



# The Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) Neath Port Talbot

2023



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### Audience

The Agreed Syllabus has been written to be accessible to all those responsible for designing a curriculum and its monitoring and other interested parties. These could include:

- the head teachers of all maintained schools and nurseries in Neath Port Talbot
- teachers of all maintained schools and nurseries in Neath Port Talbot
- the governing bodies of all maintained schools and nurseries in Neath Port Talbot
- a provider of a funded non-maintained nursery settings in Neath Port Talbot
- Teacher in charge of alternative educational settings within Neath Port Talbot
- Neath Port Talbot SACRE

- Neath Port Talbot Local Authority
- Teacher unions and school representative bodies in Neath Port Talbot
- Church diocesan authorities
- Other religious and non-religious bodies
- National bodies in Neath Port Talbot with an interest in Religion, Values and Ethics
- Parents and carers.

## Overview

This document sets out details regarding teaching and learning in the mandatory element of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in line with the Curriculum for Wales, for all Neath Port Talbot schools maintained by the local authority. This document has been adopted as the agreed syllabus for RVE in Neath Port Talbot in accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021.

From September 2022, the Curriculum for Wales will be implemented by all primary schools and setting in respect of all learners up to and including Yr. 6. In respect of year 7 learners, schools will have flexibility on whether to 'opt in' to the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022, or to introduce the new curriculum for years 7 and 8 together in September 2023.

Thereafter, the phased roll-out will continue as shown:

- Year 9 learners in September 2024
- Year 10 learners in September 2025
- Year 11 Learners in September 2026

During the period of curriculum roll out, as a school or setting 'adopts' the Curriculum for Wales Framework, they will be required to have regard to this document for those learners. Until then, these year groups should continue to follow the National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education, dated 7 September 2022.

## Action

All maintained schools in Neath Port Talbot are legally required to 'have regard' to the Agreed Syllabus for RVE when designing their curriculum. The Local Authority (LA) has a legal duty to review the agreed syllabus every three years.

Further Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

The Support officer for Religion, Values and Ethics for Neath Port Talbot  
Baglan Education and Training centre  
Elmwood Road  
Baglan  
Port Talbot  
E-mail: [samuels12@hwbcymru.net](mailto:samuels12@hwbcymru.net)

Additional Copies can be obtained from:

Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council (SAC) on Religion Values and Ethics  
Baglan Education and Training Centre  
Elmwood Road  
Baglan  
Port Talbot  
E-mail: [e.sweeney@npt.gov.uk](mailto:e.sweeney@npt.gov.uk)

Related documents

[Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

[Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#)

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

## Introduction

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) is the name Welsh Government has given to Religious Education in the Curriculum for Wales. **RVE is mandatory for all learners aged 3-16** and now sits within the curriculum, in the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (Area), along with geography, history, business studies and social studies. RVE incorporates a range of disciplinary approaches that can be used by learners to engage critically with a broad range of religious and non-religious concepts. For example, disciplinary approaches relevant to RVE may include religious studies, philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. There are also strong relationships between RVE and the other disciplines within Humanities as well as with other Areas of Learning and Experience.

RVE is still locally determined and therefore, as well as having regard to the Curriculum for Wales Framework Guidance on Hwb, which includes the Religion, Values and Ethics guidance, **all schools in Neath Port Talbot have to have regard to the Neath Port Talbot agreed syllabus for RVE when designing their school curriculum.** It is the governing bodies' responsibility to support and guide the head teacher in the implementation of this. It is the local Authority's responsibility to monitor the statutory provision for RVE, and they are supported in doing this by the Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council (SAC) on Religion, Values and Ethics.

This document was adopted as the Neath Port Talbot agreed syllabus for **RVE on January 25 2023**, following a formal recommendation to the LA by the Agreed Syllabus Conference on 7 September 2022. The Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics statutory Guidance on Hwb forms the basis of the Neath Port Talbot agreed syllabus, and as such should be read in conjunction with this document.

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

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum/#religion,-values-and-ethics-guidance>

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.

## Summary of legal changes

Schools should take note of the following points:

- 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
- the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales

Schools should also take note of the following legislative changes which will have a significant impact on schools:

- there is no parental right to withdraw their children from RVE in the Curriculum for Wales
- maintained schools with nursery age children and funded non-maintained nursery setting must provide RVE for all their learners from age 3 from September 2022
- post 16 RVE in maintained schools is optional for 6<sup>th</sup> form learners from September 2022.

