is a myriad of ways that schools can achieve this, particularly through the statutory curriculum and in extra-curricula activities.

Our National Model for Regional Working will be a key driver as we continue to raise standards and performance in schools across Wales.

However, it is important to recognise that some schools face unique challenges requiring specialised, additional support.

This is why I recently announced Schools Challenge Cymru.

This is our flagship improvement programme aimed at increasing performance in Welsh schools and focusing support on schools that are facing the biggest challenges of circumstances and delivery.

To help achieve this I have now launched a UK wide recruitment campaign to identify School Challenge Cymru Advisers to ensure we get the best candidates who have a proven record in transforming education for children and young people.

These Advisers will work with Regional Consortia and schools to drive our school important work forward in these 40 schools.

To ensure the success of Schools Challenge Cymru I have committed up to £20m, alongside proven expertise, to deliver a package of support that is individually tailored to meet each of the school's needs.

40 secondary schools in Wales, and their cluster primaries, have been selected to be part of this exciting new programme – a model of improvement that we **know** is proven to work.

The programme will be designed to tap into the potential of each school and help **support** the leadership and the workforce at each school to drive **their own** swift and sustainable improvements for the young people at their schools.

Our focus will be on embedding change within each school and indeed throughout the system to ensure long term benefits to leadership, teaching, and learning.

In so doing, I want to **empower** these schools to punch above their weight, to overcome their circumstances – and to set and achieve higher standards for all their learners.

While the focus will be on driving improvements for the participant schools, I fully expect Schools Challenge Cymru to be the catalyst for wider, system wide change.

Using the principles of the National Model, Schools Challenge Cymru will make full use of some of Wales' finest and highest performing schools.

They will share expertise and leadership directly into the classroom, supporting teachers to achieve the improvements we seek.

We must ensure that **sharing ideas** becomes the dominant culture in Welsh education.

Building on this, on the 9th of April, I announced that Professor Mel Ainscow would act as our Schools Challenge Cymru Champion.

Some of you will know that Mel was Chief Adviser for the Greater Manchester Challenge between 2007 and 2011 and with his understanding of the Welsh education landscape, Mel is a superb ambassador and champion for the programme here in Wales.

[PAUSE]

Of course in addition to this we will also be building on the major changes we have already started.

Our basic skills agenda is critical and we are continuing our work to make literacy and numeracy relevant for all our young people.

I am sure you will agree the application of numeracy in the real world is critical.

Educationalists and employers have a vital role in delivering the changes we need to see.

That is why we have launched the Numeracy Employer Engagement Programme here in Wales.

This scheme encourages employers to work **with** schools and to show how numeracy can be used in real life contexts.

It also highlights the core value and the importance of having strong numeracy skills in the future.

A year ago we introduced statutory National Reading and Numeracy Tests for learners in years 2 to 9.

This year we introduced a reasoning element to the numeracy tests.

We have produced a full package of support for the development of numerical reasoning skills, including sample materials, in addition to other support and guidance.

We are continuing our financial commitment to our improvement agenda through the School Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant.

More than one hundred million pounds will be available this year to schools and local education consortia to implement interventions that will address our priorities.

The School Effectiveness Grant is supporting measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to raise literacy and numeracy levels.

Through it we are delivering training for practitioners in all aspects of literacy and numeracy.

There is also provision for additional activities such as catch-up lessons for pupils who have fallen behind and measures to challenge more able and talented pupils.

[PAUSE]

The work we are doing through our Pupil Deprivation Grant is critical to my other key priority of breaking the link between educational attainment and poverty.

It is aimed squarely at raising the attainment of pupils from deprived backgrounds and complements the activities we fund through the School Effectiveness Grant.

Through it we are encouraging teachers to raise expectations for children, parents and carers from deprived backgrounds and to help their young people overcome the barriers to learning that they encounter.

This work is also supported through our Family Learning Programme grant.

This enables local authorities to offer a range of provision, targeted predominantly at areas of greatest disadvantage, to help parents learn alongside their young children, with mutual benefits in the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

The literacy and numeracy agenda is bolstered through programmes of work delivered by Booktrust Cymru and the Welsh Books Council, supported with Welsh Government funding.

And we also recognise the need to tackle the gender gap at a national level.

A new initiative, called 'Premier League Reading Stars Cymru' is being developed in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and the Premier League, to support the boys' literacy agenda.

[PAUSE]

Now, this leads me on to looking at how the teaching of Religious Education fits in to the changing educational landscape here in Wales.

Religious Education teachers are already introducing and implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework in their lessons.

We have seen some excellent practice across Wales.

The Welsh Government takes religion and the teaching of Religious Education in society very seriously.

