

**The Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values
and Ethics**

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

Implementation Date: September 2022

DRAFT

Foreword from the Corporate Director Of Education, Lynn Phillips

Corporate Improvement Plan

Our Core Vision and Values Our Core Vision and Values reflect who we are as a Council, how we do things and how we are shaping the future by ensuring that these apply to everything we do. Our Council Priorities. With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. We must focus on those actions that will have the greatest impact.

Safeguarding the most vulnerable people in our communities continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do. Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is also vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all children and young people. We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live and have prioritised economic development and regeneration to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Another priority is to make sure the services we provide are of a high standard and value for money, where more people are satisfied and services are more accessible for and responsive to the needs of citizens. Everything we do should contribute to the Council’s priorities (the ‘golden thread’) so that all our effort and resources are linked into the delivery of this Plan. Some of the priorities will also require contributions from across different service areas and this will help us to deliver our ‘One Council’ approach by working together to deliver better outcomes for our communities.

Education Provision

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools and their status is detailed below:

- 2 are Maintained 3-16 Learning Communities,
- 1 Foundation Comprehensive,
- 1 Maintained Comprehensive,
- 1 x Maintained 3-18 Special School,
- 1 x Maintained 3-16 SEBD Special School; and,
- 19 Primaries (of which 4 are voluntary aided / faith schools)

There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools

Lynn Phillips
Corporate Director of Education

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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 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 Blaenau Gwent SAC or if you have any queries in relation to the Agreed Syllabus, please contact:

Michelle.Jones (Strategic Education Improvement Manager)
Michelle.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or 07891815904

Hayley Jones (EAS Curriculum Partner - SACs and RVE)
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Introduction

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 Blaenau Gwent must also have regard to the Blaenau Gwent 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 Blaenau Gwent 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 Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics Statutory Guidance on Hwb was adopted as the new Blaenau Gwent Agreed Syllabus for RVE on (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 support 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 Education Act 1996 (c. 56);
- a local authority in Wales.

In addition, the guidance may also be useful to practitioners, regional consortia, awarding bodies, Estyn, teacher unions, religious organisations, non-religious organisations, parents and carers 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 LA has a legal duty to review the Agreed Syllabus every five years.

Schools should take note of the following points:

In accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 the Agreed Syllabus reflects 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;
- the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales.

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

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

We strongly advise that Governors and Head Teachers engage with this summary.

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 exemplar learning journeys in RVE](#)
- [Spiritual development of learners](#)
- Ensuring Inclusivity in RVE

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. **This will require specialists to teach RVE and specialists to have input in designing RVE within the 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 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.

Implementation

This Blaenau Gwent 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 Blaenau Gwent SAC 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.

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. However, there continues to be a determination available to schools.

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.

Concerns

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

Please contact Michelle Jones (Strategic Education Improvement Manager) if you have any unresolved concerns in relation to RVE.

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