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

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#religion,-values-and-ethics>

## Summary of the RVE guidance

The statutory RVE guidance which forms the basis of the Neath Port Talbot agreed syllabus for RVE, includes vital information for schools when designing their curriculum at a local level, such as:

- RVE within the Curriculum for Wales
- Spiritual development
- Designing your curriculum for RVE
  - RVE and the four purposes
  - RVE and the statements of what matters
  - RVE concepts
  - The RVE lens (sub lenses in RVE)
  - Learner progression and learning journeys in RVE
  - Enriching learner experience in RVE
  - Key links to the other areas of learning
  - Points to consider for school and settings
- Ensuring inclusivity in RVE
- Education in funded non-maintained nursery settings
- Education other than at school

## Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the LA, School Governors and Head Teachers of community schools, foundation, and voluntary schools without a religious character in Neath Port Talbot to ensure that the provision in the curriculum for teaching and learning encompassing RVE has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus. The Act requires this RVE provision to be implemented for all learners from age 3 to 16 years of age.

For Foundation and Voluntary Controlled schools with a religious character in Neath Port Talbot, it is the responsibility of the LA, School Governors, and Head Teachers to ensure that the provision in the curriculum for teaching and learning encompassing RVE has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus. However, for those schools there is an additional requirement, which applies **only if the RVE provision does not also accord** with the school's trust deed, or the tenets of the school's religion or religious denomination. In this case the school must provide additional RVE provision that does accord with the school's trust deed, or the tenets of its religion or religious denomination. This is because, a learner's parent can request that their child is provided, instead, with this additional provision and if a request of this type is made, it must be complied with.

For Voluntary Aided schools in Neath Port Talbot, it is the responsibility of School Governors and Head Teachers to ensure that the provision in the curriculum teaching and learning encompassing RVE has been designed to accord with the school's trust deed or the tenets of its religion or denomination. However, there is an additional requirement which applies **only if the RVE provision does not also have regard to the agreed syllabus**. In this case, the school must also include provision for RVE that has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus. This is because a learner's parent can request their child is provided, instead, with this additional provision and if a request of this type is made, it must be complied with. More details on the provision of RVE in the curriculum for all types of schools can be found:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#religion,-values-and-ethics>

Enquiries regarding additional RVE provision in specific schools in Neath Port Talbot would need to be addressed to the Head teacher at the relevant school. More general information on Church in Wales schools can be found on <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/about-us/education/religion-ethics-and-values-guidance/>. More general information on Catholic Schools can be found on <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/wales>.

## The Standing Advisory Council (SAC) on Religion Values and Ethics

The function of the Standing Advisory Council on RVE is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the provision of teaching and learning, under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, either in respect of the mandatory elements 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 local authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

Under Education Acts, the LA must provide local arrangements for dealing with Complaints. The SAC on RVE will therefore consider complaints about the provision of or lack of provision of RVE. The arrangement will give parents and others the opportunity to ensure the proper provision of RVE across all schools in Neath Port Talbot.

## The right to withdraw in the Curriculum for Wales

From September 2022, there will be no parental right to withdraw from RVE in respect of all learners up to and including year 6, as the Curriculum for Wales will be implemented by all primary schools and settings from this date.

Secondary schools will have had flexibility on whether to 'opt in' to the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022, or to introduce the new curriculum for years 7 and 8 together in September 2023.

For those secondary schools and settings that have not opted into the Curriculum for Wales in respect of year 7 in September 2022, the right to withdraw will remain for year 7 learners in 2022 to 2023 academic year but will cease to exist for their year 7 and 8 learners in the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

From September 2023, there will be no right to withdraw in respect of year 7 and 8 as all schools and setting will have implemented the Curriculum for Wales for those learners. Therefore, the phased roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales will continue, and the right to withdraw will be removed for:

- Year 9 learners in September 2024
- Year 10 learners in September 2025
- Year 11 Learners in September 2026

More information on the right to withdraw can be found in the legislative summary on Hwb <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#religion,-values-and-ethics>



## Curriculum Time

There is no legal requirement for a school's curriculum to provide a specific number of hours or lessons for any subject or discipline. However, as one of the mandatory elements of the Curriculum for Wales RVE should have equity with other disciplines within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience. The Curriculum for Wales requires all schools to offer a broad and balanced education, which enable learners to make links between 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 integrated in the four purposes
- consideration of the cross-cutting themes.

More information about the role of disciplines in learning is available on Hwb:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/principles-for-designing-your-curriculum/#the-role-of-disciplines-in-learning>

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 to seek to specialise further during learning post-16. **This will require specialists to teach RVE and specialists to have input in designing the RVE within humanities.**

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 Area throughout their time in compulsory education, which includes the mandatory elements of RVE. Schools will be expected to enable all learners to access a range of courses of study and to take suitable qualifications at the end of the compulsory education. More information on suitable qualifications, including Religious Studies GCSE will be available from Qualifications Wales in due course.

