

**The Monmouthshire Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values  
and Ethics**

**Based on the Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and  
Ethics Guidance**

**Implementation Date: September 2022**

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## **Foreword**

### **Introduction from Monmouthshire County Council**

It gives me great pleasure to commend this revised Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics for Monmouthshire schools and to congratulate those who have worked so hard to produce it.

These are exciting time for education in Wales as our new curriculum emerges, and it is important to note that Religion, Values and Ethics retains its importance within the wider curriculum framework. I hope that this new syllabus will support teachers in bringing their teaching to life. It will play an important role in inspiring our children and young people to develop as compassionate human beings, while at the same time becoming critical enquirers after truth and honesty.

Let us hope that this syllabus will enable all those teachers who use it and pupils who will learn from it to enjoy their experiences. The syllabus will provide an important element in supporting the emergence of positive values, promoting tolerance and respecting the diverse beliefs, traditions and cultures that are found throughout Monmouthshire.

Martyn Groucutt

Cabinet Member for Education

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## **The function of the Standing Advisory Council (SAC) on Religion, Values and Ethics**

The function of the Standing Advisory Council on Religion, values and Ethics (RVE) is to advise the local authority (LA) on such matters connected with the provision of teaching and learning, under the Education Act 1996 (“1996 Act”) as amended by the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (“the 2021 Act”), either in respect of the mandatory element of RVE, or the post-compulsory education in maintained schools of optional RVE which includes: methods of teaching; the choice of teaching materials; the provision of teacher training. In addition, the SAC may advise on any other matter the LA may refer to it, or as the SAC may see fit.

### **Contact Details**

For further information on Monmouthshire SAC or if you have any queries in relation to the Agreed Syllabus, please contact:

Hayley Jones (EAS Curriculum Partner - SACs and RVE)  
[hayley.jones@sewaleseas.org.uk](mailto:hayley.jones@sewaleseas.org.uk) or 07904 644749.

## Legal requirements for RVE

**Monmouthshire SAC advises schools to take particular note of the following legal requirements for RVE:**

**In accordance with section 375A(3) of the 1996 Act (introduced by the 2021 Act) the Agreed Syllabus must reflect the fact that:**

- **the religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales (this is a continuation of the Education Act 1996); and**
- **that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales (this is an addition as part of the Curriculum for Wales 2022).**

Please note that for **religious traditions**:

- the only change from the 1996 Act as originally enacted is that Wales replaces Great Britain; and
- where 'religion' or 'religious' is referred to in the guidance it should be noted that this refers to Christianity and the other principal religions in Wales;
- the definition of Christianity and religion remains unchanged

As for **non-religious philosophical convictions**:

- where the term 'non-religious' is used, this refers to 'non-religious philosophical convictions';
- the reference to philosophical convictions in the guidance is linked to philosophical convictions within the meaning of Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR") (right to education);
- neither the 1996 Act, the 2021 Act or the ECHR define what 'non-religious' means, however the term can be defined in relation to philosophical convictions as those in respect of which there is no requirement to believe in a religion e.g. a belief in man-made climate change can be held by persons of all faiths and none;

- non-religious philosophical convictions are not synonymous with ‘opinions’ and ‘ideas’ but denote views that attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance (*Valsamis v Greece* [1996] 12 WLUK 394; ECtHR);
- here is a non-exhaustive list of examples where courts have decided that a belief is a philosophical conviction within the meaning of the ECHR:
  - atheism, agnosticism, scepticism (*R (Williamson) v Secretary of State for Education and Employment* [2005] AC 246; England and Wales Court of Appeal)
  - pacifism (*Arrowsmith v United Kingdom* [1978] 10 WLUK 81; European Commission of Human Rights)
  - conscientious objection to military service (*Bayatyan v Armenia* [2011] 7 WLUK 214; European Court of Human Rights)
  - veganism (*CW v United Kingdom* [1993] 1 WLUK 536; European Commission of Human Rights)
  - man-made climate change (*Grainger plc v Nicholson* [2010] 2 All ER 253; UK Employment Appeal Tribunal)
  - gender-critical belief (*Forstater v CGD Europe* [2021] 6 WLUK 104; UK Employment Appeal Tribunal)
  - pro-life belief (*Van Schijndel v The Netherlands* (30936/96); European Commission of Human Rights)

Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission confirms that humanism is a non-religious philosophical conviction (para 2.57, EHRC Employment Statutory Code of Practice 2011).

