

Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Tuesday, 15 September 2026

Notice of meeting

Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC)

Wednesday, 23rd September, 2026 at 3.00 pm,
Council Chamber - Council Chamber

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	To Confirm the Minutes of the Previous Meeting	1 - 10
4.	Matters Arising	11 - 14
5.	GCSE & A Level Results 2026 - Brief Analysis	15 - 18
6.	Agreed Syllabus Review	19 - 22
7.	Wave 3 Qualifications Update	
8.	Estyn Updates	
9.	Membership and Recruitment	
10.	Youth Voice	
11.	Professional Learning (LASIS)	
12.	WASACRE Updates	23 - 30
	Welsh Translation for minutes are to follow.	
13.	Any Other Business	

14.	Next Meeting: 17th March 2027	
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Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Louise Brown	Shirenewton;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Rachel Buckler	Devauden;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor John Crook	Magor East with Undy;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Paul Pavia	Mount Pleasant;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Angela Sandles	Magor East with Undy;	Labour and Co-Operative Party
County Councillor Laura Wright	Grofield;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

Representing the Church in Wales (1)

Clare Werrett

Representing the Roman Catholic Church (1)

Bev Bannon

Representing Free Churches (4)

Revd. J. Greaves

Vacancy

Vacancy

Vacancy

Representing the Bahá'í Faith (1)

Mrs S. Cave

Representing the Buddhist Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Hindu Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Jewish Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Sikh Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Muslim Faith (1)

Maddie Saraireh

Representing Non Religious Philosophical Convictions

Phillip Middleton

Representing the Teachers Associations (7)

Mrs C. Rhodes

Tina Bryant

Gareth James

Claire Rosato

Susan Marles

Vacancy

Vacancy

Co-opted Members (2)

Vacancy

Vacancy

R.E Advisor

Hayley Jones (EAS)

Representing Chief Officer, Children and Young People

Sharon Randall-Smith

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

- to become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC)

Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 30th June, 2026 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT: FAITH AND BELIEF REPRESENTATIVES
Clare Werrett

COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES
County Councillor Louise Brown
County Councillor Rachel Buckler
County Councillor Paul Pavia
County Councillor Angela Sandles

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES
Charlotte Rhodes
Clare Rosato

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sharon Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement and Attainment
Geraint Edwards	Head of Litigation and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Hayley Jones	Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE)
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors John Crook and Laura Wright.

G. James, J. Greaves, M. Saraireh, S. Cave B. Bannon, S. Marles

1. Confirmation of the Appointment by Council of the Cabinet Member for Education as Chair of SAC

It was confirmed that Council had appointed the Cabinet Member for Education, County Councillor Laura Wright, as Chair of SAC.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

County Councillor Louise Brown was appointed as Vice Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

4. Collective Worship in Monmouthshire Schools Summary Report Academic year 2025/26

We received the Collective Worship in Monmouthshire Schools Summary Report for the academic year 2025/26.

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Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 30th June, 2026 at 3.00 pm

A survey of collective worship practices was completed by 31 schools and educational settings across Monmouthshire, a significant increase from the 16 responses received when the findings were last reported. The results indicate that most schools plan and deliver collective worship daily or almost daily, with this being more consistent in primary schools than in secondary schools. Secondary schools reported that practical challenges, such as examinations and timetabling constraints, can make daily delivery more difficult, although they continue to work towards meeting their legal requirements.

The survey found that most schools have policies in place for collective worship, plan provision in advance, and believe they meet the legal requirements. Collective worship is usually led by senior staff, with many schools also making effective use of local clergy and community representatives, particularly in faith schools. Most schools organise worship around themes and values, such as kindness, respect and thoughtfulness, often linking these to key religious festivals such as Easter and Christmas. While a small number of schools take a more informal approach, the majority use structured programmes that support pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

Responses showed that schools generally reflect Christian values within collective worship while also drawing on other faiths and non-religious perspectives where appropriate. These wider perspectives are often used to enhance learning, support current topics and encourage understanding of different beliefs and cultures. Schools reported that collective worship has a positive impact on pupil wellbeing, moral development and community cohesion, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity, values-based education and respect for diversity.

Despite these strengths, several areas for development were highlighted. Schools identified a need for more professional learning opportunities and clearer guidance on legal requirements. There is also some uncertainty in a minority of schools about the distinction between collective worship and assembly activities, as well as the meaning of collective worship being wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. In addition, schools expressed a desire for greater access to faith and community representatives to support wider engagement and enrich their provision.

Members welcomed the positive findings but discussed the importance of distinguishing collective worship from Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) education. Members emphasised that collective worship and RVE are separate legal requirements and that any guidance provided to schools should reflect this distinction clearly. Suggestions included promoting existing guidance from Estyn, ensuring the Monmouthshire Agreed Syllabus is more easily accessible through the website relating to SAC, and providing schools with clearer information on the legal framework governing collective worship.

The discussion concluded with recognition of Sharon Randall-Smith's work in leading the survey and supporting the Committee over many years. Colleagues thanked her for her contribution to SAC and its predecessor bodies, acknowledging her commitment and wishing her well for the future as she attended her final meeting before leaving the role.

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5. Teachers Voice Survey undertaken by WASACRE

We received an update regarding the Teachers Voice Survey undertaken by WASACRE.

The Teachers Voice Survey explored how practitioners across Wales have engaged with the new Curriculum for Wales and the introduction of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE). Although the survey received only 87 responses, which is relatively low for a national survey, it still provided valuable insights into the experiences of teachers responsible for RVE. Overall, respondents were positive about the greater professional autonomy provided by the new curriculum. Around 70% appreciated the flexibility to decide what and how they taught, while around half valued the learner-centred approach. However, many teachers also reported challenges relating to learner progression and curriculum content, indicating that while they welcomed autonomy, they would also appreciate clearer guidance and additional professional learning opportunities.