Since devolution, there have been many examples of this, from the setting up of the First Minister's Faith Forum and the publication of the Welsh Government's *Faith in Education*, strategy to the full inclusion of Religious Education in the first curriculum review in 2008.

Religious education makes a distinctive contribution to a balanced and broad-based school curriculum.

We live in a society that is more culturally diverse than at any time in its history, so there has never been a greater need for high quality Religious Education in our schools.

RE promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and the physical development of pupils in our society.

It prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The subject contributes to pupils' well-being and to community cohesion, by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in the diverse society that is Wales today.

As a Welsh Government we welcomed the Estyn report on Religious Education in June last year which was broadly positive.

Estyn reported that more pupils gain a qualification in religious studies than in any other non-core subject in Wales.

In 2011, over 28,000 pupils gained either a full-course or short-course GCSE in religious studies.

This is out of around 36,000 pupils who entered GCSEs that year.

In fact the number of entries for full GCSE courses in religious studies has risen by a third in Wales over the last 5 years.

In 2012 over a quarter of all year 11 pupils were entered for the full course and, of the non-core subjects - only history had more entries.

By comparison, in 2008, many more subjects had significantly more entries than Religious Studies - subjects such as French, Art and Design, Geography, History and ICT for example.

So, RE is not only important, it is increasing in popularity by pupils wish to follow the subject to GCSE level.

However, Estyn did raise some issues and it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that *all* children and young people benefit from the good quality Religious provision which already exists in many schools in Wales.

For example, schools do need to develop strategies to raise the attainment of boys at Key Stage 4.

They need to improve the standards for pupils who are not entered at all for a qualification.

They also need to ensure that tasks are challenging enough to enable more able pupils to reach higher levels at Key Stage 3.

To do this we will continue to share good practice in relation to professional development opportunities for teachers of religious education.

We will also continue to engage with key partners in assessing the quality of support provided by local authorities and consortia to religious education in schools.

[PAUSE]

Finally, I would like to give you a brief update on the review of the curriculum that is currently taking place in Wales.

We are currently consulting on proposed Areas of Learning and Programmes of Study for Maths, English and Welsh first language.

We want stakeholder views on whether the expectations for what children should know and be able to accomplish, are sufficiently

demanding and challenging and in line with the expectations of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

Looking at the bigger picture, I recently announced the appointment of Professor Graham Donaldson to lead a wide ranging and independent review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales.

Professor Donaldson's review encompasses the Basic Curriculum, which includes Religious Education.

This review gives us a real opportunity to develop a curriculum in Wales which gives every child the best possible chance to go out and succeed as citizens of the world.

Professor Donaldson has signalled that engagement and importantly listening are at the heart of his review.

He is keen to actively engage and work closely with a wide range of stakeholders – including those with an interest in this important agenda.

Professor Donaldson is, and will be providing opportunities for all interested parties to contribute to this review and I would urge you to participate fully in shaping our 'Curriculum for Wales'.

I very much look forward to receiving Professor Donaldson's report and recommendations at the turn of this year.

So – to conclude.

There is no doubt that in Wales we are moving in the right direction but we still have some way to go.

We all want a world class education system here in Wales, but we will have to work to achieve.

It will mean us working harder.

Working smarter.

But importantly, it will mean us working together.

Let's continue that work.

Thank you.

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RE AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Cohesive schools – Cohesive communities – Cohesive society

Foreword: Endorsement from Stephen Lloyd MP

Good community relations are at the heart of a society where people can live together harmoniously as neighbours, work colleagues and fellow citizens even if they may disagree over some of their fundamental religious beliefs or worldviews. Religious education is uniquely placed to help children and young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to play their part in today's society and tomorrow's world. There are many elements to RE.

The focus of this summary report is RE's role in promoting good community relations. It shows the strengths which already exist in many schools and colleges; we in the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE would like to see them become universal so that both young people and society in general reap the benefit. The debate around religion is often misinformed and even, frankly, inaccurate. Good RE teaching in schools by properly trained RE teachers is all about educating young people in the different tenets of the world's religions, and those with none.

I believe this is particularly important today when there is so much inaccuracy in our mainstream media and the internet or from our own peer groups. High quality RE teaching allows children to make 'informed' decisions around religion, and when we are better informed we are wiser, and make wiser decisions! Our children are literally our nation's future, so it is both our responsibility and our duty to prepare them properly for the multi-faceted, diverse and complicated world they will inherit, and one day lead.

I would like to thank all those who contributed evidence both at our three parliamentary meetings and in writing. In particular I would like to thank Dr Joyce Miller for all her hard work in conducting this inquiry.