## Collective Worship

Schools should take note that the curriculum time for RVE must **not** include time given to daily acts of collective worship. Collective worship sits outside the curriculum and has its own legal standing and requirements. Parents may still request that their children are withdrawn from collective worship from September 2022, if they wish.

## Post 16 RVE

In the curriculum for Wales, the mandatory status of RVE has been removed for Sixth Forms in maintained schools in Wales and therefore RVE is now optional for these learners. However, this does not prevent individual schools with Sixth Forms from timetabling RVE for all students if they wish to. If schools, choose not to timetable RVE for their Sixth Forms then individuals have the right to 'opt in' to RVE and the school would legally have to provide RVE for that or those learners. More information on Post 16 RVE can be found in the legislative summary on Hwb

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#religion,-values-and-ethics>

Where a Post 16 learner requests RVE pursuant to section 61 of the Act the RVE must be designed so that it:

- reflects 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
- also reflects the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales.

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 Support Officer or Neath Port Talbot SAC on RVE for support. Contact details are available on page 2 of this document.

## Resources

A wide range of resources should be available including religious and non-religious artefacts and objects, sacred and philosophical writings, other texts and reference books, adequate library provision and access to ICT, visits to local places of worship and other special places, landscapes and environments, including those with significant religious and spiritual dimensions, and appropriate visitors from the local community, including those from faith and belief groups that are represented locally and across Wales.

## Staffing and In-Service Training

A co-ordinator for RVE should be designated in all schools and settings. This can be the person who already has responsibility for Humanities or any other appropriate person. Fully accessible resources and regular programmes of professional learning should be provided.

## The role of the practitioner

In RVE the practitioner will support learners in developing an understanding of religion and non-religious philosophical convictions through the exploration of different beliefs and practices and the values and ethics of people in their local, national, and global communities so that they can recognise and appreciate the part that faith and belief play in life.

In the Curriculum for Wales RVE is **objective, critical and pluralistic** both in content and pedagogy; it is not about making learners 'religious' or 'non-religious.' Therefore, the teacher **must take a non-confessional approach** to the exploration of any faith, belief or denomination. The expressions 'objective, critical and pluralistic' comes from the European Convention on Human Rights case law. The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 ensures that all learners must be offered opportunities through RVE to engage with different religions and non-religious philosophical convictions in their own 'cynefin' (locality) and in Wales, as well as the wider world.

RVE **must be pluralistic** in nature and seek, amongst other things, to impart knowledge, develop skills and offer experiences that will deepen understanding, encourage informed judgements, and develop positive attitudes and values. There is no place in RVE for the coercion of a child into any particular faith, belief, or denomination, or conversely into none at all. However, this does not prohibit providing learning opportunities in which learners can experience meeting people to whom faith and belief is important. Therefore, visitors of faith and belief groups in the local and wider community should be encouraged and developed in order to help support a shared sense of cynefin.

Sensitivity to the beliefs, values and practices of others should always be a consideration. The question of whether or not a teacher makes known their personal beliefs is a matter for the individual teacher and needs to be handled professionally. A teacher's convictions or lack of conviction, expressed to the class or not, should not prejudice and educational approach taken to the subject.

## Local and national Faith and Belief groups

There are a number of different faith and belief groups in Neath Port Talbot that schools can engage with to enhance teaching and learning in RVE. More information about faith and belief groups represented locally, including useful information about these groups and how to contact them can be found in Appendix 4.

## APPENDIX 1: Glossary of terms

**Agreed Syllabus** An Agreed Syllabus is a statutory document which outlines what should be taught in Religion, Values and Ethics (formally Religious Education) in all maintained schools across Wales. Each local authority has its own locally agreed syllabus.

**Agreed Syllabus Conference** A statutory body brought together by the local authority in order to produce an agreed syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics for its maintained schools to have regard to. It is a separate legal body from a SAC.

**Areas of learning and experience (AoLE)** The Curriculum for Wales' organising structure will comprise six AoLE, which are designed to encourage strong and meaningful links across different disciplines. The AoLE listed in the Act are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology

**Community school** A school that is funded and run by the local authority, which owns the land and buildings, and determines the admission arrangements.

**Cynefin** The place where we feel we belong, where the people and the landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. Though often translated as 'habitat,' cynefin is not just a place in a physical or geographical sense: it is the historic, cultural, and social place which has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it.

**Curriculum** A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it.

**Foundation school** A school that is funded by the local authority but is run by the school governing body. The governing body employs the school staff and has primary responsibility for admissions. The school land and buildings may be owned by the governing body or a charitable foundation.

**Funded non-maintained nursery setting** Private provision, including playgroups and childminding, for children under the age of 5.

