

FLINTSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
3 FEBRUARY 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held at Mold Alun High School, Mold on Wednesday, 3 February 2016

PRESENT:

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

Religious Denominations: Dora Jones and Delyth McIntyre

Teacher Associations: **Ron Keating (Chair)** and Lyn Oakes

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Hilary Isherwood

Ibad Hussain, Rev Huw Powell Davies, Rita Price and Sue Jones

IN ATTENDANCE:

Challenge Advisor and Committee Officer

The Chair welcomed all those in attendance and thanked Ms. Lyn Oakes for hosting the meeting at the school, offering his congratulations for the excellent work undertaken by the team. He then asked the group to undertake a moment of quiet reflection.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015 were submitted.

Accuracy

Minute number 11 - SACRE Draft Annual Report 2014-15

Councillor Chris Bithell said that he had queried the figures which had been presented as these were out of date, and asked that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

Matters Arising

Minute number 12 - Analysis of Inspection Reports

Councillor Bithell sought clarification on whether the names of organisations should be included in reports. The Chairman said that the general principle was for organisations and individuals to be named to show transparency.

The Challenge Adviser confirmed that letters had been sent to the schools congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the reports.

Minute number 13 - RE in KS3: Muslim football player in the Premier League

In response to a question from Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer, the Challenge Adviser confirmed that he was in the process of sending the DVD to all schools.

Minute number 14 - RE and local communities

The Challenge Adviser advised that he had sent the collaboration document to all schools but had received little response. He commented on the possibility of sending an evaluation form however this would require translation.

Minute number 15 - Education Minister, Huw Lewis's comments and the future of RE

Councillor Bithell referred to concerns about the Minister's comments in relation to the place of RE within the curriculum and asked for further clarification following recent press reports. The Chairman explained that the Minister had rescinded his comments as these had been his own personal views.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record.

21. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Challenge Adviser introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for the following three schools recently inspected under the Estyn framework:

Penarlag CP School, Ewloe
Ysgol Croes Atti, Flint
Queensferry CP

The Challenge Adviser highlighted the positive statements on wellbeing, learning experiences, care, support and guidance and the learning environment. On partnership working, he explained that there was no requirement upon Estyn to make comments but that these were welcomed in any case. He expressed disappointment that there was only one comment on the interaction with churches as such examples now appeared to be more infrequent.

In response to remarks by Ms. Delyth Jones on the selection of positive comments for particular schools, the Challenge Adviser said that Estyn inspectors focussed on some areas more than others and that Estyn had been asked to remind their inspectors to comment on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The Chairman pointed out that there could be occasions where schools were showcasing something different which could change the focus of the inspection.

Councillor Colin Legg raised concerns about the lack of RE provision through assemblies or in classrooms in a particular school within the county. The Chairman reminded the group about the remit of SACRE to ensure that collective acts of worship took place in schools in accordance with legislation. He went on to say that the content of school assemblies could relate to aspirational themes such as love, peace, etc which would be seen as specifically religious or broadly non-religious. In respect of Councillor Legg's comments, he said there was a need to ensure that that side of the school's function was working effectively to allow pupils the opportunity to pray or consider religious themes. In support of this, he suggested that directives and guidance could be reissued to schools to remind them of their responsibility and that a possible workshop could be held for people involved in assemblies to ensure that this part of the remit was acted upon.

Councillor Chris Bithell spoke about past difficulties in encouraging some teaching staff to conduct assemblies and collective worship sessions. The Chairman said that in his school, support was offered to teaching staff as part of the induction process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That guidance on the content of school assemblies be reissued and a workshop be arranged to remind schools of the requirement to give pupils the opportunity to pray or consider religious themes.

22. EXAMINATION RESULTS 2015

The Challenge Adviser presented a summary of examination results for religious studies at GCSE and A Level, including short and full courses. He had collected the data from available sources but was unsure about the accuracy of all the figures.

The Chairman agreed and pointed out that the 2015 GCSE full course entry figures for St. Richard Gwyn should be 54%. The Challenge Adviser agreed to look into this. Councillor Chris Bithell felt that the discrepancies could have been the result of dealing with different Boards and was concerned that some schools did not appear to have any pupils entered for the short or full courses. It was also noted that no full or short course entries were indicated for Holywell High School.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Bithell about outcomes for pupils undertaking the short course, the Challenge Adviser explained that the short course was not recognised in England.

On the results for the GCSE short course, the Challenge Adviser pointed out that Hawarden High School had a lower cohort of 187 for 2015 and would liaise with Flintshire County Council to establish whether the numbers in the table had been counted twice. It was commented that the quoted figure of 366 could have included both Year 10 and Year 11 students. In relation to changes at Holywell High School, the Challenge Adviser intended to meet with the new Head Teacher to offer support in the development of the new school. At GCSE level, a 12.6% increase in A*-C grades for the short course was reported since 2014.

On A Level results, Councillor Bithell felt that figures should have been included for St. Richard Gwyn. Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer said that 'N/A' should have been indicated for Argoed as there was no sixth form. The Chairman suggested that those schools without sixth form education should be omitted from the table for future reports.