Stephen Lloyd MP
Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on RE

Introduction

This summary report is the outcome of three oral evidence sessions that took place under the auspices of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education¹ between December 2013 and February 2014. The inquiry has taken place at a time of rapid change and dwindling sources of information: for instance, Ofsted no longer inspects schools' duty to promote community cohesion. It was important that as much evidence as possible was gathered to inform the inquiry.

The evidence presented was often inspiring and demonstrated high quality RE and deep commitment to good community relations. It was heartening to learn that RE in England and Wales is highly regarded in Northern Ireland and in other European countries; the evidence set out below illustrated examples of excellent practice. But it also showed that some areas require continuing attention and the report includes some suggested actions and desired outcomes.

From the outset a short document was planned, so both evidence and outcomes are stated briefly; a longer paper will be published in due course on the REC website.

It is recognised that contributing to community relations is only one dimension of RE; it is also clear that good RE and the promotion of good community relations take place in a range of schools, including the voluntary aided sector and the increasing number of academies and free schools that sit outside the remit of SACREs.² Nonetheless, SACREs not only remain a statutory requirement, they are also uniquely placed to contribute to the areas this paper addresses, and while a growing number struggle, others thrive. Members of the APPG, the RE Council (REC) and its member organisations will continue to champion RE, aiming to improve further the quality of RE that young people experience in all our schools.

RE can be a strong contributor to good community relations through enabling students to:

- Acquire systematic knowledge and conceptual understanding of religions and worldviews
- Learn from visits and visitors through personal encounters
- Learn about religion and belief in local, national and global contexts
- Consider a range of viewpoints on religious, ethical and philosophical issues
- Articulate their own opinions while respecting the right of others to differ
- Develop their own beliefs, values and identities
- Participate with confidence and openness in dialogue
- Recognise and challenge ill-informed or prejudiced viewpoints, including those in the media
- Ask questions and address contentious issues in a safe space
- Explore reasons why misconceptions exist about some groups
- Evaluate attitudes and actions and how they impact on the community
- Be informed, active citizens and potential leaders.

¹ <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/appg>

² Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

A. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW AND POLICY

SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs)

EVIDENCE

- Can provide models of good community collaboration
- Can enable high quality religious education, including through specialist advisers
- Can provide a coherent, progressive, broad and balanced curriculum framework
- Can tailor the RE curriculum to meet the needs of their local communities through local determination
- Can provide evidence of their work and good practice in annual reports, including their contributions to good community relations
- Can help to increase parental and community confidence in the teaching of religions and worldviews

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- The Department for Education affirms and demonstrates its support for RE, SACREs and ASCs
- All local authorities provide specialist support to SACREs and ASCs to enable them to meet their statutory duties
- SACREs and ASCs collaborate at local/regional levels to enhance their effectiveness, including the sharing of good practice on monitoring and evaluating their work
- SACREs' annual reports, including their contribution to community cohesion, are analysed and the findings published

Law and Policy

- Since Ofsted is no longer required to inspect the duty to promote community cohesion, there is insufficient evidence on which to evaluate progress
- Religion and belief are protected characteristics in the 2010 Equalities Act
- Some bullying based on religious identity and practice is taking place in schools

- The DfE obtains evidence on community relations by commissioning a new survey to parallel the Ipsos Mori 2011 investigation of community cohesion and Prevent³ in schools
- All school and college senior leadership teams (SLTs) affirm staff/student/ community identities in the context of multi-faith Britain
- SLTs evaluate their equalities policy and practice in the light of the 'religion and belief' requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty (2010)
- Schools and RE organisations share examples of good practice in promoting equalities, particularly with regard to religion and belief

B. LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC)

EVIDENCE

- LOtC can support community relations through the involvement of local faith and belief communities
- The use of sacred space⁴, through enquiry-based, participative learning, can promote effective learning about and from religions and worldviews,⁵ contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and challenge negative stereotypes

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- SACREs support learning outside the classroom in their locality, including training and support for host communities where necessary
- SACREs support their schools in the use of visitors to classrooms
- Teachers in all phases and all types of schools make LOtC an integral part of their RE curriculum

³ Prevent is one strand of the government's counter terrorism policy

⁴ 'Sacred space' is the term used by the Learning Outside the Classroom Council. It is broader than 'places of worship' and is intended to be inclusive.

⁵ 'Religions and worldviews' is used to refer to Christianity, other principal religions, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is intended to be inclusive.