Teachers generally expressed confidence in delivering RVE. Over 71% felt confident planning and teaching RVE within an integrated curriculum model, and nearly 84% were confident in their school's approach to curriculum design. Around 77% felt confident teaching both religious and non-religious philosophical convictions and delivering RVE in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. Additionally, 75% were confident in their understanding of the legal requirements surrounding RVE. Significantly, every respondent agreed that RVE is an important part of the curriculum, while 69% felt that the subject was valued within their school. Most schools also reported having a shared curriculum vision and opportunities to experiment with different teaching approaches.

Despite these positive findings, the survey highlighted several barriers. While almost 80% described their schools as collaborative environments, RVE teachers often worked alone when planning lessons. Over 70% believed they would benefit from greater opportunities to collaborate both within and beyond their own schools. The main obstacles identified were limited time, funding, resources and difficulties accessing professional learning opportunities. Teachers reported bringing strong subject knowledge, personal commitment and a learner-centred focus to their work, but many wanted more support in translating the curriculum vision into practical classroom teaching and progression planning.

Members reflected on how these findings mirrored wider concerns about teacher support, progression and training. Potential solutions were discussed, including strengthening local collaboration networks, increasing engagement with headteachers, and creating more opportunities for teachers to share effective practice. Existing support mechanisms, such as consortium network meetings and online resource-sharing platforms, were acknowledged, but concerns remained about teachers having sufficient time to access them. It was suggested making greater use of school cluster meetings, developing local Monmouthshire networks and showcasing examples of successful RVE practice from schools to provide practical models for others.

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A recurring theme was the need for clearer signposting to resources and guidance. SAC Teacher representatives noted that although many materials are available through platforms such as Hwb, locating suitable resources can be time-consuming.

The Committee concluded that stronger communication with headteachers would be crucial in raising the profile of RVE, encouraging staff release for training and collaboration, and reinforcing schools' legal responsibilities. An action was agreed to draft a communication from SAC to Monmouthshire headteachers, highlighting the survey findings, professional learning opportunities, and key guidance on RVE and collective worship.

6. Professional Learning update for forthcoming events

We received a verbal update regarding professional learning for forthcoming events.

Hayley Jones, Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE), outlined a comprehensive professional learning offer for the next academic year, which will be promoted through upcoming marketplace events. The programme includes webinars on developing Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) subject knowledge, network meetings for both primary schools and GCSE Religious Studies teachers, and ongoing support relating to statutory collective worship requirements. While some of these initiatives have experienced declining participation over time, it was noted that recent collective worship survey work could help renew interest. The availability of bespoke support tailored to individual school needs was also highlighted.

A key focus of the professional learning programme is supporting teachers with the new GCSE Religious Studies Non-Examined Assessment (NEA). Network meetings are being used to develop and share resources, particularly as teachers have found the introduction of the NEA challenging. Having completed one cycle of the assessment, teachers are now focusing on the second NEA and refining resources and approaches based on their experiences.

The offer also includes support for developing numeracy skills within RVE and social studies, alongside training on inquiry-based approaches to learning. These approaches align with the Curriculum for Wales and aim to encourage deeper thinking, effective questioning, and the development of learners' inquiry skills from an early stage. Schools will have opportunities to visit examples of effective practice, observe lessons, review learners' work, and discuss curriculum approaches with staff and pupils. It was noted that while examples are available in other Gwent authorities, it would be welcomed if more Monmouthshire schools shared their practice to provide local examples for colleagues.

Additional opportunities include visits to schools showcasing effective RVE provision and an overview session aimed at governors, School Improvement Partners (SIPs), and other stakeholders who may have responsibility for monitoring RVE and collective worship. There is also an "Inside Out" training programme focused on resilience, wellbeing, and positive relationships, which links closely with RVE themes.

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It was emphasised that the professional learning offer remains flexible and responsive to local authority needs. In addition to scheduled courses, bespoke support to schools is provided, including curriculum design guidance, helping teachers integrate RVE into wider humanities topics, and collaborative planning sessions. Schools were encouraged to request tailored support whenever required.

In response, the Chair welcomed the breadth of the offer but expressed concern that many of the opportunities are based outside Monmouthshire, particularly in Newport and Blaenau Gwent. She suggested that increasing the number of Monmouthshire-based examples and professional learning opportunities would make the provision more relevant and accessible for local schools.

The discussion focused on the GCSE Religious Studies NEA. Teachers have reported significant challenges, particularly in sourcing and preparing appropriate materials for learners. The assessment tasks are not released until only a few months before they must be completed, limiting teachers' ability to plan in advance.

Concerns were noted about the timing of NEA task release have been raised with Qualifications Wales and WJEC. Teachers would prefer to receive the assessment themes before the summer break so they can prepare for the following academic year.

Despite concerns about workload, it was reported that teachers generally feel more confident now that they have completed one full cycle of the NEA. Although the administrative burden remains substantial, teachers have a clearer understanding of expectations. Feedback so far suggests that the NEA provides learners with a more accessible way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and there is optimism that the changes will ultimately benefit both teaching and learning.

7. Estyn Update - King Henry VIII School

We received an Eystyn update in respect of King Henry VIII School.

King Henry School recently received a very positive inspection outcome, with Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) specifically highlighted in the report. It was noted that pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding effectively through RVE lessons and dedicated assemblies. While the report identified an area for development in ensuring diversity learning more consistently reflects the Welsh context, the recognition of RVE was seen as a significant achievement and evidence of strong practice within the school.

