

Cwestiynau i CYSAGau/ Questions for chairpersons - Monmouthshire

Pa gysylltiad rheolaidd sydd gan eich sefydliad ag ysgolion cynradd ac uwchradd yn eich ardal?

What regular contact does your SACRE have with primary and secondary schools in your area?

Monmouthshire SACRE has four primary teachers and three secondary teacher representatives on the SACRE committee, plus a HTLA as a co-opted member. Teacher representatives attend as many meetings in a year as they are able and representation is usually good but sometimes a teacher's work load and other school commitments may prevent them attending every meeting.

The RE Consultant to SACRE is in regular contact with SACRE teacher representatives in between meetings and has some contact with other schools as and when situations of support are required.

SACRE communicates with all schools via a regular SACRE Newsbulletin which is distributed by email through the Monmouthshire Headteachers Association.

Each term the Education Officer supporting SACRE contacts schools that have recently been inspected and requests the completion of a SACRE self-evaluation proforma. Response rate is 100%. Following consideration of the proforma at the subsequent SACRE meeting, a letter is sent to each of the schools commending the areas of good practice and providing support and advice regarding any areas for development as applicable. On occasion as required, the RE Consultant will telephone a school to provide further advice.

Pa gymorth ac arweiniad ydych chi'n eu rhoi i staff ysgolion?

What support and guidance do you provide for school staff?

Agreed Syllabus Support Material

Monmouthshire SACRE has provided comprehensive teacher support material alongside its 2008 Agreed Syllabus.

For Foundation Phase Comprehensive Foundation Phase support material entitled 'Think Topic' was distributed to all settings and schools within the authority in summer 2008.

The production of the material in the form of a CD and hard copy was a joint project with two other authorities. A working party of teachers, Foundation Phase Training Officers and the RE Consultant developed topic based support material with Religious Education included as appropriate. Additional religious education support material was included in the pack as it was recognised that this area of learning often needs additional guidance.

The Key Stage 2 / 3 Agreed Syllabus Support Material was made available to all schools in autumn 2008. The material includes an updated outline long term plan for Key Stage 2 'straight classes' and a long term plan for 'mixed classes' over a two year cycle. There are twelve units of work, six of which are exemplified with samples of pupils' work. All of the units promote a skills based approach to RE and provide a wealth of activities and specific learning objectives. The units are aimed to be supported by the use of the 'Developing Primary RE' series produced by RE Today Services and schools have been encouraged to invest in the purchase of these publications.

Key Stage 3 teachers should find the support material helpful in providing an insight into the provision of RE at Key Stage 2 and the quality and standards of pupils' work being achieved. Many of the units identify key resources and areas of exploration for Key Stage 3 which will effectively build on prior learning.

Feedback from schools using the support material has been extremely positive. Teachers have found the material easy to use and very effective in supporting a skills based approach to Religious Education. In 2017, teachers are still using this highly effective support material to support their provision of RE.

To accompany the locally produced support material, schools were advised that it was highly recommended that they purchase the 'Developing Primary RE' and 'Developing Secondary RE' from RE Today publications. A significantly reduced cost was negotiated with RE Today Services and schools were invited to place an order via the authority.

Newsbulletin

SACRE communicates regularly with teachers via a regular Newsbulletin offering information on current developments in Religious Education, new and noteworthy resources, special events, annual details of the Holocaust Memorial Day, items from faith representatives and articles from teachers as a way of sharing good practice. SACRE also shares information with schools from organisations such as Welsh Government, the WJEC, RE organizations, and faith groups.

Support From Faith Communities

SACRE regularly provides schools with up to date information on possible visits to places of worship and visitors from faith communities to support their RE provision.

RE Celebration Days

SACRE supports the provision of 'RE Days' for all Y6 pupils hosted by the respective secondary schools for their primary schools within their clusters. The series of workshops offered throughout each RE Day are provided by the SACRE faith representatives.

School Based RE Days and Faith Representative Support

Several Monmouthshire primary and secondary schools have welcomed the support of the SACRE faith representatives in providing whole school 'Festival of Faith / RE Days' or individual workshops to support particular year groups and RE lessons.

Farmington Scholarships

Schools are notified annually of the opportunity to apply for a Farmington Scholarship and to let SACRE know of any successful applications.

Artefact Loan Service

Monmouthshire has a comprehensive collection of RE Artefacts which is located at five schools around the county.

RE News

Schools are notified that the previously published magazine RE News is now available freely from <http://www.religious-education-wales.org/> and is a good resource to keep up to date with developments and good practice in RE across Wales.

