

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