

# Annual Report

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS

2023-2024

draft

## A Message from Blaenau Gwent Standing Advisory Council on Religion, Values, and Ethics

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Members of the Blaenau Gwent Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC) would like to express gratitude to everyone in the education sector for the sterling work you are doing to provide children and young people in Wales with care, support, and education despite the many challenges and uncertainties faced as we have emerged from the wake of the pandemic. It has also been a time for great change and growth as schools move into the new Curriculum for Wales 2022.

Members would like to remind practitioners engaged with Religious Education (RE) and Religion Values and Ethics (RVE) that SAC is here to support you with advice on teaching, learning and resources, as well as advice on RVE in the new Curriculum for Wales.

Additionally, support from SACRE is also available for the Daily Act of Collective Worship.

Blaenau Gwent SAC on RVE welcomes correspondence via the contacts below:

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**The Annual Report of Blaenau Gwent Standing Advisory Council for  
Religion, Values and Ethics 2023-2024**

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# The Annual Report of Blaenau Gwent Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics 2023-2024

## SECTION 1: INFORMATION ABOUT SACRE/ SAC

### 1.1 Duty to Establish SACRE/SAC

All Local Authorities are required to constitute a Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC) within their local area under section 390 of the Education Act 1996, as amended by the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021. Legacy functions of SACRE will be exercised by SAC pending the phase out of the pre-curriculum for Wales 2022 syllabus.

### 1.2 Composition of SACRE/SAC

Representation on SACRE/SAC is required as follows: -

- (i) Such Christian and other religious denominations and non-religious philosophical convictions as, in the opinion of the Local Authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. Since 2018, on the Direction of the Welsh Government Cabinet Minister for Education, humanists can be full members of this Committee as well as other belief groups analogous to religious belief;
- (ii) Representatives of teachers' associations;
- (iii) Representatives of the local authority.

The Local Authority determined that the SACRE/SAC should consist of six elected members, seven bodies representative of religion and belief, and seven representatives of teachers' associations. In addition, the Authority allowed two other individuals to be co-opted onto the committee during June 2023.

### 1.3 Membership of SACRE/SAC

The membership list showing the position for September 2023-August 2024 is attached in Appendix 1.

The SACRE/SAC is actively working to increase representation from religious groups beyond Christianity, as well as from the teaching profession. The local authority is currently inviting expressions of interest to fill vacancies within these categories.

Blaenau Gwent SACRE/SAC have allocated two co-opted places to youth representatives and work is ongoing to fill these places. SACRE/SAC look forward to young people joining the Standing Advisory Council (SAC) in the future in order to incorporate learner voice.

### 1.4 Functions of SACRE/SAC

- To advise the Local Authority on worship, religious education and Religion, Values and Ethics to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials, and the provision of training for teachers.
- To consider whether to recommend to the local authority that its current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
- To consider whether the requirement that religious worship in a county school should be 'broadly Christian in nature' should be varied (determinations).

- To report to the Local Authority to Welsh Government on its activities on an annual basis.

### **1.5 Meetings**

No SACRE/ SAC meetings took place during the academic year 2023-2024, Due to capacity issues at the Local Authority and availability of the SACRE members.

### **1.6 Circulation of Report**

Copies of this report are circulated electronically to those organisations and establishments listed in Appendix 3. It is also available on the Local Authority and the WASACRE website.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ADVICE GIVEN BY SACRE/ SAC**

Summary of the advice given to the local authority by SACRE/SAC

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/ RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS**

#### **Issue**

To monitor provision and standards in RE/ RVE

#### **Action**

1. SACRE/SAC considers and analyses school inspection reports. If there are any issues regarding RE/RVE, such as non-fulfilment of statutory requirements, then the LA follows this up.
2. SACRE /SAC visits schools on an annual basis to receive a presentation on RE/RVE. During 2023-2024 SACRE/SAC did not visit any schools.

#### **Issue**

To fulfil the legal requirement to review the agreed syllabus for RE/RVE on a five-year basis and ensure the agreed syllabus is implemented in schools.

