

Minutes



Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date: 24 February 2016

Time: 9.30 am

Present:

LEA

Representatives: Councillors D Wilcox (Chair) and D Williams

Officers: V Thomas (RE Consultant), A Powles (Assistant Head of Education) & J Howells (Democratic Services Support Officer)

Faith Groups: H Stephens (Baptist), S Hunt (Church in Wales) & P Landers (Roman Catholic)

Teacher

Representatives: S Northcott (NUT) & H Vaughan (NAHT)

Apologies: Councillor C Jenkins, N Baicher (Sikh), Major C Comely (Salvation Army), L Stevens (NUT) & N Huggleston (NASUWT)

The meeting was held at Duffryn High School and began with a presentation from Mrs Sarah Hawke-Williams, the head of RE. She was one of three teachers who taught RE.

Mrs Hawke-Williams' presentation was an overview on the teaching of RE at Duffryn High School. In years 7, 8 and 9 there was a cross curriculum approach to the lessons. Included in year 7 teaching was an introduction to dharmic religions. One of the subjects covered in year 8 is children's rights and year 9 prejudice and law and justice.

Recent lessons included an Islamic awareness day when students learnt about the Qur'an, tried on Islamic dress and learnt about Arabic calligraphy. It was important to introduce a variety of lessons which the students enjoyed.

Students taking the full course in both year 10 and year 11 were offered two options. All other students study the short course. The school had found that a lot of students who study the GCSE short course will go back and take the A level course having enjoyed the short course.

The Chair agreed that offering a choice of 2 options was obviously popular and was reflected in the amount of students who entered for RS at A level. This year 26 students had entered.

Mrs Taylor-Williams, another RE teacher, introduced a short animated film on the 'sheep and goats' parable. Rather than give pupils regular homework she had asked her class to produce a project done over the academic year and the film had been made by a year 8 student.

The Chair thanked the headteacher for hosting the meeting and also Mrs Hawke-Williams for the presentation which everyone had found informative and entertaining

1 Time of Quiet Reflection

Members took part in a period of quiet reflection.

2 Apologies for Absence

As noted above.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were submitted.

Agreed:

That the Minutes of the SACRE meeting were accepted as a true record.

4 Matters Arising

Re item 5: Presentation of REQM Bronze Award

VThomas confirmed that the report had been sent to RENews

APowles had loaded a copy of the RE News article onto the school website

A letter of congratulations had been sent to Langstone school

Re item 6: Membership Update

Chair confirmed that she had spoken to the Business Manager of the vacancies for two city councillors on SACRE

Re item 7: SACRE Annual Report

VThomas confirmed that all relevant parties had been sent a copy of Newport's report.

Item 11: WASACRE

VThomas was pleased to report that Newport had been well represented at the Autumn meeting of WASACRE.

Item 12: Holocaust Memorial Day 2016

The Chair reported back on the service at St Woolos Cathedral. Everyone who attended agreed that the service had been well organised and was very moving. She asked that letters of thanks be sent to the schools who had participated in the service. VThomas also asked that a press release or report be sent to Sally Richards for the HMD Trust to put on their website.

Item 13: Correspondence

It was confirmed that the Mixed Marriage article provided by N Baicher had been sent to all secondary schools and also loaded onto the schools website.

5 Membership Update

It was reported that Reverend Parish-Foley had been forced to resign due to work commitments. It was also reported that Pastor Elwyn Phillips had passed away in 2015 but the clerk had only been informed of his passing earlier in the week.

Agreed:

Letter of condolence to be sent to the family of Pastor Elwyn Phillips.

Clerk and V Thomas to follow up on membership vacancies such as Presbyterian Church/ URC and Evangelical Church and Pentecostal.

6 Analysis of Examination Results 2015

VThomas went through the analysis of the religious studies results for GCSE full course, GCSE short course, A level and AS level. She confirmed that each school would have received feedback on the examination results and this feedback would be discussed within the school. She went on to give a summary of the 2015 results in comparison to the previous two years and the All Wales figure.

GCSE full course: Less students had entered for 2015 but the number of schools entering were back up to the number in 2013. Results are better than 2014 at all grade boundaries and also better than All Wales figures at all grade boundaries.

GCSE short course: There was also a decrease this year in the number of pupils entering this course, although the number of school entering had increased. Many schools offer Short Course accreditation as a way of delivering statutory requirements for RE. Some schools did fast track more able students to take 2 x GCSE short courses and their results would be reported in Full Course figures. Short Course does give pupils the opportunity for accreditation for their KS4 study. At all grade boundaries results this year are below previous performance but are better than All Wales figures at A*-A and A*-C and comparable with the All Wales figures at A*-G. SACRE agreed that whilst the full course results were very pleasing the short course results were satisfactory.

A Level: Once again entry figures had slightly decreased but the results were a success story. A*-A and A*-C grades results were better than previous performance and All Wales figures. The pass rate for grades A-E was 100% and continues the excellent performance of previous years.

AS Level: Entry levels were on a par with 2013. Results for all grades were far better than the previous 2 years although there was no All Wales figures to compare them with. VThomas reminded those present that this data did not include those who had not yet 'cashed in' their results ie. if a pupil had sat AS level in 2015 but not yet 'cashed in' the result – otherwise this would result in the data being counted twice.