Intercultural education

EVIDENCE

- Participation of young people in intercultural, cross-school initiatives promotes deeper understanding, meaningful interaction, respect for difference and enables them to address controversial issues
- Initiatives to promote 'Youth Voice' have been successful in enhancing community relations

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- RE professionals use existing organisations (such as 3FF, Face to Faith and the Schools Linking Network) to promote intercultural dialogue and links between schools, or develop their own. This focuses on learning and includes teachers and students in long-term collaboration, with support from governors and parents

Conflict and extremism

- Inter- and intra-religious conflicts and religiously motivated extremism exist and schools can explore these issues in RE

- The REC to update its *REsilience* materials⁶ to include resources on intra-religious conflict, the socio-political dimensions of religions and worldviews, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.
- RE professionals to work alongside colleagues in other curriculum areas to further develop pupils' skills of critical enquiry and media literacy and their understanding of human rights and genocides

C. TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Professional development

EVIDENCE

- It is through skills and attitudes, not just content, that RE can promote open-mindedness and an informed perspective on religions and worldviews
- Patterns of belief, practice and adherence are changing locally, nationally and globally in ways that need to be reflected in the RE curriculum
- There is a 'religious literacy gap' which schools can help address by teaching about religions and worldviews
- Young people's sources and use of information have changed because of social media and the internet

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- All RE organisations explore ways in which they can provide training and support for their members on community relations and how they can share good practice and research findings
- All RE organisations promote the REC Code of Practice,⁷ the PD Portal, the e-Handbook⁸ and RE:ONLINE⁹ to increase staff sensitivity, confidence and competence in teaching about religions and worldviews
- The new RE hubs consider prioritising community relations in their professional support for teachers and lecturers in FE
- Teachers develop their understanding of social media and the internet and the challenges and opportunities they bring to teaching RE
- RE teachers increase their understanding of globalisation and its impact on community relations
- Teachers are supported in their professional engagement with changing patterns of religions and worldviews
- RE advisers and teachers lead in-school professional development on understanding local communities, through structured visits and visitors.

⁶ *REsilience* is a professional development programme, managed by the REC, to help increase teachers' confidence when addressing contentious issues, particularly where such issues are sometimes used to justify extremism and violence.

⁷ http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/Practice_Code_for_Teachers_of_RE.pdf

⁸ <http://www.theredirectory.org.uk/pdportal>

⁹ <http://www.reonline.org.uk>

REMAINING QUESTIONS

- Can SACREs and ASCs continue to be viable given that an increasing proportion of schools no longer come under their remit?
- How can RE work more closely with other subject areas and curriculum initiatives to achieve shared aims for improving community relations? What other partnerships can be developed to make this happen effectively?
- How can RE professionals help to ensure that the whole school ethos supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and protects equalities in relation to religion and belief?
- How can learning about religions and worldviews be made more interesting and relevant for pupils of 'no religion'?
- How can the RE community collaborate with and better support colleagues in the Further Education sector, where there is no statutory requirement to teach RE to post-16 students?
- How far does RE address issues of socio-economic inequality? How important is this in developing social cohesion?
- How can the work of the Council of Europe on the religious and non-religious dimensions of intercultural education be more widely known and used in England and Wales?
- The 1988 Education Reform Act requires schools to contribute towards the spiritual, moral and cultural development of children **and society**. Can unpacking that phrase provide a rationale for and a means by which schools can work more effectively with and on behalf of their communities?

The APPG: The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education was established in 2012. Its purpose is to provide a medium through which parliamentarians and organisations with an interest in religious education can discuss the current provision of religious education, press for continuous improvement, promote public understanding and advocate rigorous education for every young person in religious and non religious world views.

Oral evidence was provided by: Deborah Weston, Sharon Lambert, Aisling Cohn, Dr Julia Ipgrave, Jane Chipperton, Prof Adam Dinham; Helen Harrison, Dr Marius Felderhof, Patricia Hannam, Aliya Azam, Alastair Ross, David Raven-Hill; Young Ambassadors for RE from The Redhill Academy (Hannah Morley, Ryan Hutchings, Charlotte Hart-Shaw, Jake Chaplin and Holly Walker), Lesley Prior; Dr Norman Richardson, Robin Richardson, Revd Garry Neave, Jamie Bartlett.

Written evidence was received from: British Humanist Association; Deesha Chadha, Chinmaya Mission, UK; Prof. Robert Jackson; Lambeth SACRE; Lewisham SACRE; Mulberry School; National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom; Riaz Ravat, St Philip's Centre, Leicester; Dr Lynn Revell, Canterbury Christ Church University; Dr Barbara Wintersgill; Dr John Wise, National Council of Faith and Beliefs in Further Education.

This report was written by Dr Joyce Miller who coordinated the inquiry on behalf of the APPG on RE.



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