



CURRICULUM FOR WALES:
SUPPORTING NON-STATUTORY
GUIDANCE FOR CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS



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1. Introduction

This document provides additional non-statutory guidance to Catholic schools on using Curriculum for Wales to design a curriculum which reflects their Catholic faith and values. It builds on the Curriculum for Wales guidance, providing contextual support for Catholic schools. It is not intended to duplicate or differ in principle from that guidance.

Headteachers, members of a school's governing body, staff, parents and clergy will find this document a useful resource when considering curriculum design. The document may also be of service to the wider community by providing insight into the identity and ethos of Catholic schools.

Practitioners from Catholic schools have been actively involved in the co-construction of the Curriculum for Wales as Pioneer and Innovation schools and as contributors in the development of the Welsh Government's Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance for schools and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) guidance and Code. This guidance had been developed by practitioners in the primary and secondary sector representing the three Catholic dioceses in Wales. They have been supported in their work by the diocesan officers, the Catholic Education Service and with advice from Welsh Government officials.

2. Mission of a Catholic School

Education is central to the mission of the Catholic Church. Catholic education aims to offer learners experience of life in a welcoming community which will help them grow to their full human potential, paying regard to the whole person, and supporting them to develop their physical, moral and intellectual talents.¹

For over 150 years the Church's aim has been to provide a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic learner. The Catholic community works in partnership with Welsh Government and Local Authorities in its provision of education.

With the emphasis on purpose-driven holistic education, Curriculum for Wales relates well to the commitment of the Church to assist in the education of learners, so that they may direct the gift of life toward Christ and the common good.

3. Developing a distinctive Catholic vision for curriculum design

Pope Benedict XVI posed the question to young people *What kind of a person do you want to be?* Curriculum for Wales, through its four purposes, seems to be concerned with a similar question, and provides its answer in terms of its statement that *all our young people will be...* Schools must design, adopt and implement a curriculum that enables learners to develop in the way described in the four purposes.

Catholic schools seek to cultivate Christian virtues (character strengths) and form personal values, rooted in the Gospel of Christ, and expressed in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Fostering these character strengths through virtues education can assist Catholic schools in realising the four purposes.

The Catholic Church defines a virtue as 'a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts but to give the best of themselves.' The Catholic tradition lists seven

¹ [Christ at the Centre: Why the Church Provides Catholic Schools, Bishop Marcus Stock, \(Catholic Truth Society, 2012\).](#)

essential moral, and five key intellectual virtues, which together make a person 'good at being human'. The Intellectual Virtues are ordered towards exercising a person's Intellect well, the Moral Virtues make a person exercise their free will in ways that are good in the moral sense. The seven Moral Virtues are further divided into Cardinal Virtues and Theological Virtues:²

Moral Virtues:

- Cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance, justice and fortitude.
- Theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.

Intellectual virtues:

- understanding, prudence, practical wisdom, science and art.

4. Your curriculum design

The governing body of a Catholic maintained school is responsible for policy relating to the whole curriculum, including religious education. This ensures that the curriculum of the school, including the areas of learning and experience, actively promotes the spiritual and moral development of the learners. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility for the religious education curriculum and have a duty to ensure that it is taught in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and norms of the Catholic Church.

Schools must adopt their curriculum and assessment arrangements and publish a summary of it. They must ensure the adopted curriculum is implemented in a way that:

- enables the development of the **four purposes**;
- secures appropriate progression for each learner, which is informed by the **principles of progression** under each Area;
- is suitable for each learner's age, ability and aptitude;
- takes account of each learner's additional learning needs (if any);
- secures broad and balanced learning and teaching for each learner.

For each learner in reception to year 9 (inclusive) the curriculum must be implemented in a way that secures learning and teaching that:

- encompasses the six Areas and all the mandatory elements
- for RSE, is suitable for the learner's stage of development
- for RVE, except in relation to learners in reception (those learners below compulsory school age, typically those aged 3 to 5 years), accords with curriculum design requirements. 3- to 5-year-olds should still be provided with pluralistic RVE
- develops the mandatory **cross-curricular skills**.

For each learner in years 10 and 11 the curriculum must be implemented in a way that secures learning and teaching that:

- secures learning and teaching in each Area
- for RSE, is suitable for the learner's stage of development
- for RVE accords with curriculum design requirements;

² [Formation in Virtues: Educating the Whole Person, \(Department for Education and Formation, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2020\).](#)

- develops the mandatory [cross-curricular skills](#).³

4.1 Areas of Learning and Experience (Areas)

The six Areas in *Curriculum for Wales guidance* are the framework for our curriculum design. Five principles of progression underpin progression across all Areas:

- Increasing effectiveness
- Increasing breadth and knowledge
- Deepening understanding of the ideas and disciplines within the Areas
- Refinement and growing sophistication in the use and application of skills
- Making connections and transferring learning into new contexts⁴

A school's response to the curriculum should reflect the school's values and ethos. Catholic schools will be supported and facilitated in this through an ongoing programme of professional learning and discussion.

When developing opportunities for learning and experience in the six Areas, Catholic schools should reflect values rooted in the Gospels of Christ and virtues education (see 3 above). Indeed, knowledge set in the context of faith becomes wisdom and life vision. The endeavour to interweave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation and coordination, bringing forth within what is learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history.⁵

4.2 Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE)

Within the new Curriculum for Wales 'Religion, values and ethics' is a statutory requirement for all learners from 3 to 16 and there is no right to withdraw from RVE. There will be a staggered roll out of the right to withdraw from RVE following the implementation timeline for the Curriculum for Wales.⁶ In voluntary aided schools of a religious character the Act requires the curriculum to make provision for teaching and learning in respect of RVE that accords with the school's trust deed or the tenets of the Catholic Church.

