

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.

About NEU Cymru

The National Education Union Cymru (NEU Cymru) stands up for the future of education. It brings together the voices of teachers, lecturers, support staff and leaders working in maintained and independent schools and colleges to form the largest education union in Wales.

The National Education Union is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). It is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

Together, we'll shape the future of education.

Our Response

The National Education Union Cymru (NEU Cymru) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Government consultation 'Religion, values and ethics'. NEU Cymru welcomed the Welsh Government's consultation on ensuring access to the full curriculum issued in October 2019.

In England, the NEU has called on the Westminster Government to review the curriculum to ensure it embraces the fact that Britain is rooted in Black and global history, achievement and culture and includes the achievements of Black Britons; as recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. We welcome that the First Minister has said that the Welsh

Government is working with Estyn to ensure BAME representation on the curriculum. We welcome that the planned Curriculum 2022 guidance includes a section on 'diversity' and includes equality and human rights education. But 'race' and 'racism' are only mentioned once. We believe that Wales has the opportunity with the Curriculum for Wales to ensure it embraces the fact that Wales is also rooted in Black and global history, achievement and culture and includes the achievements of Black Welsh men and women.

The NEU's anti-racism charter, which is a framework that has been designed to help education professionals explore ideas around race equality and plan how to tackle racism with children, young people and staff, might be a valuable resource and is available on the NEU website - <https://neu.org.uk/anti-racism-charter>.

We welcome the petition set up by Show Racism the Red Card Wales to call for anti-racism teaching materials for schools. We believe there is an opportunity now to create these ahead of the introduction of the new curriculum and ensure that anti-racism education is embedded across the curriculum in 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	<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)

We agree with points 16 to 18.

We also agree that adding additional provision making reference to non-religious philosophical convictions within the meaning of Article 2 Protocol 1 (and hence beliefs within the meaning of Article 9) of the European Convention on Human Rights will be beneficial.

We believe it is essential that schools and education professionals have access to high-quality training to ensure that they can deliver the new RVE curriculum. If the funding for this is not made available to schools, they will not be as able to teach an inclusive and developmentally appropriate curriculum, which in turn, could lead to tensions between Local Authorities, education professionals, parents and schools.

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

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)

We agree with point 19.

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	<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)

We agree with points 21 to 22. The Areas of Learning and Experience, and in this instance Humanities, can be designed and developed at school-level, with regard to the agreed syllabus developed by the Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), in response to the specific needs of individual learners within the school. A school may have pupils with many religious or non-religious beliefs in attendance and the ASC must ensure that the agreed syllabus caters for all learners.

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)

We agree with points 2 and 23. A school may have pupils with many religious or non-religious beliefs in attendance and the school therefore needs to ensure that the content of the RVE part of the curriculum is inclusive, pluralistic and developmentally appropriate.

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

We agree with point 24. If a parent was to send a child to a voluntary-controlled school with religious character, then the assumption would be that the parent would be happy for the school to teach RVE in accordance with the trust deeds of the school or the tenets of the faith of the school.

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

We agree with points 25 to 28. If a parent was to send a child to a voluntary-aided school with a religious character, then the assumption would be that the parent would be happy for the school to teach RVE in accordance with the trust deeds of the school or the tenets of the faith of the school. However, as a Voluntary-aided school has up to 90% of the running costs maintained by the Local Authority, they need to provide a RVE which has been designed in accordance with an agreed syllabus, just as in all other Local Authority maintained schools. Therefore, their RVE provision needs to be inclusive, pluralistic, and developmentally appropriate.

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

It is vital that there is parity of provision in both languages and that provision should reflect the linguistic nature of the school and its catchment area. Training needs to be made available to members of the education profession to ensure that the Welsh Government’s aim of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 is met.

The guidance document will also need to be available in Welsh, for those Welsh medium and bilingual schools, and this will ensure that Welsh is treated no less favourably than English.

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 Question 7.

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.

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: