

Ensuring access to the full curriculum

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by **28 November 2019** to:

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

or completed electronically and sent to

e-mail: AHWB@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 'Ensuring access to the full curriculum'. NEU Cymru welcomed the Welsh Government's consultation on the new guidance for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools issued in February 2019.

The NEU felt that this was a huge step in the right direction to ensure all children and young people have access to age- appropriate, inclusive ¹ and high quality RSE that is empowering and relevant for all children and young people's lives.

¹ <https://neu.org.uk/articles/statement-support-inclusive-relationships-and-sex-education-rse>

Please indicate which of the following stakeholder groups you are responding as:

Child or young person	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other family member	<input type="checkbox"/>
School, teacher, governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other education practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation or representative body	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify): **Education Union**

Question 1 – What implications would there be for learners, parents/carers and schools if all learners were required to receive RE and/or RSE lessons in the new curriculum?

Please use the space below for your comments:

We do not believe it is right for any child to miss out on these important areas of learning and support the proposal to discontinue the parental right to withdraw from RE and RSE.

We believe that these elements of the curricula are essential to uphold a child's right to a balanced education and to equip children with the information they need to stay safe and healthy.

The curriculum needs to be very specific at a national level. It is essential that schools cannot interpret the guidance and advice differently, as this will potentially cause tensions and rifts between Local Authorities, education professionals, parents and schools.

Question 2 – What support, information and guidance would be needed if this approach was adopted?

Please use the space below for your comments:

Welsh Government needs to:

- Provide additionally funded ring-fenced resources to Local Authorities to enable them to support schools to deliver developmentally appropriate, empowering and needs led RE and RSE for young people and engage with parents, carers and local communities.
- Mitigate the effects of misinformation being circulated about the content of RE and RSE.
- Issue advice to schools to empower them to positively teach an inclusive curriculum and develop a whole school approach to embed equality and celebrate diversity.
- Support schools where opposition to inclusive education is raised by parents, including offering advice on how schools can engage parents in supporting inclusive education. As much as possible needs to be done ensure that we avoid the personal and intimidating situations that arose in England where individual teachers and schools were targeted in opposition to them delivering an inclusive curriculum.

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

Question 3 – Our proposal is that parents/carers should not be able to prevent their child from having RE or RSE lessons. This will be rolled out from September 2022, for all primary age learners and learners in Year 7 in secondary school (with additional year groups being added each year).

Should the ability of parents/carers to prevent their child from receiving RE and RSE lessons also be stopped under the old curriculum from September 2022? (This would only have implications for learners in Years 8–11 in 2022, Years 9–11 in 2023, and so on.)

Yes	✓	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Why do you think that?

According to the Welsh Government’s Integrated Impact Assessment on Children’s Rights, *“Providing for a right to withdraw in the new curriculum could have negative impacts on learners as – if their parents chose to exercise that right - they would miss out on core curriculum content, which is important for their development (and in the case of RSE for safeguarding them)”*.

It could therefore be said that those learners who are withdrawn from receiving RE and RSE under the existing National Curriculum from 2022 until 2026 are missing out on core curriculum content, which is important for their development. Therefore, the ability of parents/carers to prevent their child from receiving RE and RSE under the old curriculum from September 2022 should be stopped as we believe that these elements of the curricula are essential to uphold a child’s right to a balanced education and to equip children with the information they need to stay safe and healthy.

Attendance at Religious Worship

At present, section 71(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 states, *“if the parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious worship in the school the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn.”* The ability of parents/carers to withdraw their child from attendance at religious worship under the old curriculum from September 2022 should be carefully considered.

We believe that, in the interests of consistency, all learners would have full access to the curriculum in 2022. We believe that this is consistent with the Welsh Government’s aims.

As stated above, clear guidance and training should be made available to schools to ensure full access and consistency across the curriculum.

Question 4 – What is an appropriate name for ‘religious education’, to accurately reflect the broader scope proposed in for the new curriculum?

No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion, values and ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religions and worldviews	✓	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other (please specify): _____

Reasons for your choice:

We feel that the proposed name change to ‘Religions and worldviews’ is relevant and, as young people are able to access ‘information’ instantly online about religions and different worldviews on religion and belief, this makes the subject area title more current and inclusive.

Question 5 – We would like to know your views on the effects that not including a right to withdraw in the new curriculum 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

Not including a right to withdraw in the new curriculum should have no effect on the Welsh language.

However, we would highlight that if the Welsh Government is to meet its target of achieving 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, then training must be made available to current education professionals, to ensure that the profession is able to assist in helping the population of Wales to learn Welsh.

Question 6 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed plan 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 5 above.

Question 7 – 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: