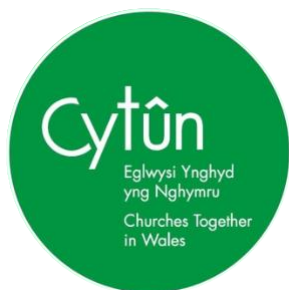


The New Schools Curriculum for Wales election briefing



**Updated March 2021
by Gethin Rhys**

The new schools curriculum for Wales

The outgoing Senedd has passed the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act](#) to provide the legal underpinning for the new [Curriculum for Wales](#) for introduction in all maintained schools. The current Government is still intending that introduction begin in 2022 (up to Year 7, with other years following in sequence), although in [evidence to a Senedd Committee](#) the outgoing Education Minister, Kirsty Williams MS, indicated that she has not ruled out a delay due to the disruption caused by Covid-19.

“[The Curriculum guidance] aims to help each school develop its own curriculum... A school’s curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes [see below]. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it.” [from <https://gov.wales/curriculum-wales-overview>]

This is very different from the prescriptive model used by the current curriculum (1988 and later revisions). Each local school curriculum will start from its *cynefin* (a Welsh word meaning locality, neighbourhood, community, habitat) – of which local places of worship and faith communities are an important part.

The Act specifies the **Four Purposes** of the curriculum *to enable learners to develop as:*

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world

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- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The following **six areas of learning and experience** must be reflected in the adopted curriculum:

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

The following will be mandatory curriculum elements:

- Religion, values and ethics (RVE)
- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE)
- Welsh
- English (from the age of 7).

The Act gives the next Welsh government the power to alter the specified areas of learning and experience and many other aspects of the curriculum framework, including how assessment will be arranged. This would give considerable scope to the next Welsh Government to change quite fundamentally the way the new curriculum operates without needing to amend the primary legislation.

Particular subjects of special interest to churches

Cytûn has contributed to the development of all aspects of the Curriculum 2022 Framework and Christians will be committed to the

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development of the whole curriculum. There are, however, two areas in which we have taken a particular interest and which have been of particular concern to many members of churches and other faith communities.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will become mandatory for all pupils as part of the [Health and Well-Being](#) Area of Learning and Experience. Cytûn is part of the Faith/BAME Involvement Group which is a sounding board for the detailed national level guidance for schools which will be published in due course. This part of the curriculum will be subject to much greater specification than other areas, rather than being largely locally determined. A draft Code for RSE will be published for consultation and decision by the Senedd after the election.

Religious Education will be renamed **Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE)** and will become mandatory for all pupils as part of the [Humanities](#) Area of Learning and Experience. The Curriculum Framework says:

“It is important that learners have opportunities to discuss and explore their personal perspectives on religious and non-religious worldviews, ethical challenges and social inclusion issues.”

A draft Framework for the subject will be published for consultation after the election. It will be for the Standing Advisory Council of each local authority (on which faith and belief groups are represented) to decide the RVE curriculum framework for their local area. Church schools will be able to continue to teach according to their own faith tenets, but will also have to offer the county RVE curriculum to those learners whose parents choose.

Questions for candidates

1. Do you believe that the new curriculum arrangements should be introduced in September 2022, or postponed following the pandemic?
2. How do you believe learners should be assessed throughout their education, and especially at age 16, under the new curriculum?
3. How will you support local churches and faith groups to help local schools develop their curriculum, as an important part of the school's *cynefin*?
4. What do you believe should be included in the new Code for Relationships and Sexuality Education?
5. What do you believe should be included in the new Framework for Religion, Values and Ethics?

Contact

We would like to know how this guidance was useful and what should be added or changed for future publications.

If you have questions, suggestions or comments please write to:

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Article updated March 2021 by Gethin Rhys