

Curriculum for Wales: Religion, values and ethics

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by **28 July 2020** to

Arts, Humanities and Well-being Branch
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: RVEConsultation@gov.wales.

Question 1 – Do you agree that religion, values and ethics (RVE) should encompass both religious and non-religious beliefs that are philosophical convictions (in line with the European Convention on Human Rights) as described in the consultation document?

Agree	✓	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

Question 2 – Do you agree that agreed syllabus conferences **must have regard** to statutory guidance when they are developing their locally agreed syllabus?

Agree	✓	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

In fact we are of the opinion that agreed syllabus conferences should not only have regard to statutory guidance when they are developing their locally agreed syllabuses but that they should act in complete accordance with them. Relating to the above, what is the meaning of ‘must have regard’ here? What legal status does it have? The term appears to be rather imprecise and open-ended, e.g. would it be acceptable to you that an agreed syllabus conference would have regard to but then refuse the government’s statutory guidance?

Question 3 – Do you agree with our proposal that community schools and foundation and voluntary schools **without a religious character** must be required to have regard to an agreed syllabus in designing and implementing RVE?

Agree	✓	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

We would wish to repeat here our concern regarding the meaning of the phrase ‘have regard to’.

Question 4 – Do you agree with our proposal that parents/carers of learners in schools **without a religious character** must no longer be able to request provision of RVE in line with tenets of a particular faith?

Agree	✓	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

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Question 5 – Do you agree with the proposal that voluntary-controlled schools **with religious character** can teach RVE in accordance with the trust deeds of the school or the tenets of the faith of the school **if requested by parents/carers**?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

<p>With reference to paragraph 24, we are of the opinion that learners should only receive 'RVE which has been designed in accordance with an agreed syllabus'. It is very important that learners understand and have the opportunity to discuss and assess the various religious and non-religious viewpoints that exist in our society and to this end it would be beneficial for them to receive an education on these matters.</p>
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Question 6 – Do you agree that **voluntary-aided schools with a religious character** should be **required** to teach the agreed syllabus **where a parent/carer requests it** and should not have discretion to refuse to do so?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

<p>Again, we believe that it is very important that learners understand and have the opportunity to discuss and assess the various religious and non-religious viewpoints that exist in our society and to this end it would be beneficial for them to receive an education on these matters. The final phrase in the Welsh language version of question 6 contains a significant mistake. See our Welsh language consultation response form.</p>
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Question 7 – We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals in relation to religion, values and ethics would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

<p>i) learners would have the opportunity to expand their subject vocabulary and become acquainted with standpoints which exist in our society and gain</p>
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confidence to discuss such matters while at school and after leaving school.

- ii) By practising that noted in i) above, the Welsh language would not be treated less favourably than the English language.
- iii) This would mean that considerable bilingual resources would need to be prepared across the age range and that Welsh language resources be published at the same time as English medium publications.

Question 8 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy on religion, values and ethics in the Curriculum for Wales could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

See the answers noted for Question 7 above.

Question 9 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Paragraphs 16, 17 and 18. These paragraphs appear confusing and muddled in their presentation. It should have been made clear from the outset that the legal changes needed to focus on a) subject content and b) ASC and SACRE membership in a local authority.

Paragraph 16 refers to changes in the law on Religious Education but does not offer specific wording. We are therefore left uninformed regarding what exactly will be the proposed change. There is need for more detailed explanation regarding the criteria that will be used to decide which non-religious viewpoints will be acceptable for inclusion in an agreed syllabus. A phrase which states ‘such as humanism or atheism’ does not provide sufficient guidance. Professor Russell Sandberg’s valuable article ‘*Radical Reform of ‘Religion, Values and Ethics’ in Welsh Schools*’, Law and Religion UK, 6 May, 2020, discusses these issues in greater detail and raises a number of pertinent questions. In considering these matters, it is important that the ‘guidance’ noted in the last sentence of paragraph 16 is clear and detailed.

Paragraph 17 is confusing:

- a) It refers to the membership of ASCs and SACREs but the final sentence begins ‘Changes will also be made ..’. It is difficult to see what the word ‘also’ here refers to.
- b) In the final sentence we read ‘.. to create new groups to represent those who hold philosophical convictions of that kind’. Is it the intention here to create more than one group to represent these philosophical convictions? If this were to be the case, we would fundamentally oppose this development. In

recognition of the fact that these bodies are statutory, we believe it would have been helpful if the specific groups which will make up future membership of ASCs and SACREs had been clearly noted.

To this end, we suggest the following groups are made future members of ACSs and SACREs:

- i) County Councillors.
- ii) Primary School RVE teachers.
- iii) Secondary School RVE teachers.
- iv) Representatives of the Church in Wales & the Catholic Church.
- v) Representatives of the other Christian Denominations.
- vi) Representatives of the other Faith Groups.
- vii) Representatives of the Non-Religious Philosophical Groups.

Paragraph 18: The first two sentences and the final sentence of this paragraph refer to the law but without elaboration, while the third sentence refers to local authority subject committee membership. There is no clear linear development to the paragraph discussion which makes no sense. Has something been omitted here? In our Welsh language response, we have also raised an issue with regard to the Welsh language translation of ‘..material change ..’ in the first sentence.

If it is the intention to keep ACSs and SACREs, we would have appreciated receiving clear guidance regarding the purpose and functions of these bodies when the new curriculum becomes operational. After all, these are statutory bodies. We take it that as from September 2022 local schools/clusters of schools will decide what will be taught in respect of subject content and content weighting between different religions/non-religious convictions after they have given due regard to an agreed syllabus.

Paragraphs 24-28: Discussion here relates to VC and VA schools with a religious character. Our answers to questions 4-6 reflect a free church perspective.

We also make reference in our Welsh language response form, following a previous consultation, of our appreciation that our translation of ‘Agreed’ as in AS/ASC has been adopted and used in this consultation document.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: