

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DATE: FEBRUARY 21ST 2012

SUBJECT: THE WASACRE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 24TH, 2011 IN CARDIFF

PURPOSE: TO INFORM THE SACRE OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND DELIBERATIONS OF WASACRE

Summary

The issues were as follows:

1. Introduction and Welcome

Members were welcomed to Cardiff by pupils of Mount Stuart Primary who performed the Divali story through dance and by the Indo Cymru choir of Kitchener Primary. The Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Cllr Delme Bowen also welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Report from the Executive Committee held on 5th October 2011

Members were informed that the KS3 moderation timescale has been cut, with all schools now needing to make their submissions by March 2012. This is due to the cut in funding by the WG. A letter has been sent from the WASACRE executive to Leighton Andrews asking for an extension for RE because of its late inclusion in the process. It was reported that, to date, no reply had been received. A strong case was made in support of 'teacher voice' and the concerns raised by teachers in a number of LAs about the March 2012 deadline. Members were asked to vote about the way forward and it was agreed to write again to the Minister asking for an extension and raising the concerns of teachers.

3. Respect and Resilience

A presentation was received from Steve Bowden, a professional adviser to DfES, on the 'Respect and Resilience' document published by the WG in January 2011. The document provides guidance and advice to schools on how they can further develop aspects relating to community cohesion and prevent violent extremism. It was emphasised that the guidance is consistent with the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework and the Estyn Common Inspection Framework. Reference was made to the Welsh context in particular and the impact of extremist groups on young people as background to why schools and LAs need to engage with community cohesion.

The guidance provides advice to schools in relation to leadership, working with others, curriculum and teaching and intervention and support. Particular reference was made to the importance of ESDGC, PSE and RE in the development of community cohesion in the curriculum.

Copies of the document can be found on the WG website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/respectresilience/?lang=en>

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/respectresilience/1&lang=cy>

Similar guidance has also been produced for further education institutions in Wales.

Creating Safe Learning Communities:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/safelearning/?lang=en>

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/safelearning/?1&lang=cy>

Guidance for Universities in Wales will be available online soon.

4. The REsilience Project: a secondary school's perspective

A presentation was received from Donna Graves, the Head of RE at Bryntirion Comprehensive, describing her involvement in, and perspective of, the REsilience project. She outlined how the completion of the self-evaluation questionnaire, discussion with a REsilience mentor and the use of Gateway documents all supported the work of the department in addressing the priority of *'Finding strategies to address incidents of prejudice and discrimination within the school, specifically through the provision of RE.'*

Donna outlined how the school developed the P4C strategy to support the priority as well as the resources from 'Show Racism the Red Card' following an Inset that she attended. Examples of resources and strategies used by the department were shared. Donna explained how worthwhile and beneficial she had found her involvement with the programme especially in developing her confidence in handling contentious issues as well as helping teachers to foster debate and dialogue effectively in the classroom.

5. Community Cohesion: a primary school's perspective

A presentation was received from Jared Nolan, acting head of Usk Church in Wales Primary school about a school linking network that was developed to support community cohesion and to develop links between the pupils of Maesglas Primary (Jared's former school) and Maindee Primary. This project was supported by the Gwent Ethnic Minority Support Service (GEMS) through the work of its advisory teacher Rebecca Webb and also support from Gwent police and the Schools Linking Network in England (funded by the DCSF). It was explained that the two schools, even though they were only 3-4 miles apart are very different in terms of catchment area. Maesglas Primary serves a local area where there is a high degree of social disadvantage with around 50% of pupils entitled to free school meals. Maindee Primary has around 80% of pupils who speak English as an additional language. In order to develop pupils' understanding of identity, diversity and community a number of events were arranged for year 5/6 pupils over an eight week period. It included team building games, visits to both schools, work on identity projects and a walk to the top of Twmbwrlwm. Throughout the eight weeks pupils could use a 'worry wall' and a 'big brother diary chair' to record their feelings. The 'Blob tree' was also used as a self-reflection tool.

It was explained that the two schools found it to be a worthwhile project to promote community cohesion and that similar projects have since been developed between other schools in Newport, Torfaen and Cardiff.

6. Representation on SACREs

It was noted that all SACREs in Wales have received a letter from the British Humanist Association requesting full membership, or at least a co-opted status, to a Humanist representative.

Reference was made to 10/94 which states that

“The inclusion of representatives of belief systems such as humanism, which do not amount to a religion or religious denomination, would be contrary to the legal provisions referred to at paragraph 103”

It was explained that the Welsh Office Education Department Circulars were guidance only and do not have legal authority, unless there has been a court ruling on a particular aspect.

Reference was also made to the NASACRE viewpoint that encouraged SACREs in England to remain within the legal framework, which remains as before with no legal requirement for Humanists to have a place on Committee A and still only have a co-opted place. Although it was noted that some SACREs in England have given Humanists a Group A place.

The WASACRE Executive has already written a letter to the Welsh Government asking for clarification on this issue regarding the place of Humanists on a SACRE. The Association is awaiting a response with regard to the legal situation.

Several points were raised by members:

- a few SACREs in Wales already have Humanist representatives as co-opted members
- SACRE could co-opt a Humanist representative if this is in accordance with their constitution
- if reference is made to Humanism in the Agreed Syllabus then Humanists should have the right to attend SACREs
- SACREs should reflect the religious make up of their local area - one SACRE has requested figures relating to the number of Humanists in their LA
- There was reference made to the Office of National Statistics who does not accept Humanism as a 'religion' in terms of the census. This will have implications for them being placed in a 'faith group' committee
- Debate arose around having clarity as to what constitutes a 'faith' group because if Humanists have a place within committee A (Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations) then what would stop other 'world views' such as atheism.
- SACRE meetings are open meetings and anyone can attend and observe these meetings

WASACRE will make further enquiries with the legal department of the Welsh Government. The Chair of WASACRE requested that SACREs wait for further guidance in relation to this matter.

7. Showcase of resources:

7.1 REMW – RE Ideas are available to schools in the LA who subscribe.

7.2 Christian Aid

A presentation was received by Eirian Samuel, Education Co-ordinator for Christian Aid in Wales, who referred to the links between education and development. She outlined a number of Christian Aid resources:

a) Just Living?

This resource supports the teaching of GCSE (full and short course) at KS4. The resource considers:

- Why do Christians help the poor?
- What is Christian Aid?
- What is poverty?
- Examples of emergency and long-term aid.

The resource includes worksheets, case studies, teacher guidance, films and PowerPoints and is available in Welsh and English on the Christian Aid website:

www.christianaid.org.uk/learn

b) Assemblies of the month – acts of collective worship for primary and secondary schools are available every month on the Christian Aid website.

c) Sessions in schools – any schools interested in a workshop on Christian Aid are asked to contact Eirian Samuel - 02920844646

8. Date of next meeting: March 30th 2012 – Aberaeron, Ceredigion.