**More information can be found in the legal summary section on Hwb:**

[Link to Curriculum of Wales: Summary of Legislation – Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

## **Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE)**

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) is the name the Welsh Government has given to Religious Education in the Curriculum for Wales. **RVE is mandatory for all learners aged 3 to 16.** This now sits within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

(AoLE), along with Geography, History, Business Studies and Social Studies. RVE is still locally determined and therefore, as well as having regard to the Curriculum for Wales Framework Guidance on Hwb, **all schools in Monmouthshire must have regard to the Monmouthshire Agreed Syllabus for RVE when designing their school curriculum.**

It is the local authority's responsibility to monitor the statutory provision of RVE, and they are supported in doing this by the Monmouthshire Standing Advisory Council on Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC).

Every local authority is legally required to establish and support an Agreed Syllabus Conference which must prepare a syllabus of RVE to be adopted by a local education authority. The LA has a legal duty to review the Agreed Syllabus every five years.

The Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics Statutory Guidance on Hwb was adopted as the new Monmouthshire Agreed Syllabus for RVE in (date to be inserted), following a formal recommendation to the LA by the Agreed Syllabus Conference on (date to be inserted).

**The RVE statutory guidance can be accessed via Welsh Government's Hwb website:**

[Link to Hwb – Welsh Government Guidance on Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

This Agreed Syllabus is not intended to be a scheme of work. It provides a framework within which each school can best design its own local curriculum which includes RVE within the Humanities AoLE.

## **Aims of RVE**

Mandatory RVE makes an important and distinctive contribution to supporting the four purposes by giving learners opportunities to:

- **engage with and explore ultimate and philosophical questions** about the meaning, significance and purpose of life, and about the nature of human thought and of the universe, and the connections between them;
- **undertake enquiries and engage with sources of wisdom and philosophies** that encourage them to explore the challenges, opportunities and responses of human beings in the context of their [cynefin](#), locally, in Wales and the wider world, as well as supporting them in evaluating their own perspectives and those of others;
- **develop and express their own informed viewpoints**, which prepares them for lifelong learning in a pluralistic and diverse world;
- **use their knowledge and understanding** of both institutional and personal religious and non-religious beliefs and practices to think critically about their own values and about how they might make important social and personal decisions;
- **explore the ways in which religion and non-religious philosophical convictions have influenced human experience throughout history**, so that they can make sense of their place in the world, imagine possible futures and create responsible solutions that take in to account the diverse needs and rights of all people;
- **evaluate and use evidence from a range of religious and non-religious sources to engage with ethical and moral issues**, past and contemporary, that challenge their knowledge and values. This enables learners to develop an understanding of religion and belief, culture, community, their [cynefin](#), Wales and the wider world now and in the past, which can help to nurture a sense of place and belonging;
- **respond sensitively to religion and non-religious philosophical convictions** and explore the beliefs and practices of people in their community, Wales and the wider world, and how these might impact their actions and choices;
- **develop secure values and establish their ethical beliefs and spirituality** through the exploration of religion and non-religious philosophical convictions on a range of issues, which can in turn enable them to form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect;
- **discuss and reflect on their own perspectives and those of others** on a range of issues, which help them to build their mental, emotional and spiritual well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy.

## Audience

The RVE guidance in the Humanities AoLE has been written to be accessible to all those responsible for designing a curriculum. Those persons who must have regard to the guidance when designing a curriculum are:

- the headteacher of a maintained school or a maintained nursery school;
- the governing body of a maintained school or a maintained nursery school;
- a provider of funded non-maintained nursery education;
- the teacher in charge of a pupil referral unit;
- the management committee for a pupil referral unit;
- a person who provides teaching and learning for a child, otherwise than at a maintained school, maintained nursery school or pupil referral unit, by virtue of arrangements made under section 19A of the 1996 Act;
- a local authority in Wales.

In addition, the guidance may also be useful to parents and carers, learners, practitioners, regional consortia, awarding bodies, Estyn, teacher unions, religious organisations, non-religious organisations, and other bodies in Wales with an interest in RVE. These bodies do not have to have regard to the guidance, but it may be useful and informative for them to refer to it to better understand the content of a given setting's curriculum.

### *Church in Wales Schools*

More information on Church in Wales guidance can be found [here](#).

### *Catholic Schools*

More information on Catholic guidance can be found here [\(Link to follow\)](#).

## **The RVE Curriculum**

### *Time*

At each progression step, sufficient time and resources are required to provide an effective and coherent course of study. As a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales, **RVE should have equity with other disciplines within the Humanities AoLE.**

### *Design*

The Curriculum for Wales requires all schools to offer a broad and balanced education, which enables learners to make links between the different disciplines and areas of learning and experience. Therefore, curriculum design should draw together different disciplines, including RVE, to provide learners with a coherent and holistic learning experience, which incorporates the following:

- the cross-curricular skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence;
- the skills integral to the four purposes;
- consideration of the cross-cutting themes.