It was suggested that SAC sends a letter congratulating the school on this recognition and acknowledging the work of the RVE department. Members agreed that this would be a positive gesture. It was noted that, if the school is demonstrating effective practice, there may be opportunities for this work to be shared with other secondary schools across the authority.

Further discussion focused on the work of the Head of RVE at King Henry VIII School. It was noted that the Head of RVE has been actively developing and refining the RVE curriculum, including curriculum design, lesson structures, medium-term planning and

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approaches to progression. It is hoped that examples of planning might be obtained that could be shared more widely as models of effective practice.

It was suggested that recognition from SAC might encourage further collaboration with the school and potentially enable the Head of RVE to contribute to future SACRE work. It was proposed exploring funding opportunities through EAS to release the Head of RVE for specific projects that would benefit the local authority while also being shared more broadly across the region. Members agreed that this could be a useful avenue to pursue, provided there was a clearly defined piece of work to commission.

The committee agreed to invite the Head of RVE to attend a future SAC meeting to present his curriculum work and share examples of effective practice.

8. WJEC Draft Specification - Wave 3 qualifications

We received a report by the WJEC regarding Draft Specification - Wave 3 qualifications.

The discussion focused on the draft Wave 3 qualification specifications published by WJEC and their potential links to Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE). It was noted that schools will be able to mix and match modules rather than select specifically RVE-focused options. However, because RVE remains a mandatory part of the curriculum, it was noted that schools should consider incorporating RVE-related modules into their provision. Reviewing the draft specifications, several modules had been identified with strong links to RVE, particularly Faith and Belief in the Community, which directly explores religious and non-religious worldviews through theological and sociological perspectives.

Other modules were highlighted that could support meaningful RVE integration, including Ethical Choices, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Healthy Relationships, Democracy, and Sustainability and Action. These subjects offer opportunities to explore moral reasoning, diversity, rights, responsibilities, stewardship, and ethical decision-making through religious, philosophical, and sociological lenses. It was noted that these topics should not be approached solely from secular subject perspectives, such as geography or citizenship, but should include RVE inquiry and reflection.

It was also noted that even modules not immediately associated with RVE could provide opportunities for meaningful integration. For example, Everyday Law could include discussions on justice, fairness, and morality; Mental Health and Wellbeing could explore questions about humanity, dignity, purpose, and the meaning of life; Food Planning and Preparation could consider religious dietary requirements and cultural diversity; Online Responsibility could examine digital ethics; and Financial Literacy could address poverty, wealth, and social responsibility from both religious and non-religious viewpoints.

To support schools, a curriculum mapping approach was proposed that identifies an RVE lens within whichever qualification modules are selected. This would involve mapping theological, philosophical, and sociological inquiry to the mandatory RVE requirements, planning explicit RVE questions within lessons, and providing ways for learners to record evidence of their learning. It was suggested that exemplar units and

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lesson plans would be particularly valuable, giving schools practical models that can be adapted to local contexts rather than expecting teachers to design everything themselves.

Members acknowledged that one challenge is that the units are optional, and schools may choose modules that do not naturally lend themselves to RVE. It was noted that this could make delivery of mandatory RVE more difficult. However, if schools do not choose modules such as Faith and Belief, they will still be legally required to provide RVE, meaning schools will need to find alternative ways to integrate the content. It was noted that stand-alone, non-examined RVE lessons are unlikely to be attractive to many schools due to competing curriculum demands.

A question was asked how engagement with these qualifications could be encouraged. It was explained that work is being undertaken with James Kent to develop guidance and a roadmap showing how mandatory RVE can be embedded within the Wave 3 qualifications. It was suggested that providing ready-made resources and practical examples would reduce workload pressures and increase the likelihood of schools adopting suitable modules. Since many of these courses may be taught by non-specialists rather than RVE teachers, accessible and adaptable resources will be particularly important.

It was noted that teachers are not reluctant to teach RVE but are often constrained by time and planning pressures. It was noted that previous resources had been successful because they were well-organised and easy to use. Concern was expressed that examination boards do not always fully recognise the mandatory status of RVE. Emphasis was made regarding the importance of communicating this requirement to headteachers and presenting practical solutions rather than highlighting challenges. It was noted that integrating RVE into meaningful qualifications would benefit both schools and learners by ensuring mandatory RVE content is covered while also providing learners with recognised and relevant qualifications.

9. The Draft Annual Report of the Monmouthshire Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics 2025-2026

We received the draft Annual Report of the Monmouthshire Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics 2025-2026.

The Committee discussed a shortened version of the annual report, which had been prepared in advance due to ongoing discussions within WASACRE about potential future changes to the report format. It was noted that the changes are still under consideration by the Welsh Government, and no implementation date has been confirmed.

A concern was raised regarding the section on collective worship. It was suggested amending the wording where the report refers to uncertainty around the definition of “broadly Christian.” It was considered that the report should instead reflect the legal definition of collective worship as being “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.” It was also suggested removing wording referring to representation from a

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wider range of faith and belief communities, as it was considered more relevant to the Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) curriculum than to collective worship requirements.

The Committee discussed whether the report should be approved at the current meeting or deferred until the autumn term, as had been the usual practice in previous years. No further comments or amendments were raised by members.

Following discussion, it was proposed and seconded that the report be approved subject to the amendment outlined regarding the collective worship wording.

Members indicated their support and the report was approved unanimously, subject to the agreed amendment.

10. Forward Work Plan

We received the Forward Work Plan.

The Committee discussed the importance of developing a forward work plan for the next academic year to provide clear objectives and accountability. Members agreed that it would be useful to identify specific goals and actions that could be reviewed at future meetings, allowing the Committee to measure progress against an agreed checklist. It was noted that work had not yet begun on creating a formal forward work plan template, although discussions with Sharon Randall-Smith may take place to support this process.

