

FLINTSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
11 FEBRUARY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held at County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 11 February 2015

PRESENT:

Councillors: Chris Bithell, Dave Mackie and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

Religious Denominations: Dora Jones and Delyth McIntyre

Teacher Associations: **Ron Keating (Chair)**

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Hilary Isherwood and Colin Legg
Yvonne Barker, Ibad Hussain and Sue Jones

IN ATTENDANCE:

Challenge Advisor and Committee Officer

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2014 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Minute number 13 - SACRE Draft Annual Report 2013-14

The Challenge Advisor confirmed that the Annual Report was now available on the WASACRE website in English and was awaiting translation to Welsh. On behalf of SACRE, the Chair thanked the Challenge Advisor for his hard work in producing the report.

Minute number 14 - Analysis of Inspection Reports

The Challenge Advisor advised that a letter of congratulations had been sent to Sandycroft C.P. School in recognition of their positive inspection. In the absence of Yvonne Barker, an update could not be received on the presentation by the Head Teacher of Sandycroft School.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes be approved as a correct record; and
- (b) That Yvonne Barker provide an update and feedback on the presentation by the Head Teacher of Sandycroft C.P. School at the next meeting of SACRE.

21. **ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS**

The Challenge Advisor introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for the following five schools inspected under the Estyn framework during Spring 2014:

Gwynedd C.P. School, Flint
Ysgol Glan Aber C.P., Bagillt
Ysgol Gronant, nr. Prestatyn
St. David's R.C. School, Mold
Ysgol Cae'r Nant, Connah's Quay

The Challenge Advisor highlighted the positive statements on overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the recognition of a broad and balanced curriculum in respect of religious education at St. David's R.C. School. One area for development was for Ysgol Glan Aber C.P. School to improve and promote global citizenship.

In alluding to the statements on St. David's R.C. School, the Chair felt that observations on the school's input into religious education, faith and spirituality were more enhanced due to the school's religious character, as inspections were tailored towards the main ethos of each school. He felt that this could disadvantage other non-faith schools which had a similar profile and that this disparity of language reflected concerns previously expressed by SACRE.

The Challenge Advisor advised that a letter had been sent to remind Estyn that it was good practice to comment on provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which had prompted Estyn to write to all inspectors strongly emphasising their responsibility on this matter.

In response to a query from Delyn McIntyre on statements relating to Ysgol Glan Aber C.P., the Challenge Advisor said that global citizenship covered several elements, some of which were found to be positive in that school with others needing more emphasis. On the recognition of the range of opportunities for pupils at St. David's R.C. School to develop spiritual, moral and social skills, it was assumed that the omission of 'cultural' had arisen during editing.

Following a suggestion by the Chair, it was agreed that a letter would be sent to the schools congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the inspections.

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.

22. EXAMINATION RESULTS 2013/14

The Challenge Advisor presented a summary of examination results for religious studies at GCSE and Advanced Level, including short and full courses. As a point of accuracy, he advised that there had been a 17.6% reduction on GCSE A*-C grades (full course) achieved at St. Richard Gwyn High School between 2013 and 2014. He reminded members that some of the figures represented a small cohort number which should be taken into consideration on percentage outcomes.

It was pointed out by Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer that the 20.7% dip in GCSE A*-C Grades (full course) achieved in 2014 across Flintshire was not reflected in the all Wales figures which indicated a dip of just 1%. The Chair felt that this may be due to a range of issues. He referred to the challenges in encouraging learners and parents to recognise the ethos and effort needed to thrive in religious studies and the requirement for good literacy skills by the learner to succeed in this subject. He also felt that dynamic teaching of the subject helped to encourage learners, suggesting that RE teachers could benefit from a greater level of support.

Councillor Chris Bithell echoed the concerns around the drop in results which was reflected across all of the schools listed and highlighted the need for good outcomes for learners to go on to further education or employment.

The Challenge Advisor commented that there was not the same level of direct county support for religious studies. Councillor Bithell asked if this should be taken up with GwE. Councillor David Mackie pointed out that the support provided by GwE had changed, in comparison to previous arrangements.

The Chair spoke about the recent restructuring at GwE which could provide an opportunity for support groups for religious education teaching. It was agreed that the Challenge Advisor would assist the Chair in writing to GwE, on behalf of SACRE, to reflect the concerns raised and to seek a solution.

On the same issue, members discussed the need to understand the reasons behind the decline in results for Flintshire, for example whether there were staffing issues or variances due to the use of different examination boards. The Challenge Advisor explained that candidates could be entered for both full and short courses in religious education, which could have a negative impact on the results. He added that further analysis of the data indicated that perhaps Connah's Quay and St. Richard Gwyn High Schools required support for this subject.

The Challenge Advisor reported an increase in the number of Grades A*-C achieved at Advanced Level 2014, which was also reflected in the all Wales figures. An error on the table of results for the previous ten years (full course) meant that the figures in the column for 2014 were incorrect.

The Chair welcomed the steady increase in A-Level results over the past ten years. He went on to talk about future changes to the curriculum in relation to 'Progress 9' proposals which could increase pressures on schools and potentially compromise religious education teaching. It was agreed that this would be included as a future agenda item.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Challenge Advisor assist the Chair in writing to GwE, on behalf of SACRE, to reflect the concerns raised on the decline in GCSE results in Flintshire for 2014 and to seek support; and
- (c) That an item on the effects of 'Progress 9' on religious education be included on a future agenda.

23. WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

The Challenge Advisor gave an overview of presentation slides by WJEC on data feedback for religious studies, which had been delivered at the WASACRE meeting in November 2014. The key points of the presentation were:

- GCSE Religious Studies Specifications A and B
- GCSE feedback on the last three years
- AS/A2 combined entry level profile for the last three years
- GCE AS level feedback on the last three years
- GCE A2 level feedback on the last three years
- GCE A2 level

In response to queries, the Challenge Advisor provided clarification on the content of units adopted by schools for Specifications A and B.

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to the new sixth form hub at Connah's Quay and said that concerns around religious education provision had been raised and taken on board.

Feedback at both GCE AS and A2 levels indicated that learners were moving away from more traditional units towards other options such as Eastern Religions (eg Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism) and Religion and Ethics. This was thought to be possibly due to eastern religion being viewed as more diverse or influenced by teachers through their background/training. In England, units on Religion and Ethics and Philosophy of Religion would possibly be combined within one unit to restrict pupils' ability to complete an RE qualification focussing just on Philosophy and Ethics. Wales would be consulting teachers with the possibility of adopting a similar practice.

The Chair thanked the Challenge Advisor for the presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

24. SACRES AND CONSORTIA ARRANGEMENTS

The Challenge Advisor said it would be beneficial to present this item to a wider range of SACRE members. Following a proposal from the Chair, it was

agreed that the item be deferred to the next meeting in the hope that more members would be present.

RESOLVED:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting of SACRE on 17 June 2015.

25. RE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Challenge Advisor reported that following receipt of all entries, he would be collating a booklet containing good examples of case studies. A separate email would be circulated to seek example case studies of religions other than Christianity to include a broader range of communities, for presentation at the WASACRE meeting on 25 June 2015.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update be noted; and
- (b) That the Challenge Advisor pursue example case studies from a wider range of religions.

26. WASACRE

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

The minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 26 November 2014 were accepted.

- (i) To agree attendance to the next WASACRE meeting scheduled for 6 March 2015 in Pembrokeshire

The Challenge Advisor agreed to send the apologies of SACRE members for the meeting on 6 March 2015.

- (iii) 25 June 2015 - Flintshire hosting WASACRE and WASACRE AGM

It was agreed that the Challenge Advisor would liaise with the Chair to put together a programme for agreement at the next SACRE meeting on 17 June 2015 prior to its presentation on 25 June 2015.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 26 November 2014 be accepted;
- (b) That the Challenge Advisor pass on the apologies of SACRE for the next WASACRE meeting scheduled for 6 March 2015; and
- (c) That the Challenge Advisor liaise with the Chair to put together a programme for the WASACRE meeting on 25 June 2015, to be agreed at the next SACRE meeting on 17 June 2015.

27. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed members that the next meeting of SACRE had been scheduled for 2pm on Wednesday, 17 June 2015 in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold.

Delyth McIntyre gave her apologies for this meeting.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 3.30pm)

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Chairman