More about the role of disciplines in learning is available here:

[Link to Principles for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

When planning and preparing your RVE curriculum you should take note of the following areas. Please see below links which will take you to the relevant sections of the guidance on the Hwb website:

- [Humanities statements of what matters](#)
- [Descriptions of Learning \(Progression steps\)](#)
- [RVE Concepts](#)
- [RVE lens \(sub lenses in RVE\)](#)
- [Learner progression and learning journeys in RVE](#)
- [Spiritual development of learners](#)

As learners progress, they should have greater opportunities to engage with different disciplines and to specialise within them, particularly when they reach the later progression steps. The Curriculum for Wales guidance tells us that **this process should be supported by discipline-specialist teaching**, which, along with the multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum design, should prepare learners who seek to specialise further during learning post-16.

While learners should have opportunities to specialise, the curriculum must remain broad and balanced, and each learner should continue to draw on learning from each AoLE throughout their time in compulsory education, which includes the mandatory element of RVE. Schools will be expected to enable all learners to access a range of courses of study and to gain suitable qualifications at the end of compulsory education.

It would be useful for schools themselves to develop links with faith and belief groups represented locally to talk about their faith and belief journeys. Through these connections, learners develop a deepening understanding of their own local [cynefin](#) within the history and traditions of both Monmouthshire and Wales.

### *Implementation*

This Monmouthshire agreed syllabus will be effective from September 2022, for Religion, Values and Ethics in respect of all learners, up to and including year 6. In respect of year 7 learners, schools in the region will have flexibility on whether to roll out the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022, or to roll out the Curriculum for Wales for years 7 and 8 together in September 2023. During the period of curriculum roll out, as a secondary school or setting 'adopts' the Curriculum for Wales Framework for a particular year group, this agreed syllabus will supersede the current/legacy agreed syllabus. From September 2023, this agreed syllabus, in respect of years 7 and 8 as all schools and

settings will have implemented the Curriculum for Wales for those learners. Thereafter, the phased roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales will continue, and this agreed syllabus will supersede the other:

- year 9 learners in September 2024
- year 10 learners in September 2025
- year 11 learners in September 2026

More information for schools and settings on the process for opting in to the Curriculum for Wales in respect of year 7 learners is provided in the [‘Journey to curriculum roll-out’](#).

### *Post-16 RVE*

In the Curriculum for Wales, the mandatory status of RVE has been removed for Sixth Forms in maintained schools. Therefore, as of 2027 RVE will become optional for these learners. However, this does not prevent individual schools with Sixth Forms from timetabling RVE for all students if they wish to. Sixth Formers **have the right to ‘opt in’ to RVE** and the **school would legally have to provide RVE for those learners upon request**.

There are a variety of ways that a school can provide RVE for Sixth Formers who request it. For advice on this type of provision, schools can contact the RVE Partner or Monmouthshire SAC on RVE for support. Contact details are available on page 2 of this document. More information on Post-16 RVE can be found here: [Link to Post-16 RVE Guidance](#)

### **The right to withdraw in the Curriculum for Wales**

From September 2022, there will be no parental right to withdraw from RVE as the new Curriculum for Wales is implemented in their year group. **The parental right to withdraw will remain in place until their year group becomes subject to the Curriculum for Wales.** The timetable for these changes is as follows:

Primary aged pupils – September 2022

Yr. 7 pupils – September 2022 OR September 2023 (depending on the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales into their school).

Yr. 8 pupils – September 2023

Yr. 9 pupils – September 2024

Yr. 10 pupils – September 2025

Yr. 11 pupils – September 2026

This is in line with every other academic subject in the Curriculum for Wales.

Note that **parents may still request that their children are withdrawn from ‘collective worship’ from September 2022**, if they wish, as this is distinct and separate from the academic subject of RVE.

More information on the right to withdraw can be found in the legal summary on Hwb:

[Link to Curriculum of Wales: Summary of Legislation – Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

## Collective Worship

Collective Worship is **distinctive from, and additional to**, curriculum time given to RVE. Collective worship sits outside the curriculum and has its own legal standing and requirements and must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Parents may still request that their children are withdrawn from collective worship if they wish.

## Complaints

Under the Education Act, the LA must provide local arrangements for dealing with unresolved complaints. The Local Authority will consider complaints in relation to the Agreed Syllabus. Complaints relating to the provision of the RVE Agreed Syllabus should be addressed through individual school Complaints processes.

Please contact Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager, if you have any unresolved complaints in relation to RVE.

Tel: 01633 644647

E-mail: [annetteevans@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:annetteevans@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

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