#### **Action**

In 2008 the Agreed Syllabus Conference endorsed and adopted a new agreed syllabus for the authority's schools which was implemented from September 2008. In June 2013 the Agreed Syllabus Conference, endorsed the re-adoption of the Blaenau Gwent agreed syllabus for Religious Education with an understanding that the syllabus would be reviewed once further information is received in relation to the assessment and national curriculum review.

SACRE (as it then was) subsequently received updates via email of developments with the Curriculum and the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.

During 2020-2021 SACRE responded to the Welsh Government consultation on the Guidance for Religion Values and Ethics in the Curriculum for Wales 2022.

Following the publication of the RVE guidance SACRE advised the local authority to convene an Agreed Syllabus conference where the adoption or adaption of the framework as the Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus was discussed.

### **TEACHING MATERIALS**

#### **Issue**

To ensure that schools are informed of suitable resources for RE/ RVE.

#### **Action**

Schools were sent the following information and resources, with SACRE/SAC Members also sent a copy of the information:

1. Schools were informed of the 2023 Interfaith Week, Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. Resources can be found on their website <https://www.interfaithweek.org> – these include lesson plans, case studies, collective worship material suitable for primary to post-16.
2. Schools were informed of the 2024 Holocaust Memorial Day theme 'the Fragility of Freedom'. Holocaust resources can be found on their website [www.hmd.org.uk](http://www.hmd.org.uk) – these

include lesson plans, film clips, case studies, collective worship/assembly material and worksheets suitable for primary to post 16 students.

3. WASACRE continued to provide resources and advice for RE, RVE and collective worship which was distributed to schools via SACRE.
4. Schools were informed about Welsh Government consultations and publications for Humanities and RVE.
5. Primary and Secondary Network Meetings for curriculum leads and offers of support were sent to all primary and secondary schools through the EAS Humanities Network.
6. Farmington Scholarships 2023-2024 information was sent to all schools and shared via SACRE meetings.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS**

### **Issue**

To ensure that teachers can access appropriate professional learning (PL).

### **Action**

The EAS has offered a range of professional learning opportunities for all practitioners within the region, focusing on sharing practice and empowering teachers.

The EAS has provided RE/RVE specific training to secondary school practitioners via the Curriculum Partner for RVE and SACRE/SAC. During 2023-2024 RVE specific PL was delivered to primary and secondary school practitioners via Partner Schools, Humanities meetings, and the EAS Curriculum Partner. The focus of the training included the continued implementation of the Curriculum for Wales 2022, approaches to curriculum design and pedagogy, and in addition, changes to legislation around RVE.

Schools in the region were provided with ongoing RVE Headteacher briefings to understand the mandatory requirements of RVE, develop an understanding of RVE, how it has evolved in the context of the Curriculum for Wales, and consider some of the planning or implementation issues that may arise because of the new RVE framework in schools.

Schools received resources for the 2023 Interfaith Week, including lesson plans and worship materials for all age groups. They were encouraged to share their participation and student experiences with SACRE/SAC.

For the 2024 Holocaust Memorial Day, themed "Ordinary People," schools received similar resources, such as lesson plans and assembly materials, and were asked to report their involvement and insights on student outcomes to SACRE/SAC.

Wales Association on the Standing Advisory Councils on Religion, Values and Ethics / Religious Education (WASACRE) continued to provide resources and advice for RE, RVE, and collective worship which was distributed to schools via SACRE/SAC.

Schools were informed of any further Welsh Government consultations and publications for Humanities and RVE.

The cross-regional Curriculum Design Project continued (supported by Lucy Crehan in 2022) and resources were shared with schools and published on Hwb.

WASACRE commissioned specific professional learning relating to RVE using Welsh Government funding. The first in a suite of modules was published in March 2023. These resources are intended to support practitioners with the changes to RVE, within the Curriculum for Wales. The modules are specifically tailored and aim to support practitioners. They help with the transition to a new way of thinking, planning, and delivering an RVE curriculum that is purposeful for learners in Wales.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### Issue

To ensure that schools fulfil statutory requirements for collective worship and provide a worthwhile experience for pupils.