**Have regard** To 'have regard to' requires that a person take into account the guidance, engage with it, and carefully consider it before making a decision. Having done so, there would need to be a good reason for any departure from it and for not complying with it.

**Hwb** Hwb is the digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales. Hwb provides its users with access to a range of centrally funded, bilingual, digital tools and resources. It is the Welsh Government's strategic digital channel to support the delivery of the curriculum in Wales.

**Maintained schools** Schools that a local authority has a duty to maintain. They include:

- Voluntary schools

- Community schools and community special schools
- Foundation schools and foundation special schools
- Any maintained special school not set up in a hospital

**Maintained special schools** Schools providing special education needs funded by a local authority.

**Mandatory** Something that is mandatory is demanded by law and must be done.

**Non-confessional** An impartial approach to teaching Religion, Values and Ethics that does not require or encourage the learner to be religious or to accept a prescribed religious teaching.

**Pluralistic/pluralism** A system in which two or more religions or non-religious philosophical convictions, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist.

**Standing Advisory Councils on Religion, Values and Ethics (SACs)** Formerly called a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) these are re-named Standing Advisory Councils on Religion, Values and Ethics and their constitution amended. All local authorities are required to constitute a SAC within their local area. SACs are an independent body which consider provisions for religious education within their local authority.

**Voluntary controlled school** A school that is funded by the local authority, but the school land and buildings are usually owned by a charitable foundation (e.g., the Roman Catholic church or Church in Wales). The local authority employs the school staff and has responsibility for admissions, but will consult with the charitable foundation in drawing up the admission policy.

**Voluntary aided school** A school that is part funded by the local authority and partly by a charitable foundation (e.g., the Roman Catholic church or Church in Wales) which owns the school land and buildings. The governing body employs staff and decides admission arrangements and contributes to building and maintenance costs.

## Appendix 2: List of Schools in Neath Port Talbot according to type

<https://www.npt.gov.uk/1469>

## APPENDIX 3: Education in funded non-maintained nursery settings

RVE provision in a funded non-maintained nursery setting should be considered as part of an overarching holistic approach to learning and development. The 'Designing your curriculum for RVE' section of the Religion, Values and Ethics guidance on Hwb provides further information on RVE for ages 3 to 16, including the example learning journeys from age 3 to support practitioners in these settings with this holistic approach. Young learners are endlessly curious; they enjoy exploring and investigating by themselves and with others, and naturally ask questions about life and the world around them. Through engaging, practical, integrated activities in this period of learning, they can begin to learn more about themselves, other people, and the wider world. Effective, learner-centred pedagogy, which is responsive, dynamic, and embedded in strong relationships, should be central to the development of RVE provision in a setting. Through play, learners are able to develop their ideas, opinions and feelings with imagination, creativity, and sensitivity, which can help inform their view of the world. Spending time outdoors supports learners' social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development, as well as their well-being. Being outdoors also helps them to develop an awareness of the need to show care and respect for living things. Learners in this period of learning are beginning to understand the concept of 'difference.' Practitioners should encourage them to share their knowledge and experiences of their own beliefs, heritage, and traditions, as well as those of others (for example, through songs, stories, and role play). This can help young learners understand more about themselves, as well as about experiences and viewpoints which may differ from their own. A supportive, nurturing environment, where learners can learn about each other's differences and similarities, can help them to begin to develop respectful relationships and a sense of responsibility. They can begin to explore the language of rights and start to understand their right to believe different things and follow different beliefs. Through this, learners from an early age can begin to identify and understand how their actions may affect others and learn to reflect on and revise their own perspectives, as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 4: Local faith and belief groups

For details about local faith and belief groups in and near Neath Port Talbot, contact Neath Port Talbot Standing Advisory Council (on Religion Values and Ethics).

E-mail: [e.sweeney@npt.gov.uk](mailto:e.sweeney@npt.gov.uk)

Some national faith and belief websites are included below:

UK Bahá'í Community <https://www.bahai.org.uk>

Cytûn – Churches together in Wales <https://www.cytun.co.uk/hafan/en/home>

Humanists Wales <https://humanists.uk/wales>

The Board of Deputies of British Jews <https://bod.org.uk>

The Buddhist Council Wales <http://buddhistcouncilwales.blogspot.com/p/organisations.html>

The Catholic Church in England and Wales <https://www.cbcew.org.uk>

The Church in Wales <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk>

The Muslim Council of Wales <https://muslimcouncil.wales>

The Pagan Federation <https://www.paganfed.org>

The Sikh Council of Wales <http://sikhcouncilofwales.com>

Wales Evangelical Alliance <https://www.eauk.org/about-us/nations/wales>