RE Ideas

The 2017 – 2018 collection of three 'RE Ideas' which provide a teaching and learning theme for Foundation Phase, Lower KS2 and Upper KS2 have been distributed to all schools.

Inspection and Self-Evaluation Follow-Up

A letter is sent to each of the schools commending the areas of good practice and providing support and advice regarding any areas for development as applicable. Schools are invited to contact SACRE if they feel they need any further support.

A ydych yn teimlo y gall athrawon fanteisio ar hyfforddiant a chymorth digonol i'w galluogi i addysgu addysg grefyddol yn effeithiol?

Do you feel that teachers have sufficient access to training and support to enable them to teach RE effectively?

There is an inadequate amount of funding available which allows teachers to attend training courses. This combined with the difficulty of teachers being released from teaching commitments resulted in the last series of training days, offered locally, being cancelled due to an insufficient number of delegates to ensure the financial viability of the courses.

Funding specifically for CPD in religious education would be welcomed to help ensure that teachers feel supported and that high standards of teaching and learning are secured.

However, it is hoped to arrange local consortium training this academic year which will be facilitated by the South Wales Education Achievement Service with schools paying for attendance at the course. This will be a good indication of the current financial situation and priorities that face schools.

In addition, SACRE faith representative members have offered to provide training for each other with an open invitation for teachers to attend. Details will be provided to local schools as soon as available.

Secondary School teachers have been able to attend recent WJEC training sessions. They have also attended network meetings provided by the Lead Practitioners who are supporting colleagues with the implementation of the new RS GCSE.

A ydych yn teimlo bod unrhyw broblemau o ran athrawon nad ydynt yn arbenigwyr yn addysgu addysg grefyddol mewn ysgolion uwchradd? Sut mae hyn yn effeithio ar safonau disgyblion?

Do you feel that there are any issues with non-specialist teaching RE in secondary schools? How does this impact on pupil standards?

Teaching of RE by non-specialists has a major impact on pupils and the subject department staff and leaders. With a lack of subject specific knowledge and an understanding of the important concepts and skills, non-specialist teachers are often unable to achieve the same standards of teaching and learning as would be expected from a specialist in the subject. Higher ability pupils can feel frustrated by a non-specialist teacher not being able to offer spontaneous challenge. Additionally, non-specialists also find it hard to differentiate resources for lower ability pupils, often due to a lack of knowledge of which elements can be appropriately modified and which elements are essential to the lesson. This inevitably has an impact on pupils' attainment but also their enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject. Where non-specialist teachers are supporting the teaching of RE, this results in the Head of Department having a significantly increased workload in providing particularly detailed schemes of work, individual lesson plans and supporting resources.

In addition, non-specialist teachers lack the training to deal with specific sensitive topics addressed in RE, which require specialised and well informed delivery. Furthermore, under the Prevent agenda, specialist RE teachers are best placed and qualified to identify areas of concern and radicalisation through addressing challenging topics. Non-specialist teachers do not have the subject knowledge to identify where 'religious' radicalisation might be occurring.

The impact of the deployment of non-specialist teachers has been evidenced in some secondary schools in Monmouthshire.

A ydych yn monitro safonau a darpariaeth mewn addysg grefyddol mewn ysgolion lleol? Os ydych, ym mha ffyrdd a pha mor aml? Beth yw eich canfyddiadau?

Do you monitor standards and provision for RE in local schools? If yes, in what ways and how often? What are your findings?

Inspection Reports and Self Evaluation Reports

Each term, Monmouthshire SACRE considers individual school summary reports which are created by gleaning any relevant information from Estyn school inspection reports that may indicate standards and provision of RE. In addition, SACRE has in place a process of asking schools to provide their own evaluation of the provision of and outcomes in religious education and providing this to SACRE shortly after the school is inspected by Estyn.

Response rate is 100%. In most cases, self-evaluation reports are appropriately detailed and provide a good insight into outcomes and provision. The majority of schools indicate that standards are good whilst recognising and noting some areas for development.

A letter is sent to each of the schools commending the areas of good practice and providing support and advice regarding any areas for development as applicable.

Survey of RE at KS4 and implications of the Welsh Baccalaureate

SACRE has consulted with schools on how the provision of RE is being managed alongside the introduction of the new Welsh Baccalaureate from September 2015. All secondary schools within the authority responded either via the WASACRE produced survey or via direct communication with the RE Consultant. SACRE noted the varied provision of RE across the four secondary schools within the authority and the School Improvement Officer liaised with the schools in order to try to ensure that statutory requirements are met by all schools for all pupils.

Review of Non-Maintained Settings

In 2015 – 2016, the School Improvement Officer responsible for Early Years undertook a review of all non-maintained settings in the authority in order to monitor the provision of cultural and religious education.

SACRE received the report which covered twenty nine settings. Members of SACRE were pleased to note the numerous examples of good practice identified. It was noted that many settings explore the festivals of Christmas, Easter, Chinese New Year and Diwali and that appropriate provision is being made for moral education within the PSE Curriculum, with values such as kindness being promoted. SACRE also noted that in many settings pupils interact with and enjoy RE through a combination of roleplay, dressing up, puppets and stories. Members

were also pleased to note that many settings have established strong links with their local church and that visitors from a range of faiths visit some settings.

In response to the review, SACRE wrote a letter to each setting congratulating them on their achievements. A list of faith representatives who are able to provide support to Early Years settings was distributed together with a list of recommended resources to encourage settings to explore a wider range of aspects of RE to build on the excellent work being covered around festivals.

A ydych wedi ystyried effaith Dyfodol Llwyddiannus ar addysgu addysg grefyddol mewn ysgolion? A ydych yn rhagweld unrhyw broblemau os caiff addysg grefyddol ei haddysgu'n rhan o gwricwlwm ehangach y Dyniaethau yn CA3?

Have you considered the impact of Successful Futures on teaching RE in schools? Do you envisage any issues if RE is taught as part of a wider Humanities curriculum at KS3?

In the current political and social climate good Religious Education has never been more important for our pupils in order to ensure that they receive a balanced and informed view of religion and how it may be expressed in contemporary society.

SACRE members have considered the ongoing developments of the curriculum review at every termly meeting since the review began. Lengthy and in-depth discussions have been held where members have had opportunity to express their views and respond to consultations. SACRE members have expressed concerns about whether good Religious Education can be maintained if it is taught as part of the wider Humanities Curriculum. Members do not want to see Religious Education diluted and fear that it might be lost or become unidentifiable if it is not safeguarded as a specific subject.

In order to maintain high standards of teaching and learning in the subject, we must ensure that within the new curriculum RE has parity with History and Geography and that it is delivered by subject specialists. If teachers are deployed to teach all areas / subjects encompassed within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, there is a real danger that the quality of Religious Education that pupils experience will be diminished. Teacher bias is inevitable as they will play to their strengths thus resulting in vastly different experiences for pupils where one teacher teaches several subjects within Humanities. This is the experience of at least one school in Monmouthshire who had adopted a 'Humanities Approach' over a number of years and found that it was not effective in maintaining standards in each of the subject specialisms. A further potential negative impact of a Humanities approach may be the uptake of RS GCSE. If pupils are not taught by specialists and receive subject specific quality RE provision, there may be limited opportunity to engage pupils and inspire them to take RS at GCSE level.

If current legislation remains, there needs to be careful consideration of the implications of the right of parents to be able to withdraw their child(ren) from RE. The planning, teaching and learning associated with RE placed within a Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, would need to be clearly identifiable in order for teachers to be able to manage any request for partial or whole withdrawal from RE made by parents. If pupils are withdrawn from the RE element of Humanities, this calls into question whether this partly defeats the object of creating a Humanities approach. Pupils will potentially have different experiences of this AoLE.

Current legislation states that RE is not a statutory requirement for Nursery pupils, yet the new curriculum is designed for 3 – 16 year olds. This anomaly needs to be addressed in order to bring RE in line with the other subjects with the Humanities AoLE and ensure that children in Nursery classes have the same opportunities as those from Reception upwards.

At ei gilydd, pa mor dda ydych chi'n teimlo y mae addysg grefyddol yn cael ei haddysgu mewn ysgolion ar hyn o bryd? A ydych yn teimlo bod unrhyw agwedd benodol ar addysg grefyddol yn cael ei haddysgu'n dda neu ei haddysgu'n wael? Pa dystiolaeth ydych chi'n seilio'r farn hon arni?

Overall how well do you feel that RE is currently being taught in schools? Do you feel that any particular aspect of RE is more often taught well or taught poorly? What evidence do you base this judgement on?

Since Estyn's inspection framework ceased to include subject specific inspection and subsequent judgments, SACRE has had to rely on other means of monitoring schools and this has at times proved challenging and limiting. Scrutiny of self-evaluation reports, suggests that most schools regard themselves as attaining good standards in terms of outcomes and provision. Many self-evaluation reports cite excellent examples of good practice. Some schools continue to confuse spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and / or collective worship with Religious Education when reporting on the subject.

Feedback from primary school teacher representatives on SACRE suggests that many teachers other than the RE Co-ordinator, often omit RE due to the pressures of other curriculum demands, time restraints and lack of enthusiasm for and / or confidence in RE. This situation is exacerbated by commercially produced 'schemes of work' and / or 'Individual Learning Projects' that take a cross-curricular topic approach and do not include Religious Education. Where schools have purchased such resources, a conscious effort needs to be made to add the RE into the curriculum.

The status of RE in a school, and therefore the quality and quantity of provision, often depends on the attitude of the Headteacher, senior management staff and RE Subject Leader for RE. Primary teachers receive little, if any CPD in RE and rely on their mostly very limited initial teacher training input and the support and enthusiasm of their RE Co-ordinator to support them.

Secondary schools in Monmouthshire have strong leadership from the department head of RE; three of whom are members of SACRE. Self-evaluation reports received from secondary schools cite standards as ranging from good to excellent.

A ydych yn teimlo bod safonau addysg grefyddol mewn ysgolion wedi gwella neu ddirywio'n gyffredinol dros y 5 mlynedd diwethaf? Ym mha ffyrdd a pham?

Do you feel that standards of RE in schools have generally improved or declined over the last 5 years? In what ways and why?

This is a very difficult question to answer as the situation will vary between schools due to numerous factors.

Where standards have improved this may be due to

- change in RE Subject Leader
- employment of specialist and expert staff
- change in senior management and status given to the subject
- increased time allocation
- increased budget and funding for resources
- Investment in training of staff

- resulting increased enthusiasm of pupils
- subsequent support from parents who witness their children benefiting from RE.

Where standards have declined this may be due to

- change in RE Subject Leader
- change in senior management and lowering of the status given to the subject
- decreased time allocation
- RE being subsumed with the Welsh Baccaulaureate
- decreased budget and funding for resources
- increased curriculum demands on teachers' time and energy.

From teacher consultation and feedback there is reason to suggest that the amount of RE being provided has significantly reduced in recent years in primary schools. One factor of this is the removal of the inspection of RE (as with all subjects) within the Estyn Inspection Framework. Other factors are the impact of the priority given to Literacy and Numeracy as well as a generally overloaded curriculum.

In secondary schools where RE has been subsumed within the Welsh Baccaulaureate, this will not adequately provide the breadth or depth of RE required according to the Agreed Syllabus. Additional RE needs to be provided alongside any elements that are taught within the Welsh Baccaulaureate.

Beth ydych chi'n teimlo yw'r prif broblemau y mae ysgolion yn eu hwynebu?

What do you feel are the main issues facing schools?

Constant government led changes, new initiatives and demands on schools.
 Timetabling issues for senior management trying to manage an overloaded curriculum.
 Overloaded curriculum requirements for class teachers in the primary school.
 Literacy and Numeracy taking a priority at the expense of other foundation subjects including RE.
 Lack of funding for resources and CPD.
 Lack of access to quality, specialist CPD courses.
 Teacher workload and the retention of the best quality educators.
 Managing the right of withdrawal where parents request children are withdrawn from RE – especially when this is partial withdrawal from certain aspects of RE only.
 Countering the negative aspects of religion that are displayed by the media.
 Dealing with sensitive issues arising as a result of terrorist attacks arising in the UK and around the world.

A oes unrhyw wybodaeth arall yr hoffech ei rhannu â mi?

Is there any other information that you would like to share with me?

WASACRE has highlighted a growing trend of cases where schools are not meeting the statutory requirements for Religious Education.

Monmouthshire SACRE has a good relationship with its schools and has been able to remind headteachers that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus remain in place during the current curriculum review and until further notice.

However, SACRE has also noted that there is no ultimate sanction on schools who do not fulfill requirements for RE and thus there is little incentive for schools to rectify such situations. It would be helpful if Estyn addressed this within the inspection process as it did formerly.

It is also felt that when RE was inspected as a specific subject this had a major positive impact on the status given to RE in schools. Re-introduction of this would not only improve the status of the subject in schools but also greatly assist SACREs in monitoring provision and standards.

Diolch yn fawr i chi am ein helpu â'n hymchwil.

Thank you very much for helping us with our research.

Anfonwch yr ymateb hwn at liz.counsell@estyn.gov.uk erbyn 27 Hydref.

Please email this response to liz.counsell@estyn.gov.uk by October 27th

Os hoffech i mi ddilyn yr holiadur hwn â sgwrs fer dros y ffôn, rhowch eich enw a'ch manylion cyswllt. If you would like me to follow up this questionnaire with a short telephone conversation, please add your name and contact details.

Enw/ Name _____ **Swydd/ Position** _____

E-bost/ Email _____ **Ffôn/ Phone** _____