

SAC DISCUSSION PAPER

Review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) 2026–2027

Purpose: To support SAC members in considering the forthcoming review of the locally agreed syllabus and to identify priorities for the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).

Executive Summary

The Local Authority is required to reconsider its agreed syllabus at least every five years. The review should determine whether the current syllabus remains fit for purpose, whether targeted refinement is needed, or whether more substantial revision is required. The review should be evidence-informed and should not assume that replacement of the existing syllabus is necessary.

What SAC Needs to Know

1. The review is a statutory requirement but does not automatically require a new syllabus.
2. The purpose is to test whether the existing syllabus remains legally compliant, educationally effective and locally relevant.
3. Curriculum for Wales places significant emphasis on subsidiarity and curriculum autonomy. Schools should continue to determine how RVE is delivered within statutory requirements.
4. The most valuable outcome may be additional guidance, local exemplification and support materials rather than wholesale redevelopment.
5. Decisions should be based on evidence from schools, communities and relevant stakeholders.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Why This Matters for RVE

The review provides an opportunity to ensure that RVE continues to be critical, objective and pluralistic. It allows consideration of developments in pedagogy, progression, local demographics, community representation and implementation of Curriculum for Wales.

The process can identify where schools require greater support and whether current arrangements are achieving the intended educational outcomes.

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Why This Matters for SAC

SAC has a strategic advisory role. Members can help identify local priorities, advise on representation of faith and belief communities, consider evidence from schools and challenge assumptions about the need for change. SAC can also help ensure that any future developments remain proportionate and support rather than constrain schools.

Members should consider both the benefits and resource implications of any proposed changes. The review should add value for schools while maintaining professional autonomy and avoiding unnecessary prescription.

Key Issues for Discussion

Effectiveness of the current syllabus; evidence from schools; local diversity and representation; support materials required by practitioners; maintaining curriculum autonomy; and determining whether the likely outcome should be Retain, Refine or Revise.

Potential Areas for Local Adaptation

Possible additions could include a local faith and belief profile, community contacts, exemplification of high-quality RVE, progression guidance, sensitive issues guidance, resource signposting, curriculum links and professional learning support. These could sit alongside statutory guidance rather than replace it.

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Questions for SAC Members

1. What evidence suggests the current syllabus remains effective?
2. What do schools report as their greatest challenges in RVE?
3. Would additional local guidance improve implementation?
4. How well does the syllabus reflect local communities?
5. What support might teachers need over the next five years?
6. What would constitute sufficient evidence to justify Retain, Refine or Revise?

Possible Actions for SAC

Recommend consultation priorities; contribute local expertise; support engagement with schools and communities; identify professional learning needs; assist communication about the review; and provide advice to the ASC and Local Authority.

Recommendation and Action Required

Type of paper: Discussion and Recommendation. SAC is invited to discuss the issues presented, identify priorities for evidence gathering, advise on consultation activity and provide recommendations to inform the review process. No formal decision on the agreed syllabus is required at this stage.

Appendix: Retain, Refine or Revise Framework

Retain: existing syllabus remains appropriate.

Refine: targeted amendments or supplementary materials required.

Revise: substantial reconsideration required due to significant gaps or changed circumstances. Decisions should be evidence-based and proportionate.