Potential agenda items for future meetings include:

- Revisiting the recent Estyn report.
- Revisit the Teachers Voice Survey.
- Presentation on the humanities Estyn review.

Hayley also highlighted ongoing work taking place behind the scenes involving geography, history, RVE, and curriculum design. She offered to share presentation materials and related resources with members before the next meeting to allow them to review the information in advance.

It was also proposed that draft information intended for schools be shared with the Committee before publication so members could review and comment on it if necessary.

The Wave 3 skills proposals currently remain at a high-level stage, with no definitive drafts yet available. Given the ongoing nature of these developments, members agreed that qualifications and skills updates should remain a standing item for future consideration.

Members discussed ways of broadening participation in meetings. Hayley suggested inviting more schools and external stakeholders to contribute presentations and share

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examples of practice from their own settings. It was considered that this would provide valuable insight into what is happening in schools and help generate useful discussion and ideas. Members supported the proposal, noting that increased engagement and dialogue would help spread understanding and strengthen the work of the Committee. Members agreed that greater stakeholder involvement should form part of the forward work plan going forward.

11. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

12. Next Meeting

23rd September 2026 at 3.00pm.

The meeting ended at 4.32 pm.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS (SAC)

Dear Headteacher,

ESTYN INSPECTION - RVE, SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND VALUES EDUCATION

The Monmouthshire Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC) would like to congratulate King Henry VIII 3-19 School, its leadership team, staff and pupils on the strong Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) provision recognised in Estyn's February 2026 inspection report.

SAC was particularly pleased to read that pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding well through RVE lessons and assemblies. We were also encouraged by Estyn's recognition of older pupils' ability to analyse complex ethical issues and produce coherent, balanced arguments in response to challenging and thought-provoking questions. These findings highlight the positive impact of RVE within the school and its important contribution to developing thoughtful, respectful and informed learners.

The inspection findings demonstrate how RVE supports the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales by helping young people engage with questions of religion, belief, values and lived experience, while developing the skills and dispositions needed to become ethical, informed citizens.

SAC was also pleased to see the positive picture of pupils' behaviour, wellbeing and engagement reflected throughout the report. Estyn notes that most pupils engage positively in learning, show respect for others and collaborate effectively with their peers and staff. These strengths help to create an environment in which RVE and wider values education can flourish.

The report's recognition of the role that RVE and assemblies play in supporting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is particularly welcome. It reflects the contribution that this work makes not only to curriculum learning, but also to the wider ethos of the school and the development of learners across all phases.

As King Henry VIII 3-19 School continues to develop its all-age provision, SAC recognises the opportunity to build further on these strengths through collaboration across phases, supporting progression in RVE and the continued development of pupils' ethical understanding, enquiry skills and critical thinking.

Monmouthshire SAC would like to express its appreciation to the RVE team, school leaders and all staff who contribute to this important aspect of school life. Their dedication has clearly helped to create meaningful learning experiences that support pupils' personal growth and understanding of the world around them.

Please convey SAC's congratulations and thanks to colleagues for their continued commitment to high-quality RVE provision. We look forward to continuing to support schools across Monmouthshire as RVE develops within Curriculum for Wales and would be pleased to offer advice, professional learning and opportunities to share effective practice.

We wish King Henry VIII 3-19 School every success as it continues to build on the many strengths identified in the inspection report.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Laura Wright

Cabinet Member for Education/Chair of Monmouthshire Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics

Monmouthshire SAC Annual Work Plan 2026-2027

Vision

To ensure that Monmouthshire SAC has a measurable impact on RVE and collective worship in schools by:

- Supporting high-quality RVE provision.
- Giving schools an active voice.
- Sharing and celebrating effective practice.
- Providing challenge and support.
- Producing clear evidence of SAC impact for learners, teachers, and leaders.

Monmouthshire SAC Annual Action Plan 2026-2027

RAG Key: **Red** = Significant concerns/not started | **Amber** = In progress | **Green** = On track/completed

Priority Area	Success Criteria	Key Actions	Lead	Timescale	Review Date	RAG	Impact Measures / Evidence
Increase School Engagement and Participation	School contributions feature at every SAC meeting. At least 3 schools contribute across the year.	School Spotlight at each meeting; invite schools; video submissions; practitioner network.	SAC Chair / LA Officer / Members	Throughout 2026-27	Autumn, Spring, Summer	○	Minimum 6 schools engaged; attendance; feedback; representation.
Strengthen Accountability and Purpose	All actions have a named lead, deadline, and intended outcome.	Maintain Action Tracker; review progress; challenge delays; focus on impact.	SAC Chair and Leads	Ongoing	Autumn, Spring, Summer	○	Completed actions; evidence of influence; annual review.
Amplify School and Learner Voice	Feedback informs SAC priorities.	Gather school feedback; learner voice updates; identify themes.	Members / Schools	Throughout year	Spring, Summer	○	Learner voice examples; actions taken from feedback.
Promote Effective Practice	Schools share effective practice and resources.	Practice sharing; case studies; signpost professional learning.	Members / Schools	Spring-Summer	Spring, Summer	○	Case studies; resources; practitioner feedback.

Meeting Milestones

Meeting	Focus	Key Activities	Expected Outcome
Autumn 2026	Understanding School Needs	School Spotlight; agree priorities; assign leads; establish Action Tracker.	Clear priorities and responsibilities established.
Spring 2027	Reviewing Progress	Review actions; school and learner voice; identify support needs.	Evidence of progress and targeted actions agreed.
Summer 2027	Demonstrating Impact	School Showcase; Annual Impact Report; set next priorities.	Clear evidence of SAC impact.

