

Education Report

- 1. The place of Religious Education in the Humanities curriculum.** As part of the scheme for curriculum reform in Wales, Prof. Donaldson noted in his report, 'Successful Futures' (2015) that Religious Education should be placed within the 'Humanities' (which also includes History, Geography, Business and Social Studies). In order to develop this curriculum and ensure a secure and successful future for Religious Education, the Welsh Government has held during September a number of Religious Education consultations across Wales. As a member of the Wrexham SACRE, I was invited to represent the SACRE at a meeting on 18 September between Welsh Government officers and representatives from SACREs across North Wales at the Welsh Government's Llandudno Junction Office. At that meeting we were given the opportunity to respond to the latest draft report 'Humanities Areas of Learning - Summer 2018'. It includes general educational guidelines for all Humanities subjects and it was a pleasing to see that RE is far more evident in this document than in previous versions of the document. I enclose for information my feedback comments.
- 2. In June Estyn published its report: Religious Education in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.** With the focus on skills dominating the curriculum in recent years, subject specific inspection reports have been few and far between but here we have a report on Religious Education and it has been warmly welcomed by the RE fraternity. This 39 page report recommends amongst other things that more able pupils are challenged more and also asks for better transition in terms of the subject between primary and secondary schools. I would also like to refer to the eighth and final recommendation in the report which strategically notes that Welsh Government should 'Work with Local Authorities, regional consortia and SACREs to ensure that clarity exists regarding the place of Religious Education within the Humanities Areas of Learning'. In fairness, the Welsh Government has already responded to this recommendation and my previous comment regarding meetings held between Welsh Government and representatives of county SACREs is one important step in fulfilling this Estyn recommendation and ensuring that RE has its rightful place in our schools' future curriculum.
- 3. Free Church issues.** I was unable to attend a meeting of the FCEC due to a change of date. However, I did send documentation to the FCEC secretary to update her on developments in Wales.

Feedback Comments on the RE Consultation between Welsh Government and North Wales county SACREs

Welsh Government, Llandudno Junction Office – September 18th, 2018.

Is Religious Education easily recognisable in the Humanities Areas of Learning?

Yes, this Humanities AoL Summer 2018 draft document presented today strengthens and gives RE a greater focus in the Humanities curriculum and is a considerable improvement on what we had in June.

In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses so far of the proposals under discussion?

- 1. RE is given a greater focus in the document and the Humanities curriculum.*
 - 2. Strengthens the Welsh dimension by referring more to Wales in the document than was previously the case.*
 - 3. The whole scheme is very acceptable, exciting and challenging.*
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- 1. There is no mention so far in the document of 'Spiritual and Moral Development', e.g. as a cross curricular topic.*
 - 2. Given that the number of RE county Advisers in Wales has fallen considerably this year (possibly only 2 left) how do we ensure that this substantial scheme will be delivered in schools and that it will be of the highest standard? That is, who at county level will monitor and give appropriate subject leadership to teachers?*
 - 3. As over 50% of RE teachers in Wales are without the appropriate RE subject qualifications and competence, how will these teachers receive the necessary support and training that they will need?*
 - 4. In considering points 2 and 3 above, Welsh Government will need to fund substantial training schemes in order to reach the required standard and high expectations of this reform programme. I also doubt whether this matter is unique to teachers of RE.*

Do you have any questions to ask the Humanities Areas of Learning Working Group, or any suggestions to offer?

See above points 2-4.

Given that religious and non-religious beliefs are now to be part of the scheme, will the law with regard to RE need to be revised?

Will the role and purpose of county SACREs need to be revised? (Note the discussion in England – The CoRe Report, the final version has recently been published)

The Right of Withdrawal from RE lessons –given that this is the 21st century, isn't it about time that this right is removed? Is it not the case that RE is now established as an educational subject on a par with other subjects which are currently taught in our schools? (This is also currently being discussed in England)

What is your opinion on the proposed relationship between the agreed syllabuses and the Humanities Areas of Learning?

I would expect an agreed syllabus to contain the Humanities Areas of Learning with the focus on RE as part of its statutory requirements.

Would the supplementary framework be an effective way of helping agreed syllabus conferences to fulfil their statutory role?

The supplementary framework is an important document that would help give support and leadership to teachers but it will need specialist RE personnel to lead the discussion and unpack the subject so that RE teachers can create schemes of work and lessons of high standard in schools.

Is there anything else we should consider as we develop the supplementary framework?

The right to withdraw from RE lessons was noted above. My comment on this matter is perhaps too ambitious but merits discussion.

'Learner Entitlement' is worthy of inclusion (from the CoRe Report). Could this be a statutory matter for us in Wales?

Ensure that documentation and any resources are published bilingually and at the same time. RE teachers are fed up with receiving Welsh language resources months or possibly years after English language publications are made available (c.f. A level resources).

What are the implications of these proposals for you?

Support our RE Adviser in Wrexham!

Vaughan Salisbury

18.09.2018