

Caerphilly LA Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Focus: The impact of the changes to legislation and the implementation of the new Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) curriculum.

Date of Monitoring Report: 13th June 2023

Purpose of report:

- Provide an update on the implementation of RVE and the new Agreed Syllabus;
- Provide an overview on the support provided by the EAS for schools with RVE and the Agreed Syllabus;
- Provide an update on the engagement of schools with RVE and the Agreed Syllabus;
- Identify ways forward for RVE in Caerphilly schools.

1. Context

1.1 Religion Values and Ethics

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.

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 locality and in Wales, as well as in the wider world.

1.2 Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics

Following the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, Caerphilly Local Authority (LA) was required to prepare and adopt a syllabus of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) for use in all maintained schools from September 2022, and have due regard to guidance given by Welsh Ministers on this matter.

The Agreed Syllabus must reflect the following points:

- (a) 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;
- (b) a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales;
- (c) the local authority may make different provision in respect of different descriptions of schools maintained by the local authority and different descriptions of learners.

Caerphilly adopted the Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics Statutory Guidance on Hwb as the new Caerphilly Agreed Syllabus, for RVE following a formal recommendation to the LA by the

Agreed Syllabus Conference on 20th of June 2022. This Syllabus is to be reviewed every five years and can be viewed by clicking on the following hyperlink: [Caerphilly Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics \(RVE\)](#)

1.3 Objectives of the Agreed Syllabus

The Agreed Syllabus is **not** designed to be a scheme of work, but rather a helpful guide and legal reference point for schools to support them in designing an appropriate and relevant curriculum for their learners, which includes RVE within the Humanities area. The approach of the Curriculum for Wales Framework is based on the principle of subsidiarity and, as such, the Agreed Syllabus recognises and reflects the autonomy of each school and setting in realising its own curriculum. Therefore, there is no scheme of learning within the Agreed Syllabus.

1.4 Provision of RVE and Curriculum

Each school will decide its own approach to RVE curriculum design and approaches, for example integrated, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or disciplinary. However, practitioners must consider the statements of what matters in the Humanities area to allow learners to explore and critically engage with a broad range of religious and non-religious concepts.

The Agreed Syllabus also refers to the Curriculum for Wales RVE guidance where it considers and identifies some relevant lenses through which to view RVE concepts. The lenses are provided to help schools and settings understand some significant aspects of RVE and to help them identify opportunities for RVE within the statements of what matters to support school curriculum design.

Lenses in RVE include:

- Search for meaning and purpose;
- The natural world and living things;
- Identity and belonging;
- Authority and influence;
- Relationships and responsibility;
- Values and ethics;
- The journey of life.

1.5 Learner Progression

Learner progression is an important driver for designing an RVE curriculum. To develop a shared understanding of progression from ages 3 to 16 in relation to RVE, an example 'learning journey' for each lens is provided. These learning journeys illustrate how a learner may develop their understanding of concepts in RVE through various lenses alongside the descriptions of learning for the Humanities.

2. Engaging Schools with RVE

2.1 Offer to Schools 2021-23

All schools across Caerphilly LA have been given the opportunity to attend half termly Humanities meetings (with RVE focused agenda items) as well as EAS RVE professional learning opportunities. In addition, all schools have been offered bespoke school support from the EAS RVE Curriculum Partner and the opportunity to link with the RE Lead Network School.

2.2 School engagement with PL Opportunities 2021-23

RVE Curriculum in Wales Briefing for RVE

EAS led headteacher and senior leadership RVE briefings to develop understanding of the mandatory requirements of RVE in the curriculum for Wales. The Humanities lead at Fochriw Primary School shared their emerging curriculum plans for RVE during this session. Out of the schools that attended the briefings:

- 80% were from Caerphilly LA;
- 52% of Caerphilly English primary schools attended;
- 27% of Caerphilly English Secondary schools attended;
- 22% of Caerphilly Welsh primary schools attended;
- 100% of Caerphilly Welsh secondary schools attended;

Following this briefing, all attendees were asked to complete an evaluation. Evidence from those who completed the evaluation indicates that many headteachers and senior leaders have greater understanding of, and confidence in meeting, the RVE mandatory requirements.