Academic Performance Analysis: 2026 Religious Studies Results (Monmouthshire)

1. Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive data analysis of the 2026 Religious Studies (RS) examination results for Monmouthshire, covering **182 GCSE** entries and **41 A Level** entries.

The core finding of this analysis is that Monmouthshire’s academic performance is exceptionally strong, significantly outperforming national Wales averages across all primary benchmarks. The results demonstrate a high-attaining subject area characterized by rigorous standards and a healthy pipeline into post-16 study. This document serves as a professional assessment for the Standing Advisory Council (SAC) to evaluate systemic success and identify strategic priorities.

2. GCSE Religious Studies: Headline Performance

The county-wide GCSE performance in Religious Studies reflects a culture of high expectations and academic excellence:

- A*9–A/7:* 54.9% of students achieved the highest grade bracket.
- A*9–C/4:* 89.0% of students achieved a high-tier pass.
- A*9–G/1:* 99.5% overall pass rate.

The data reveals a remarkably low level of underachievement. Across the entire county, only five students fell within the E–U range. It is statistically significant that no G or U grades were recorded, with a single F grade representing a distinct outlier in an otherwise high-performing dataset.

3. GCSE Performance by School and Cohort Impact

The table below provides an anonymised breakdown of GCSE performance across the three participating secondary schools.

School Name	Entries	A*9–A/7 %	A*9–C/4 %
School A	114	50.9%	87.7%
School B	15	80.0%	100%
School C	53	56.6%	88.7%

Qualitative Analysis of Cohort Impact

- While School B achieved the highest proportional outcomes—notably a 100% success rate at the C/4 threshold—these figures are derived from a small cohort of 15 students and should be viewed as localized excellence.
- Conversely, the performance of School A is of particular strategic importance. Maintaining a C/4+ rate of 87.7% with a cohort nearly eight times larger than School B (114 vs. 15) indicates a highly scalable and consistent pedagogical approach that effectively supports a wide range of learner abilities.

Collectively, these results confirm that Monmouthshire’s success is systemic and robust, rather than the product of small, selective groups

4. Comparative Analysis: Monmouthshire vs. National Wales Benchmarks

Monmouthshire's 2026 outcomes demonstrate a significant competitive advantage when compared to the national performance of Wales.

Measure	Monmouthshire	Wales	Difference (Percentage Points)
A*9–A/7	54.9%	32.3%	+22.6 pp
A/9–C/4	89.0%	69.8%	+19.2 pp
A/9–G/1	99.5%	97.0%	+2.5 pp

Methodological Note: To ensure statistical consistency and a valid "like-for-like" comparison with the Welsh national benchmark of 32.3%, this analysis utilises the aggregate Monmouthshire A*/9–A/7 figure of 54.9%. The most striking takeaway is the 22.6 percentage point lead at the highest grades, confirming that local students are significantly more likely to reach the highest levels of attainment than their national peers.

5. A Level Religious Studies: Detailed Results

The post-16 landscape remains resilient with 41 entries recorded. Following a rigorous reconciliation of the raw student data, the corrected grade distribution and cumulative statistics are as follows:

Grade	Number of Students	Percentage
A*	5	12.2%
A	12	29.3%
B	13	31.7%
C	7	17.1%
D	4	9.8%
E	0	0.0%
U	1	2.4%

Cumulative Attainment Levels:

- A–A*: 41.5%
- A–B*: 73.2%
- A–C*: 90.2%
- A–E (Pass Rate)*: 97.6% (Reflecting a single U grade outlier).

6. A Level School-Level Insights

Post-16 provision across the county exhibits strong specialization and high attainment:

- **School C:** Established itself as the county's "center of excellence" for top-tier performance, contributing 100% of the county's A* grades (5 out of 5) and achieving a 52.2% A*–A rate.
- **School A:** Demonstrated a strong value-added profile, with 91.7% of its cohort achieving grades in the A–C range.
- **School B:** Maintained a small but successful cohort of six students, with two achieving A/B grades and four achieving C or above.

7. Strategic Discussion Points for the Standing Advisory Council (SAC)

Key Strengths for Celebration

1. **Exceptional Comparative Attainment:** GCSE results significantly exceed national averages, specifically the 22.6 percentage point lead at the A*/7 threshold.
2. **Healthy Post-16 Pipeline:** Sustained A Level interest (41 entries) indicates the subject's continued relevance and appeal to students.
3. **High-Grade Density:** Consistency in top-tier achievement, with over half of GCSE candidates and 73.2% of A Level candidates securing A*–B grades.
4. **Negligible Underachievement:** System-wide success in minimizing failure, with near-zero rates of G or U grades at GCSE and a single outlier at A Level.
5. **Pedagogical Scalability:** Evidence of strong performance across diverse cohort sizes, from small specialised groups to large comprehensive entries.

Strategic Questions for Exploration

Suggested discussion points

- What is contributing to the strong performance in RS across Monmouthshire?
- Can effective practice from the strongest-performing departments be shared through the RVE/RS network?
- How can SAC support schools in maintaining high GCSE participation, particularly given the national decline in RS entries?
- What is the relationship between GCSE and A Level RS uptake?
- Are schools seeing sufficient numbers of students progressing from GCSE RS into A Level RS?
- How can SAC continue to promote the value of RS/RVE as a subject which develops critical thinking, ethical reasoning, literacy and preparation for further study?
- Are there opportunities to use the strongest practice to support schools where RS cohorts are smaller?