### Action

1. SACRE/SAC monitors the sections of inspection reports that are concerned with collective worship and SMSC. The LA follows up on any non-fulfilment of statutory requirements. During 2023-2024, Estyn did not identify any instances of non-compliance with statutory requirements. In nearly all schools, it is reported that spiritual, moral and social skills are developing well, and pupils have opportunities to develop an understanding of spiritual and ethical beliefs through assemblies, reflection time, comparing different faiths and beliefs.
2. Schools have been informed by SACRE/SAC of a range of appropriate resources and websites that support collective worship in schools.
3. SACRE/SAC committed to continue to visit schools across Blaenau Gwent and observe an act of collective worship to monitor fulfilment of statutory requirements, provision, and the quality of collective worship during 2024-2025.

### OTHER ISSUES:

**Aim:** To ensure a more informed SACRE/SAC through providing regular updates on local and national issues.

1. SACRE/SAC has maintained its membership of WASACRE and receives termly feedback from the meetings of the Association.
2. The RVE Partner is a member of National Advisory Panel for Religious Education (NAPfRE) and regularly attends meetings on the behalf of SACRE/SAC.
3. SACRE/SAC members receive regular training to keep up to date with legislative and educational changes and to understand the role and function of SACRE/SACs.
4. SACRE/SAC takes seriously Holocaust Education and advises the LA and its schools on this.
5. SACRE/SAC has received updates on the development and implementation of the Curriculum for Wales 2022 and the implications for religious education. It has responded to Welsh Government consultations on Curriculum for Wales.
6. SAC has received updates on the development of the Qualifications Wales Full 14-16 qualifications offer consultation and the implications for religious education. It has responded to this.
7. SACRE/SAC, where possible, would hold meetings at schools in Blaenau Gwent for members to familiarise themselves with RE, RVE, and collective worship in schools. This has not been possible during 2023-2024. Visits to school settings will be planned for 2024-2025 where possible.



## **SECTION 2: ADVICE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/ RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS**

### **2.1 The Locally Agreed Syllabus**

Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics (Curriculum for Wales 2022)

The Blaenau Gwent Local Authority convened an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), which advised adopting the Religion, Values and Ethics Guidance as the basis for the Local Agreed Syllabus for RVE. The document was revised to reflect Blaenau Gwent's specific syllabus. However, Year 9 students and above will continue to follow the pre-2022 curriculum (Curriculum for Wales 2008) throughout their secondary education.

### **2.2 Standards In RE/ RVE**

SACRE/SAC has adopted several strategies for monitoring standards being achieved in religious education and Religion, Values and Ethics in the Authority's schools including the following:

#### **School Inspection Reports**

SACRE/SAC regularly reviews relevant sections of Estyn school inspection reports for Blaenau Gwent schools. If issues regarding collective worship arise, such as non-fulfillment of statutory requirements, the local authority requests a development plan. The current Estyn inspection framework does not include subject judgments; instead, members focus on Estyn's comments related to a school's provision of Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural development (SMSC).

#### **Examination Reports**

It has been the practice of SACRE/SAC to analyse examination results over three years and identify trends in performance benchmarked against all Wales data.

Due to continued guidance from Welsh Government on the way data is presented, and to avoid arbitrary comparison of schools, the LA, EAS Partner, and schools now form closer relationship to identify areas of support.

Through the EAS Humanities and RVE practitioner meetings, schools were updated on the changes to the GCSE and GCE examinations for Religious Studies. All issues and views concerning examinations for Religious Studies were shared with SACRE/SAC, WASACRE, NAPfRE, and the WJEC.

During 2024-2025 SACRE/SAC will discuss ways in which the Local Authority will be able to provide meaningful information to SAC about the quality of Religious Education and Religious Studies (RS) at KS4 within its schools.

SACRE/SAC was informed of the national challenges facing RE/RS and the decline in GCSE and A Level entry. The RE Council of England and Wales published a report. SACRE/SAC were provided with national updates and discussed concerns, which were then shared with WASACRE and NAPfRE.