Bassaleg Religious Studies Open Event

EAS hosted an open event at Bassaleg School to see effective examples of KS3, GCSE and A level RS practice in the classroom. The event allowed time to reflect on a range of strategies that can enhance the learning environment for all learners, as well as begin the discussion on progression in line with the Curriculum for Wales progression steps. Out of the three spaces available at this event:

- All of the spaces were filled by Caerphilly schools;
- One English secondary and one English primary school attended the event;
- One secondary Welsh medium school attended.

As a result of this professional learning event, early evidence suggests that nearly all those practitioners who attended increased their knowledge and understanding of exemplar practice, whilst developing networks of support with other colleagues.

RVE Inspiration, Ideas and Practice (Lat Blaylock)

To support schools in realising the principles of progression in RVE, the EAS commissioned Lat Blaylock (National RE Advisor) to provide a day of professional learning for practitioners to implement the new RVE curriculum within the Humanities AoLE. Out of the schools that attended this professional learning event:

- 50% were from Caerphilly LA;
- 30% of Caerphilly English primary schools attended;
- 33% of Caerphilly English Secondary schools attended;
- 22% of Caerphilly Welsh primary schools attended;
- 100% of Caerphilly Welsh secondary schools attended;

It is difficult to measure the full impact of this offer as there has been limited time since the training. However, early feedback has been captured focussing on practitioner skills and knowledge and commitment to act. Of the Caerphilly schools that attended, many expressed a commitment to disseminate the information to staff and revisit their process for RVE curriculum design as a result of the program.

Evidence of planning and strategies being utilised has been captured in a few cases. For example, Hengoed Primary are in the exploration phase as they trial units, approaches, and strategies from the event in their own classes. They are committing to act and implement whole school changes as they develop their RVE curriculum and embed it into the Humanities AoLE. This has also been shared at regional network meeting and in the summer Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC on RVE) meeting.

Further impact from this training, has also resulted in the RVE Curriculum Partner planning a program to further support schools with planning progressive, high quality, RVE using case studies of planned units, as well as supporting schools to develop their own ideas and practice.

An Introduction to the Jewish History Association of South Wales Holocaust Education Resources professional learning

This professional learning is focused on improving knowledge and pedagogy in RVE with a focus on Jewish History and the Holocaust.

- 50% were from Caerphilly LA;
- 4% of Caerphilly English primary schools attended;
- 9% of Caerphilly English Secondary schools attended;
- 22% of Caerphilly Welsh primary schools attended;

Approaches to planning Primary RVE

The EAS, along with Caerphilly SAC on RVE identified a gap in provision for Primary RVE practitioners and leads regarding curriculum planning and implementation. As a result, the EAS

Partner, and Lead Network School (Bassaleg) developed an offer to ensure schools were given the opportunity to observe exemplar practice, that can be adapted for use within their own settings, whilst also developing networks of support with other colleagues.

- 55% were from Caerphilly LA;
- 5% of Caerphilly English primary schools attended.

Of the Caerphilly schools that attended, early feedback suggests that a majority of delegates left the session with increased pedagogical knowledge around planning for RVE in the primary phase and have benefitted from seeing models of emerging practice that can be adapted for use within their own settings.

Collective Worship Bespoke Professional Learning

The EAS supports the successful provision for collective worship in schools. As a result of the Head Teacher Briefings, a need for clarification around how the Curriculum for Wales has impacted this provision was identified from a small number of schools. A bespoke offer was sent to all Caerphilly schools to further support the delivery of collective worship and the uptake was as follows:

- 4% of the Caerphilly schools engaged with this offer;
- 3% of Caerphilly English primary schools engaged with this offer;
- 18% of the Caerphilly Secondary schools engaged with this offer.

Lewis School Pengam is progressing with its collective worship provision. They have identified weekly themes and created reflection book to be used daily during form time. A presentation was also given to SACRE to share their developing provision.

Bespoke RVE Support

The EAS and Caerphilly SAC on RVE recognised a need to support schools during the transition from RE to RVE, following feedback from the Head Teacher Briefings and network meetings. The direct impact of this was to offer Caerphilly schools bespoke support. The offer included support with understanding and implementing the new Agreed Syllabus, progressive curriculum design for RVE; GCSE and AS/ A Level, and any other aspect of RE/RVE that may be needed.