SAC Meeting Summary *Monmouthshire schools have achieved strong outcomes in Religious Studies in 2026. At GCSE, 182 students were entered, with 54.9% achieving A/9–A/7 and 89.0% achieving A/9–C/4, significantly above the Wales figures of 32.3% and 69.8% respectively. Almost all students (99.5%) achieved A*/9–G/1. Performance was strong across the larger cohorts at School A and School C, while School B achieved 100% A*/9–*

C/4 from a smaller cohort. At A Level, 41 students were entered, with 41.5% achieving A/A and 73.2% achieving A*/A/B. There were no E grades and only one U grade. The results provide a positive picture of attainment and progression in Religious Studies across Monmouthshire and provide an opportunity for SAC to celebrate effective practice and consider how this can be shared more widely.*

SAC DISCUSSION PAPER

Review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) 2026–2027

Purpose: To support SAC members in considering the forthcoming review of the locally agreed syllabus and to identify priorities for the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).

Executive Summary

The Local Authority is required to reconsider its agreed syllabus at least every five years. The review should determine whether the current syllabus remains fit for purpose, whether targeted refinement is needed, or whether more substantial revision is required. The review should be evidence-informed and should not assume that replacement of the existing syllabus is necessary.

What SAC Needs to Know

1. The review is a statutory requirement but does not automatically require a new syllabus.
2. The purpose is to test whether the existing syllabus remains legally compliant, educationally effective and locally relevant.
3. Curriculum for Wales places significant emphasis on subsidiarity and curriculum autonomy. Schools should continue to determine how RVE is delivered within statutory requirements.
4. The most valuable outcome may be additional guidance, local exemplification and support materials rather than wholesale redevelopment.
5. Decisions should be based on evidence from schools, communities and relevant stakeholders.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Why This Matters for RVE

The review provides an opportunity to ensure that RVE continues to be critical, objective and pluralistic. It allows consideration of developments in pedagogy, progression, local demographics, community representation and implementation of Curriculum for Wales.

The process can identify where schools require greater support and whether current arrangements are achieving the intended educational outcomes.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Why This Matters for SAC

SAC has a strategic advisory role. Members can help identify local priorities, advise on representation of faith and belief communities, consider evidence from schools and challenge assumptions about the need for change. SAC can also help ensure that any future developments remain proportionate and support rather than constrain schools.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Key Issues for Discussion

Effectiveness of the current syllabus; evidence from schools; local diversity and representation; support materials required by practitioners; maintaining curriculum autonomy; and determining whether the likely outcome should be Retain, Refine or Revise.

Potential Areas for Local Adaptation

Possible additions could include a local faith and belief profile, community contacts, exemplification of high-quality RVE, progression guidance, sensitive issues guidance, resource signposting, curriculum links and professional learning support. These could sit alongside statutory guidance rather than replace it.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Questions for SAC Members

1. What evidence suggests the current syllabus remains effective?
2. What do schools report as their greatest challenges in RVE?
3. Would additional local guidance improve implementation?
4. How well does the syllabus reflect local communities?
5. What support might teachers need over the next five years?
6. What would constitute sufficient evidence to justify Retain, Refine or Revise?

Possible Actions for SAC

Recommend consultation priorities; contribute local expertise; support engagement with schools and communities; identify professional learning needs; assist communication about the review; and provide advice to the ASC and Local Authority.

Recommendation and Action Required

Type of paper: Discussion and Recommendation. SAC is invited to discuss the issues presented, identify priorities for evidence gathering, advise on consultation activity and provide recommendations to inform the review process. No formal decision on the agreed syllabus is required at this stage.

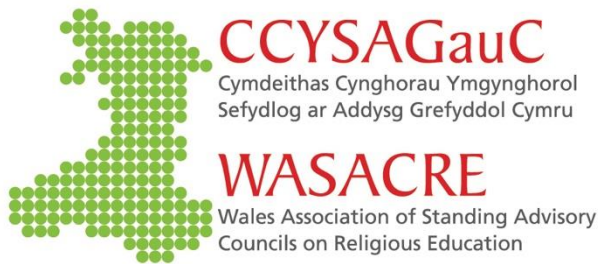
Appendix: Retain, Refine or Revise Framework

Retain: existing syllabus remains appropriate.

Refine: targeted amendments or supplementary materials required.

Revise: substantial reconsideration required due to significant gaps or changed circumstances. Decisions should be evidence-based and proportionate.

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WASACRE Summer Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 24 June 2026

9.30 – 12:30

Hosted by Conwy SAC, virtual via Zoom

Chaired by Edward Evans

35 participants including special guest, Anna Silver, and SAC representatives across Wales

Attendance

Ynys Môn / Anglesey Phil Lord (PL) Blaenau Gwent Kathy Riddick (KR) Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / Bridgend Edward Evans (EE) Alice Parry (AP) Caerffili/ Caerphilly Eifion ap Iŵyd Dafydd (ELD) Caerdydd / Cardiff Corinne Hainsworth (CH) Sir Gaerfyrddin / Carmarthenshire Jennifer Harding-Richards (JHR) Ceredigion Anne Uruska (AU) Rhianydd James (RJ) Conwy Phil Lord (PL) Dr Lowry Brown (LB) Roger Boon (RB) Josh Andrews (JA)	Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire Phil Lord (PL) Jennie Downes (JD) Sir y Fflint / Flintshire Lyn Oakes (LO) Gwynedd / Merthyr Tudful / Merthyr Tydfil Donna Graves (DG) Sir Fynwy / Monmouthshire Louise Brown (LB) Rachel Buckler (RB) Clare Werrett (CW) Castell-nedd Port Talbot / Neath and Port Talbot Rachel Samuel (RS) Casnewydd / Newport Powys John Mitson (JM) Caroline Davies (CD)	Rhondda Cynon Taf Donna Graves (DG) Alison Lee Torfaen Hayley Jones (HJ) Bro Morgannwg / Vale of Glamorgan Kathy Riddick (KR) Wrecsam / Wrexham Tania ap Siôn (TS) Libby Jones (LJ) CSC Donna Graves (DG) EAS Hayley Jones (HJ) NAPfRVE Phil Lord (PL) Donna Graves (DG) EFTRE Phil Lord (PL) REC Kathy Riddick (KR)	Observers WJEC Chris Owens (CO) ESTYN Michelle Gosney (MG) Church in Wales Lisa Taylor (LT) Catholic Education Service WLGA Elin Stock (ES) Qualification Wales (QW) Oliver Stacey (OS) Special guests: Anna Silver (AS) - Board of Deputies of British Jews Translator: Sioned Jones (SJ) Rhys Evans Sarah McErlaine Cllr Sue Shotter Maddie Saraireh
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Minutes of the meeting