### **2.3 Methods of Teaching, Teaching Materials and Teacher Training**

#### **Professional Learning**

SACRE/SAC has continued to offer advice and guidance to schools on pedagogy and resources. The EAS has supplied a variety of programs, materials, and approaches to support schools in the region.

The EAS advertises its courses through the [Supporting Our Schools website](#) and attendance for the LA was as follows:

Mrs Hayley Jones offered bespoke support for Religious Education and Religion, Values, and Ethics within the region during 2023-2024.

SACRE/SAC was advised that the EAS has invested in delivering bespoke support for RE/RS and RVE. This enables schools to receive direct support from the Curriculum Partner, for example developing a greater understanding of the Curriculum for Wales, planning, and designing a tailored RVE and Humanities curriculum. In addition, cluster schools have worked together, with the support of the EAS partner, to co-construct and collaborate on their RVE and Humanities provision. This offer is open to all schools allowing greater capacity for the development of curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership. RVE practitioners can continue to access EAS professional learning and resources on pedagogy.

### **Partner Schools for Religious Education and Religion, Values and Ethics**

The Partner School for RVE has continued their efforts throughout 2023-2024. Their guidance and support, along with collaboration among SACRE/SACs and NAPfRE, has been shared with teachers of Religious Education/Religious and Values Education (RE/RVE).

### **Teaching Materials**

A wide range of teaching materials have been made known to schools by SACRE/ SAC on RVE as follows:

#### **Farmington Scholarships**

SACRE/SAC provided Blaenau Gwent schools with information regarding the Farmington Scholarships 2023-2024 which are free to teachers of religious education in the UK.

#### **Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 Resources**

For Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, SACRE/SAC wrote to all schools to encourage them to commemorate the day in some way. They were advised of the theme, and free educational Holocaust resources that can be found on [the Holocaust Memorial Day website](#).

#### **The cross regional Curriculum Design Project with Lucy Crehan**

Resources published on Hwb.

#### **The Jewish History Association of South Wales resources and website link to support RVE <https://www.jhasw.com/>**

JHASW/CHIDC seeks to document and share the heritage of Jewish communities in South Wales. The charity has developed free, bilingual Holocaust resources for teachers and students, including classroom activities and guidance notes. The training session introduced teachers to these resources and the educational principles behind them.

#### **EAS Humanities Newsletter**

The EAS Humanities Newsletter is emailed to all schools each term. It provides useful information on RVE, teaching and updates on the work of SAC.

## **SECTION 3: ADVICE ON COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **3.1 School Inspection Reports**

SACRE/SAC reviews Estyn Blaenau Gwent inspection reports. SAC has decided to keep using these reports to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and to consider relevant comments.

### **3.2 Applications for Determinations**

No applications were received from schools for determinations to be made on the lifting of the requirements for collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

### **3.3 School Visits**

SACRE/SAC appreciates the opportunities accorded to members to observe acts of collective worship in schools. Members did not have the opportunity to host a SACRE/SAC meeting at a school or observe an act of collective worship during 2023-2024.

## **SECTION 4: OTHER ISSUES**

### **4.1 Wales Association on the Standing Advisory Councils on Religion, Values and Ethics / Religious Education (WASACRE)**

SACRE/SAC has maintained its affiliation with WASACRE, with representatives attending meetings and reporting back on discussions during the 2023-24 academic year. SACRE/SAC appreciates WASACRE's proactive efforts on issues affecting RE/RVE and values the feedback received from the EAS Partner and attendees at WASACRE meetings.

Additionally, WASACRE, in collaboration with NAPfRE, organized an RVE Conference, featuring an in-person Conference Day on June 13, 2024, alongside online seminars. The conference aimed to celebrate RVE in the Curriculum for Wales and provided various opportunities for participants:

- significant professional learning opportunities for our member SACs and their schools;
- offer opportunities to raise and discuss issues that really matter for RVE in Wales;
- make connections and share insights across Wales.