Queries were raised regarding the falling entry numbers for some exams and whether this had anything to do with the cohort figures for the schools. VThomas said that she did not have cohort entry figures to hand but this would be a useful piece of information to include in the analysis and suggested that this be included in the analysis figures for 2016.

Agreed:

VThomas to draft a letter to all Newport schools enclosing the analysis which would be forwarded to all schools.

APowles to supply the cohort figures for each secondary school when the analysis report was submitted to the 2017 Spring SACRE meeting.

7 Revised Criteria for GCSE & GCE Specifications

V Thomas outlined to members all the recent changes and developments that have taken place regarding GCE A/AS level and GCSE specifications. Members have been continually updated via the RE Consultant VThomas and the SACRE clerk as information has been received. She referred to the letters that have been sent from WASACRE and NAPfRE and other SACREs in Wales regarding a deferment of GCSE and also the letter that Qualification Wales has sent to all schools agreeing that a deferment of GCSE RS and History was in the best interests of schools. She referred to the intention that WASACRE and NAPfRE have to meet with subject officers to influence the shape of the new GCSE specifications so that they will be suitable to the full range of ability of those pupils who do Short Course as part of statutory RE lessons.

8 National Curriculum Review & Assessment

Professor Graham Donaldson had been tasked, by the Minister for Education & Skills, with conducting a review of key stages 1-4 for the National Curriculum and in February 2015 his report and recommendations were published in the document 'Successful Futures – Independent Review of the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales'. In that report it was recommended that religious education form part of the Humanities area of learning and experience and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception.

Following the acceptance of this review by the Minister in October 2015 a further document was issued called '*A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*' which is the plan for taking forward Professor Donaldson's recommendations.

Pioneer schools and stakeholders will have a say in the shape of the curriculum and a series of meetings will take place to plan and discuss this. WASACRE has a place at the table as a stakeholder. The first meeting took place in December 2015 when the parameters were laid out:

- First stage for Curriculum Pioneers would be a high level definition of an Area of Learning and Experience framework.
- Detail around content would follow on from this initial phase.
- New Deal Pioneers would focus on the pedagogy and leadership needed to deliver the requirements of the new curriculum as it develops
- Members queried the best process for getting research and evidence to the Pioneer schools and agreed that the Strategic Stakeholder Group would be the most appropriate forum for this. A call for evidence would form a regular part of meetings and members could submit written evidence to the Secretariat between meetings.

At its autumn meeting 2015 NAPfRE began the process of drawing up guidelines on *What makes good RE*, for WASACRE representatives to submit to the pioneer network for consideration when working on the shape of the RE curriculum.

VThomas explained the timeline for the introduction of the new curriculum which would be introduced in 2021. Ten Newport primary schools and two secondary schools were included in the list of Pioneer schools and it was important to find out which Newport schools were involved in the design and development of humanities, particularly RE, as SACRE could offer them support in this.

The next stakeholders group will take place in March 2016 and update will come to the Summer SACRE meeting.

The Chair gave a note of caution in that should there be a change of administration following the May elections a decision might be taken not to continue following Professor Donaldson's recommended route.

HStephens had recently attended a meeting of the Cross Party group on Faith at the Sennedd. He queried the role of SACREs if RS is incorporated into humanities but the curriculum is set nationally.

V Thomas explained that WG has made it clear to WASACRE that SACREs will remain. WASACRE, as a stakeholder, could not be involved in the design of the framework of the curriculum but it could, together with NAPfRE, give local advice to SACREs.

HVaughan enquired whether the Education Achievement Service could keep Newport schools appraised of developments in this matter.

Agreed:

APowles to contact EAS requesting that Newport schools be kept up to date on any developments and enquire which Newport schools on the Pioneer list are involved in the design and development of the framework of humanities.

List of pioneer schools to be sent to all Newport schools.

9 WASACRE Issues

- As mentioned previously V Thomas confirmed that Newport had been well represented at the Autumn WASACRE meeting in Ebbw Vale.
- Concerns had been raised at the timetabling of the statutory Welsh Baccalaureate qualification which could encroach on time allocated for the teaching of RE. Following these concerns a short survey compiled by WASACRE had been sent to all secondary schools. The surveys had been returned to WASACRE for an analysis to be made, the result of which would be reported at the next WASACRE Executive in May.
- Nominations to WASACRE Executive were discussed and HStephens' name was put forward as Newport's nomination.
- The next WASACRE meeting will take place in Haverfordwest on 8 March 2016. HStephens confirmed that he would attend.
- VThomas confirmed that Manon Jones would be invited to a future WASACRE meeting to advise on the progress of the development of the curriculum.

Agreed:

Clerk to contact Newport secondary schools who had not returned the Welsh Bacc/RE survey and submit them to the secretary WASACRE within a week.

Clerk to contact Newport SACRE members inviting them to attend the Spring WASACRE meeting.

Newport's nomination of Huw Stephens to the WASACRE Executive to be submitted to WASACRE.

10 Correspondence

The number of Newport secondary school responses on the Welsh Bacc/RE survey was discussed.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Spring meeting will take place at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Teyrnnon on 8 June at the later time of 2pm. The school will be making a presentation.

Agreed

Clerk to contact school and request that the presentation be restricted to 15 minutes.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and input at the meeting