On the table of GCSE examination results for Religious Studies, the Challenge Adviser drew attention to cohort numbers and the single pupil's achievement at Maes Hyfryd. Members asked that a letter of congratulations be passed on from the group.

In response to a query from Mrs. Delyth Jones on the table of full course results since 2005, the Chairman clarified that this was an error as the figures in the columns for 2014 and 2015 should have moved down by one row.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Challenge Adviser investigate the 2015 full course entry numbers for St Richard Gwyn High School and liaise with Denbighshire Council on the GCSE short course results;
- (c) That the Challenge Adviser remove the schools with no sixth form education from the Advanced Level results table for future reports; and
- (d) That the Challenge Adviser write a letter of congratulations for the single pupil's achievement at GSCE level at Maes Hyfryd School.

23. WASACRE SURVEY TO SCHOOLS

A copy of the survey to high schools was attached to the agenda, seeking views on whether the implementation of the new Welsh Bacculaureate had impacted positively or negatively on the timetable for religious education. Six responses had been received to date including only one indicating a negative impact. All responses would be shared at the next WASACRE meeting in Llandrindod Wells to collate a co-ordinated response for Welsh Government.

RESOLVED:

That the responses be shared at the next WASACRE meeting.

24. CURRICULUM FOR LIFE

Following the presentation to SACRE in June 2015 on the review of the curriculum by Professor Graham Donaldson, a link to the Welsh Government (WG) document 'Curriculum for Wales, Curriculum for Life' which addressed the recommendations made by Professor Donaldson was included on the agenda.

The Challenge Adviser gave a presentation on the key areas underpinning the new curriculum and spoke of his involvement in a stakeholder group. He described

the intention for a 'bottom-up' approach where teachers would be required to implement a new curriculum and inform WG. The aim was for the new curriculum to be available by 2018 with the timeline for all schools extended to 2021. The various stages of preparations were set out in the WG document, including the formation of three separate groups to develop the Pioneer Network.

The Challenge Adviser provided an overview of the eight building blocks for the new curriculum:

- Embedding the four purposes
- Creating a new curriculum
- Extending and promoting learners' experiences
- Developing our cross-curriculum responsibilities
- Enabling the Welsh language to thrive
- Developing a new assessment and evaluation framework
- Building the capacity of all practitioners and leaders
- Establishing a constructive and robust accountability system

These would be supported by four 'enablers' forming strong partnerships with stakeholders:

- Working in partnership
- Strong school-to-school working
- Inspiring leadership
- Inclusivity

The Challenge Adviser highlighted the intention by WG to consult prior to bringing forward any legislation proposals during the next Welsh Assembly term. Whilst this could have implications for SACRE, it was noted that the Minister had confirmed that SACRE would continue.

The Challenge Adviser referred to the governance arrangements and raised concerns about where SACRE fitted into the process. He added that once the curriculum was developed, SACRE should be in a position to scrutinise the syllabus.

The Chairman explained that he had been updating his senior leadership group on Pioneer Schools. He shared the concerns about the need for SACRE to be well placed to influence the syllabus and had encouraged the Challenge Adviser to explore this further with local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

25. UPDATE ON SACRE AND SCHOOL TO SCHOOL COLLABORATION

The Challenge Adviser reported that a total of 33 schools had expressed interest in taking part in the collaboration groups, including ten from Flintshire. He hoped to have some representation on SACRE to work on planning and resources for collective worship, and would provide a further update at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That a further update be received at the next meeting.

26. URDD EISTEDDFOD 2016

It was noted that the Eisteddfod would be held in Flintshire between 30 May and 4 June 2016. The Chairman suggested that the organisers of the event could be asked to provide guidance on how schools could be encouraged to raise awareness of the various areas of competition in which pupils could participate.

RESOLVED:

That the Challenge Adviser contact the event organisers to seek guidance on how SACRE can encourage schools to involve pupils.

27. WASACRE

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

The minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 25 November 2015 were accepted. The Chairman offered his congratulations to the Challenge Adviser who was the new Chair of WASACRE.

The Challenge Adviser referred to the tributes which had been paid to two colleagues. He also drew attention to the EFTRE (European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education) conference to be held in Vienna on 31 August 2016 and spoke about the implications for the forthcoming revised GCSE specifications for Religious Studies.

- (i) To agree attendance to the next WASACRE meeting scheduled for 8 March 2016 in Pembrokeshire

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- (iii) 23 June 2016 - Denbighshire hosting WASACRE spring meeting

Noted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the WASACRE meeting held on 25 November 2015 be accepted.

28. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting of SACRE had been scheduled for 2pm on Wednesday, 29 June 2016. He asked that the Challenge Adviser seek availability of another secondary school venue. In response to a suggestion, he stated that it would be preferable to hold a meeting at Holywell High School after the new school was operational.

RESOLVED:

That the Challenge Adviser explore another secondary school venue for the next meeting.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 3.45pm)

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Chairman