### **4.2 HOLOCAUST EDUCATION**

#### ***Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 Resources – ‘the Fragility of Freedom’***

To show the Council's commitment to commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day, Tredegar Clock and General Offices, Ebbw Vale will be lit up to show an act of solidarity.

Additionally, Wales held its annual digital Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony to honour this important occasion.

For Holocaust Memorial Day 2025, SACRE/SAC will reach out to all schools to encourage commemoration of the day. They will provide information on the theme and share free educational resources.

### **4.3 CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022**

SACRE/SAC has continued to receive updates on the developments being made with regards to Religion, Values and Ethics and the new Curriculum for Wales.

### **4.4 TRAINING OF SACRE MEMBERS**

SACRE members did not receive training on the Roles and Responsibilities of SACRE/SAC. This will take place in 2024-2025.

#### 4.5 MEMBERSHIP OF SACRE/SAC

The current membership list showing the position as of July 2024 is attached at Appendix 1.

The following positions are currently vacant:

**Co-opted places** – SACRE have agreed to co-opt two youth representatives onto the Committee and work is ongoing in this area.

**Committee A** – Work is on-going to review the constitution and rationalise membership to fill the remaining vacancy for the non-Christian faith representatives.

**Committee B** – Six positions remain vacant for Trade Union Representative, and SACRE/SAC are in the process of writing to schools to seek expressions of interest to fill these places.

#### 4.6 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TO BLAENAU GWENT SACRE/SAC

Mrs Hayley Jones, the EAS Curriculum Partner for SACs and RVE, provides professional support to Caerphilly SACRE/SAC and Professional Learning for schools across Caerphilly.

Luisa Munro-Morris and Kelly Forrest provide support to SACRE/SAC in their respective roles as Interim Corporate Director of Education and Interim Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.

## APPENDIX 1: BLAENAU GWENT SACRE/SAC MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AS OF July 2024

### CHRISTIAN AND OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS - COMMITTEE A

Tim Baxter (Roman Catholic Archdiocese)  
John Meredith (Church in Wales)  
Wayne Evans (Church on the Rise)  
Dr Muzafar Jilani (Muslim)  
Chris Abass (Bahá'í)  
Kathy Riddick (Wales Humanists)

#### **Vacancies x5:**

Buddhism  
Hinduism  
Judaism  
Sikhism  
Vacancy - non-Christian faith group/religion

### TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS - COMMITTEE B (8)

Mrs. C. Lane (NASUWT)  
Mrs K Knowlson (NAHT)  
Kelly McKay (NAHT)

#### **Six Vacancies**

### THE LOCAL AUTHORITY - COMMITTEE C (2)

Councillor Sue Edmunds  
Councillor Tommy Smith

#### **One Vacancies**

### CO OPTED MEMBERS (4)

#### **Up to four Vacancies**

### OFFICERS

Kelly Forrest, Interim Head of School Improvement and Inclusion  
Luisa Munro-Morris (Head of School Improvement and Inclusion)  
Hayley Jones (EAS Curriculum Partner for RVE and SAC)

### CLERK TO SACRE

Kelly Forrest, Interim Head of School Improvement and Inclusion, Forrest  
[Kelly.Forrest@Blaenau-Gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Kelly.Forrest@Blaenau-Gwent.gov.uk)

### **APPENDIX 3: CIRCULATION OF REPORT**

***Copies will be sent electronically to the relevant bodies. This report will be available on the Local Authority website and the WASACRE website for interested parties to download.***

Members of Blaenau Gwent Council

Chair of Blaenau Gwent Education Scrutiny Committee

All members of Blaenau Gwent SACRE/SAC

Regional Director of South-East Wales Education Advisory Service (EAS)

Welsh Government Education Officer responsible for Religious Education

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Welsh Government

Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all County Borough Schools

Principals and Governing Bodies of all Tertiary Colleges within the County Borough

All SACRE/ SACs in Wales

Wales Association of SACRE (WASACRE)

The National Library of Wales

ESTYN