There is an additional requirement which applies only if the provision described above has been designed without having regard to the agreed syllabus. In this case, the school's curriculum must also include provision for RVE that has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus. In this case, a pupil's parents can request that their child be provided with this additional provision designed having regard to the agreed syllabus. If a request of this type is made, it must be complied with.⁷

³ Curriculum for Wales- Summary of legislation, Welsh Government, Hwb Cymru, <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation>

⁴ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design>

⁵ The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1999).

⁶ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-wales-the-journey-to-curriculum-roll-out/>

⁷ [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021, Schedule 1, paragraphs 4 & 8](#); Curriculum for Wales- Summary of legislation, Welsh Government, Hwb Cymru, <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation>

Ideally, therefore, Catholic schools should be able to demonstrate the ways in which the Catholic Religious Education curriculum has been designed having regard to the locally agreed syllabus.

A new version of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory is under development. The CES and practitioners have liaised with the writing team to ensure that the Directory takes into account all the statutory requirements for Welsh schools. Additional guidance will be provided for schools in a diocesan led professional learning programme.

In a Catholic school in Wales, Religious Education is governed by Religious Education Curriculum Directory of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and is delivered and assessed according to diocesan policy and inspected under the Catholic Church's National Inspection Framework in accordance with the relevant legislation.⁸ Catholic schools are required to allocate a minimum of 10% of curriculum time to the teaching of Religious Education now known as RVE.

The Religious Education curriculum in Church schools includes learning about a range of religions and worldviews. Catholic schools in Wales teach Religious Education as required by their Bishops in accordance with their trust deeds, whilst also making links to the rest of the curriculum.

We live in a society containing a range of religious and non-religious worldviews and these need to be studied to prepare our young people for life in Wales, the United Kingdom, and the wider world. This learning needs to be underpinned by mutual respect of everyone and tolerance of alternate views. Learning about religions and worldviews other than Catholicism is thus the result of deep respect for the human dignity of the persons that hold these views.

As a result of all this, the following principle can guide our writing of the Curriculum Guidance for Catholic schools should:

- clearly express a Catholic world view
- demonstrate an understanding of and respect for other religious world views
- demonstrate an understanding of and respect for non-religious world views

4.3 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

A fundamental principle of Catholic education is the formation of the whole person. In the education of learners in Catholic schools, well-taught, developmentally appropriate Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) has been regarded as an important part of this holistic approach. Given the ease with which learners can access disinformation and damaging material, RSE plays a vital role in keeping learners safe.

RSE is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales Framework and a curriculum must accord with the RSE Code.⁹ Recognising the role of parents and carers as the primary educators of their children, Catholic schools must continue to collaborate closely with them. 'The Church's vision of the "integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation" provides the template to develop effective RSE in a manner that prepares learners for life in modern society, as well as teaching them to value the precious gift of human life and the dignity that God gives to every person.'¹⁰

⁸ [Education Act 2005, section 50.](#)

⁹ Curriculum for Wales- Summary of legislation, Welsh Government, Hwb Cymru, <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation>

¹⁰ Relationship and sex education in Catholic Schools (Department of Catholic Education and Formation Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, October 2020).

Catholic schools must ensure that learners are offered a broad and balanced RSE programme supported by virtues education which provides them with clear factual, scientific information when relevant and meets the statutory requirements placed on schools.

The governing body have responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and must ensure that schools strive to do the best for all learners, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, pregnancy, maternity, sex, gender reassignment, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children.¹¹ Equality Act Guidance for Catholic schools can be found on the CES website.¹²

Catholic schools will adhere to the principles stated in the RSE statutory guidance and code. Additionally, the statements below on effective RSE in Catholic schools will support Catholic schools when planning their RSE curriculum.

Effective Catholic RSE:

- is faithful to the Church's vision of human wholeness
- recognises the contemporary context in which we live today
- involves parents and carers as they are the primary educators of their child
- provides a positive view of human sexuality and dignity of the human person
- equips learners with the ability to make good judgements about the right thing to do in particular circumstances
- explores and promotes virtues which are essential to promoting respect and dignity of the human person
- is delivered in a way which reflects the development of the learner
- is part of cross-curricular themes for both primary and secondary schools
- is sensitive to the needs of the individual learner and recognises the diversity of the learners and their family circumstances
- is taught by skilled professionals who understand the Church's teaching.

4.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

- Within the Curriculum reform in Wales, the UNCRC plays a foundational role. Incorporated into Domestic Law in Wales in 2011, the Declaration sets out 42 rights, centred on four 'General Principles' (Articles 2,3,6 and 12) and described in the 54 articles that make up its text (together with some 'Optional Protocols' governing additional, particular applications). It is at once 'the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history' (UNICEF).
- The importance of the UNCRC for the Curriculum for Wales also makes it vital for schools to relate to it as they design, adapt, and implement their curriculum. Schools should promote knowledge and understanding of Part 1 of the [UNCRC](#) to those who provide learning and teaching.

¹¹ Equalities Act 2010, chapter1.

¹² <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools, Equalities, Equality Act Guidance for Catholic Schools, 2014.>