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Chair, Edward Evans, opened the meeting and introduced Dr. Lowri Brown, Chief Education Officer, who welcomed attendees, emphasized the importance of high-quality RVE across Wales and highlighted the collaborative work on implementing the agreed syllabus for RVE across Wales. Roger Boon, the outgoing Chair of Conwy SACRE, reflected on his time in the role and highlighted a range of issues from the lack of qualified RVE specialist teachers in Wales to the perceived lack of explicit RVE content in the new syllabus offer. The meeting included a moment of quiet reflection led by Edward Evans.

2. Quiet Reflection

Edward Evans offered reflections on making positive changes in the world and the importance of individual action. He also shared a Universal Statement for Peace.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Vicky Barlow and Councillor Nia Jenkins.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting (19 March 2026)

The minutes from the March 19th meeting were accepted after being prepared using AI by RS and LJ.

Decision: Minutes approved following amendments.

ACTION: EE to sign minutes and LJ to file

5. Matters Arising

No separate matters arising beyond those addressed within agenda items.

6. NAPfRVE Presentation

Presenter: Anna Silver - The Board of Deputies of British Jews

AS presented new Welsh-language resources for teaching Judaism, including an updated Jewish Living Experience Exhibition with 18 banners and 8 artifact boxes now available in Welsh, and a Welsh version of the Jewish Living Online website. The exhibition can be transported around Wales and is currently stored at Cardiff United Synagogue, while the online resource will be fully functional by September. AS also offered to share a comprehensive resource list and invited teachers to join monthly Q&A sessions for support with Judaism education.

The presentation received positive feedback from attendees including RS who praised the quality of the Welsh language content. Several participants requested to be added to AS's mailing list and expressed interest in school visits, with AL offering to coordinate school visits across Wales including upcoming visits to Cardiff, Newport, and Neath/Port Talbot areas. The group discussed promoting Jewish representation on SACRE committees and potential future events, including AL's plans to organize a teacher visit day at the synagogue.

ACTION:

- AS to send her presentation to Libby for onward distribution.
- LJ to circulate presentation link and related resources to all SACRE clerks and, including contact details for follow-up.
- AL to continue to coordinate and offer school visits using the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition and inform interested parties of future events for teachers.

7. Welsh Government Matters

Welsh Government updates were provided by LJ covering the recent meeting on 17-6-26

Persons present:

- WASACRE – Edward Evans, Rachel Samuel, Tania ap Sion and Libby Jones
- Welsh Government – Claire Habberfield and Angharad Thomas-Richards

Angharad has an overarching role in WG - Interim Head of Humanities and ex History teacher with RE as second subject. Sam Clutton has now left the Humanities team.

Discussion points included:

- Parents' and Carers' Guidance on RVE – update
- The Collective Worship Guidance Review – update
- Findings from Estyn's Cross-Cutting Theme Report on Humanities
- RVE / Humanities recruitment and retention crisis and related issues
- Teacher workload relating to the new GCSE
- SACRE Annual Reports review
- The Teacher Voice project

Decisions included: WG colleagues to keep WASACRE Officers updated on all discussion points and arrange future meeting dates in advance as well as extending the offer of ad hoc meetings when necessary.

ACTION:

- LJ to keep in regular contact with CH (WG) for further updates

8. Estyn Annual Report – Humanities Cross-cutting theme

Presentation by Michelle Gosney from Estyn on the Annual Report Humanities Cross-Cutting Theme.

MG presented findings from the curriculum review highlighting weaknesses in humanities education, particularly in planning, subject balance, and development of specific skills across different educational phases. The review showed that while primary schools generally recognize cross-curricular value, they often lack progression in disciplinary skills, and history tends to dominate at the expense of geography and RVE. In secondary schools, the integrated approach to humanities sometimes lacks coherence, and there's an increasing trend of staff teaching outside their subject specialism due to recruitment issues and curriculum models. Key concerns included insufficient professional learning for teachers, limited curriculum time for RVE, and underrepresentation of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups in curriculum

content. Effective leadership was identified as a decisive factor in strong humanities provision, with leaders needing to ensure sufficient curriculum planning time, invest in staff professional learning, and use firsthand evidence to evaluate impact. The discussion revealed that while schools have flexibility to choose between humanities or subject-specific teaching approaches, the current findings reflect expected outcomes of the curriculum redesign, particularly regarding the challenges of non-specialist teaching and subject knowledge development.

ACTION:

- MG to send the Estyn Humanities Thematic Report presentation to LJ for distribution to SACREs and relevant parties.

9. Teacher Voice Project (WASACRE-supported Research)

TaS provided an update on the Teacher Voice Project report, explaining that while the full report was delayed due to illness and the complexity of analyzing qualitative data, a shorter PowerPoint presentation was already available through local SACREs. TaS referred to the WASACRE webinar (25 March 2026) presenting initial findings from the survey ahead of the final report.

