



European School Leaders' Visit to Wales

Tania ap Sion and Leslie J Francis

Wales plays a leading role in the Inter-European Commission on Church and School (ICCS) through the St Mary's Centre. From the St Mary's Centre, Dr David Lankshear serves as Treasurer, Dr Tania ap Siôn is taking over the role of Secretary and is the Wales correspondent for the organisation, and Professor Leslie J Francis serves as a trustee. During March 2012, the St Mary's and St Giles' Centre hosted a residential week-long meeting to enable representatives of ICCS and the International Association for Christian Education (IV) to explore the provision for religious education in Wales with the aim of sharing and encouraging critical reflection on practice.

The visitors to Wales included:

- **Dick den Bakker**, Director of the Besturenraad Academy, Netherlands;

- **Tamás Irinyi**, Teacher at a Protestant Secondary School and Educational Counselor, Hungary;
- **Michael Jacobs**, Headteacher of a Protestant Secondary School, Germany;
- **Dr Thomas Kellner**, Head of a Protestant Schools' Centre and Lecturer at Bayreuth University, Germany;
- **Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer**, Secretary to IV, Germany;
- **Professor Jürg Schoch**, Head of a Secondary School and Pedagogical Institute, Switzerland;
- **Ágnes Urbán**, Deputy Headteacher of a Lutheran Secondary School, Hungary;
- **Dorothea Woydack**, Headteacher of a Protestant Secondary School and Board member of the Barbara Schadeberg Foundation for Promoting Protestant Schools, Germany.

During their stay in Wales, the visitors welcomed the opportunity:

- to explore the joint Anglican-Catholic secondary school in Wrexham, St Joseph's school;
- to explore the Church in Wales voluntary aided school in Wrexham, Minera, and the Church in Wales voluntary controlled school in Wrexham, St Giles;
- to explore the training of teachers at a 'Christian' University, Liverpool Hope;
- to discuss the development of the St Giles' Centre in Wrexham and to see how the initiative supports RE in Wrexham, in Wales and beyond;
- to work with the bilingual curriculum resources developed by the St Mary's and St Giles' Centre to support religious education and collective worship in schools;
- to learn about the current research projects managed by the St Mary's Centre, including the project concerned with the attitudes of 13- to 15-year-old learners to religious diversity;
- to explore the significance of the accredited professional development opportunities offered by the St Mary's and St Giles' Centre in association with Glyndŵr University, including the research-based reflective practice approach underpinning the MA and DMin programme.

As a consequence of the success of the European school leaders' visit to Wales, it is anticipated that the St Mary's and St Giles' Centre will host another visit of this kind to Wales on behalf of the ICCS and IV next year. ICCS and IV are also discussing the feasibility of organizing a similar visit to another European country.