- 10% of the Caerphilly English schools engaged with this offer and all primary;
- 22% of Caerphilly Welsh primary schools engaged with the offer;
- 22% of Caerphilly Welsh primary schools engaged with the offer.

All schools that engaged with the offer were ready and willing to improve their RVE curriculum, and enthusiastic to explore alternative ways of planning to integrate RVE into their wider humanities curriculum. The offer challenged thinking around different concepts within RVE/humanities. Practitioners were shown examples of conceptual progression maps, mapping threads from the descriptors of learning to chosen substantive concepts. Practitioners then utilised the conceptual maps to independently create contextual progression maps and plan units/topics of work. Emphasis

was placed on chosen topics having purpose and value, how they would build on previously acquired knowledge and skills and how this knowledge and skill might develop with future learning.

Nearly all practitioners who engaged with this professional learning were satisfied with the learning experience. In addition, a majority of practitioners strongly agreed that they have acquired new knowledge and skills that will develop them in their role. Most practitioners noted that they acquired greater understanding of how conceptual curriculum design can enable learner progression and are willing to take risks, experiment and innovate in their practice utilising the learning and resources they have acquired.

3. Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC on RVE)

The Caerphilly SAC on RVE consists of 18 members – 6 councillors, 6 teacher representatives, 3 religious and 3 non-religious members who meet on a termly basis. The meetings are purposeful and follow a set agenda, where members advise on what school pupils should study in RVE lessons. As well as termly meetings, sub-groups have also successfully met to create the Caerphilly Agreed Syllabus for RVE and a bespoke Collective Worship survey for schools.

Termly meetings are offered as a hybrid model where members are able to join via Microsoft Teams or in the Council Chamber in Ty Penallta. Although this model allows for flexibility, it has meant members have not met in person since before Covid and members do not know each other. Therefore an additional training session is going to be offered to all members in the summer term which will be in-person and cover the role of being a member of the Caerphilly SAC for RVE. It is hoped these sessions will be attended by everyone and allow members to explain a little about themselves and what they are able to offer in their role.

4. Summary

As a result of the professional learning offer brokered by the EAS, leaders of RVE across the LA have increased knowledge and understanding of the mandatory requirements of RVE. Early evidence suggests that headteachers and senior leaders have greater confidence in the mandatory requirements for RVE.

The opportunity to work with the LNS and RE Today, have afforded delegates the opportunity to observe first hand a range of exemplar practice, whilst developing networks of support with other colleagues.

Where schools have attended sharing practice events, or bespoke professional learning sessions, feedback suggests that delegates have left the sessions with increased pedagogical knowledge around RVE, and have benefitted from seeing models of emerging practice that can be adapted for use within their own settings.

However, records show there are some schools across Caerphilly who have not engaged with any of the professional learning offers for RVE. Therefore, it is imperative these schools are contacted on an individual basis to ensure all schools are being provided with the same opportunities, which in turn will ensure all pupils across Caerphilly are being provided with the .

5. Strategy moving forward – Summer 2023 onwards

As part of this MER, the EAS RVE Partner and School Improvement Officer have co-constructed a number of short, medium, and longer term goals:

Short term goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAS RVE partner and School Improvement Officer to continue to meet on a monthly basis to discuss developments. • Engage with those schools who are yet to engage with RVE professional learning opportunities. Particularly focusing on Trinity Fields and 3-18 School. • Contact all schools to request the direct email addresses of all Humanities/RVE leads. This will ensure all emails are sent directly to AoLE leads. • SAC on RVE training for all members – July 2023.
Mid-term goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Primary professional learning offer further on Curriculum Planning for RVE. • Develop a cluster model for supporting progression within RVE. • Support for non-specialists. • Send out the Collective Worship policy to all schools. Collate data and offer PL support to schools accordingly. Share good practice in future SAC on RVE meetings. • Create a SAC on RVE plan for 2023-24, which all members will contribute to. • Ensure all member places are filled on SAC on RVE committee.
Long term goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create exemplar materials for schools.

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6th June 2023