ACTION:

- Send the shorter Teacher Voice Project voiceover PowerPoint directly to LB (and any other relevant parties) for use prior to upcoming meetings.

10. AULRE and WASACRE Joint Conference Day in Cardiff

Rachel reported on plans for AULRE and WASACRE to hold a joint Conference Day in Cardiff in early September. However, she was still awaiting confirmation of the location from Mark Bryant.

ACTION:

- RS to chase Mark Bryant for confirmation of the location for the joint AULRE / WASACRE conference day and update members via SACREs when information is received.

11. Qualifications

OS provided updates on qualifications relevant to RVE, including the Skills for Life and Work qualifications in Wave Three, which are being developed by five awarding bodies with specifications to be published in September. He discussed feedback from the GCSE religious studies practitioner group regarding content challenges, assessment issues, and potential quick wins such as extending NEA submission deadlines and making briefs valid for two years. The group also addressed concerns about the lack of qualifications for high-achieving students and the absence of a short course option, with OS agreeing to feed these back to the executive team.

ACTIONS:

- OS to check and confirm whether schools can mix and match units from different awarding bodies for the new Skills for Life and Work qualifications, and report back to LJ.
- OS to take back to Qualifications Wales the concerns raised about the impact of new qualifications on schools without specialist teachers.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OS to take back to Qualifications Wales the concerns raised about the capping of the new Level 2 Skills for Life qualifications and the lack of provision for higher-attaining students in absence of a short course GCSE in Religious Studies |
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12. Report of Executive Committee (13 May 2026)

The meeting covered several updates and discussions. Most of the items on the agenda are on this agenda, including WG meetings and usual updates. Correspondence shared in item 14.

EE announced that SACREs will no longer exist from September 2026, and after discussion at the Executive meeting, the decision was made to retain the name WASACRE. Rachel Buckler and others endorsed the decision after a thorough discussion.

13. Updates

Updates from NAPfRVE, WJEC, REC, EFTRE, and Local matters / enquiries were presented in written form for the first time, with participants generally agreeing this approach was beneficial. Additional information included:

- NAPfRVE:

The recent meeting discussed several key topics related to RVE and current issues. PL presented materials created by NAPfRE members using Estyn resources from the Humanities Cross-Cutting Theme report relating to Self-evaluation and school improvement. These resources had been rewritten from an RVE perspective and shared with All RVE Advisers for use with local schools. PL invited SACREs to contact him with any questions or comments.

14. Correspondence

- Cultivating Deeper Inter-Disciplinary Dialogue – Cardiff Metropolitan University and Christchurch Canterbury University

Tania updated the group on the "Cultivating Deeper Interdisciplinary Dialogue" project, explaining that it had been modified to include recorded webinars rather than in-person teacher engagement, and that she had personally contributed a webinar titled "Being Shaped by Place, Prayer, Living with Nature and the Sacred."

- Freedom of Information (FOI) requests affecting schools in Wales

TaS reported on correspondence with Bangor University regarding their FOI request, which caused disruption to schools, and recommended concluding the correspondence with a thank-you response.

Libby presented guidance that WASACRE created to help SACRE advisors address FOI requests from the National Secular Society, which included clarification on questions about religious education and visitor policies.

The group agreed to send a final thank-you letter to Bangor University to close that correspondence and discussed the possibility of engaging with Welsh Government regarding governing bodies' role in FOI responses.

ACTION:

- TaS to draft and send a final response to Bangor University, thanking them for their response and making observations, to close correspondence regarding the FOI request.
- Resend the FOI guidance document to RB (Conwy) and Corinne Hainsworth (Cardiff).
- Write to Welsh Government (or coordinate with WASACRE officers) to ensure that the review of governing bodies includes explicit reference to governors' statutory duty regarding RVE and consideration of FOI responsibilities.

15. Any Other Business

No other business

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for November 10th, hosted by Ceredigion (online).

Summary of Key Actions

Actions	Person
Sign minutes and file	EE (WE) and LJ (WE)
• Send presentation to for onward distribution. • Circulate presentation link and related resources to all SACRE clerks and, including contact details for follow-up. • continue to coordinate and offer school visits using the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition and inform interested parties of future events for teachers.	AS(BoDBJ) LJ (WE) AL (RCT)
Keep in regular contact with CH (WG) for further updates	LJ (WE)
Send the Estyn Humanities Thematic Report presentation for distribution to SACREs and relevant parties.	MG (E) and LJ (WE)
Send the shorter Teacher Voice Project voiceover PowerPoint directly to LB (and any other relevant parties) for use prior to upcoming meetings.	LJ (WE)
Chase Mark Bryant for confirmation of the location for the joint AULRE / WASACRE conference day and update members via SACREs when information is received.	RS (WE)
• Check and confirm whether schools can mix and match units from different awarding bodies for the new Skills for Life and Work qualifications, and report back to LJ. • Take back to Qualifications Wales the concerns raised about the impact of new qualifications on schools without specialist teachers. • Take back to Qualifications Wales the concerns raised about the capping of the new Level 2 Skills for Life qualifications and the lack	OS (QW) OS (QW) OS (QW)

of provision for higher-attaining students in absence of a short course GCSE in Religious Studies	
• Draft and send a final response to Bangor University, thanking them for their response and making observations, to close correspondence regarding the FOI request. • Resend the FOI guidance document to RB (Conwy) and Corinne Hainsworth (Cardiff). • Write to Welsh Government (or coordinate with WASACRE officers) to ensure that the review of governing bodies includes explicit reference to governors' statutory duty regarding RVE and consideration of FOI responsibilities.	TaS (WE) LJ (WE) KR (WE)

WASACRE Executive (WE)

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