

# Curriculum for Wales: Religion, values and ethics

## Consultation response form

Your name: Buddug Mair HUws

Organisation (if applicable): Gwynedd SACRE

e-mail/telephone number:  
buddugmairhuws@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Your address:

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](mailto: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?

<b>Agree</b>	✓	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	---	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

Religious education already includes non-religious perspectives alongside religious perspectives, as the WJEC specifications make clear. The guidance (question 2) must ensure that this does not lead to either any dilution in the religious education element in the curriculum or to overloading its content by including a long list of philosophical convictions. Learners must develop an adequate understanding of religion in order to achieve the purpose of the curriculum of supporting them to be “ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world”. Philosophy is a separate academic discipline in its own right.

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

<b>Agree</b>	✓	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	---	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

Statutory guidance ensures that learners throughout Wales have a common body of knowledge for GCSE and A Level examinations. However the term “have regard to” must be defined in this context and agreed syllabus conferences must have sufficient discretion to reflect local priorities. The Framework should have been published before consulting on this question. It is important that any statutory guidance maximises the status of religious education in the face of the concern that changing the name to religion, values and ethics weakens its status and could perhaps have an impact on those choosing to study religious education qualifications at GCSE and A Level.

**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?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	✓	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	---	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

Gwynedd SACRE agree that the schools should have regard to the local agreed syllabus (not “an agreed syllabus”) but they should be required to incorporate it in their curriculum, not

merely “have regard to” it. The new curriculum allows many opportunities to study religious education within the humanities but there is a danger that some schools might not make the most of these opportunities, particularly if the head of department is not a specialist in the subject. It is not the intention of the new curriculum for Wales to weaken religious education but that could happen if schools were allowed to depart from the agreed syllabus; the learners would not develop the subject-specific skills and perhaps fewer of them might choose the subject for GCSE and A Level. This problem could be tackled by ensuring that the Agreed Syllabus Conference develop a good, pluralistic syllabus and the schools follow it. This would enable SACREs to carry out their duty of monitoring the standards of religious education in the schools.

**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?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

The curriculum is broad, balanced and pluralistic and does not seek to indoctrinate. It is suitable for everyone, including parents of a particular faith. Consequently, parents very rarely exercise their right to ask for their children to be educated in accordance with the tenets of their faith. There is little need to change the existing arrangements; removing this right might infringe parents’ human rights and might lead to more learners being home educated.

**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**?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

Paragraph 24 should make it clear that the right of a parent to request that the school teach the subject in accordance with the tenets of the faith of the school is restricted to their own children, not the whole school. If so, this proposal does not change the status quo.

**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?

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

**Supporting comments** (no more than 250 words)

We do not believe that it is fair to force a school to provide two syllabi, placing a substantial additional burden on the teachers. This proposal could divide the learners into two groups in the same school with regard to their religious education. This could damage the valuable ethos of the faith school. Denominational religious education has the same educational aims as religious education that follows the agreed syllabus; it educates, not indoctrinates. I believe that the schools should retain their discretion to refuse such a request if the circumstances mean that it would be unreasonable to comply.

**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**

The subject offers learners many opportunities to expand their vocabulary in Welsh and discuss a variety of religious and ethical concepts and viewpoints through the medium of the language. In order to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, steps must be taken to ensure that Welsh language resources are provided at the same time as those in English. The Gwynedd SACRE has drawn the Minister's attention to the fact that Welsh language resources have often been published after the English language ones and sometimes very late in the day. We have received assurances that the situation will improve and it is necessary to ensure that this happens.

**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**

as with question 7, the policy should be formulated to include providing all the resources that are available to teachers and learners bilingually and in a timely manner.

**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.

Paragraph 17: We agree that representatives of those holding non-religious philosophical convictions should be included in SACREs, as the Gwynedd SACRE and a number of other SACREs have already done. We do not believe that it is necessary or desirable to create a separate group to represent them but instead they should be included in Committee A with the representatives of the religious denominations. If philosophical convictions are regarded as corresponding to religious convictions, the representatives of all these convictions should be in the same group, rather than in separate groups. This maintains the balance between the three groups: the local education authority that provides the schools, the teachers who deliver the education, and the representatives who provide expertise in religion, values and ethics.

It has been unfair to hold this consultation during the time of the pandemic when it has been difficult for people to meet to discuss these important issues. Because Gwynedd Council has had to prioritise its resources to maintain essential services and support our communities, our businesses and our people, it has not been possible for the Gwynedd SACRE to meet face to face or virtually in order to hold open and thorough discussions. We have only been able to communicate by email etc. I also feel that the consultation document does not display a clear understanding of religious education as it is taught in our schools. I believe therefore that a fuller consultation should be held after the Framework has been published at a time when it will be possible to give proper consideration to the matter.

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: