

PRESS RELEASE

Children in Wales will have universal access to the full curriculum

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Link: <https://gov.wales/children-wales-will-have-universal-access-full-curriculum>

Parents will not be able to prevent their children from learning about religion, relationships and sexuality in the new Curriculum. Education Minister Kirsty Williams made the announcement today emphasising the need for 'careful and sensitive implementation' of the decision.

Education Minister Kirsty Williams said:

"Our responsibility as a government is to ensure that young people, through public education, have access to learning that supports them to discuss and understand their rights and the rights of others."

"It is essential that all young people are provided with access to information that keeps them safe from harm."

"Today's decision ensures that all pupils will learn about issues such as online safety and healthy relationships"

The announcement was made following an eight-week Welsh Government consultation on ensuring access to the full curriculum, including the teaching of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Religious Education (RE).

"I recognise this is a sensitive matter and the consultation responses reflected a wide range of views. There is clearly a need for us to work with communities and all interested parties in developing the learning and teaching for RSE and RE - this work will be vital to enable everyone to have trust in how the change is implemented."

The Minister outlined plans for implementation which include the creation of clear guidance, resources and professional learning for schools and the creation of a Faith/BAME Community Involvement Group to hold its first meeting this February. The group will engage in the development of RSE guidance, develop a shared understanding of the new curriculum and address concerns raised by faith and community groups during the consultation.

The Minister continued:

"It is vital that we continue to work with communities across Wales to ensure parents have the right to develop, care for and guide their children into adulthood while allowing our schools to provide a broad and balanced education."

"We will build on the community engagement which accompanied the consultation with a long term investment in listening to our communities and finding ways to address the issues which concern them."

"The Minister also confirmed plans to establish a new RSE Working Group that will oversee the refinement of the new RSE statutory guidance to form part of the new curriculum guidance."

The Minister added:

"I want to take the opportunity in 2021 to test the approach for RSE prior to it being made statutory in the new curriculum."

"This will provide valuable intelligence to inform the refinement of our approach and will also enable learners, parents and carers and communities to see it working in practice and to feedback their views."

Further details on this approach will be announced over the coming weeks.

The consultation also showed support for renaming the subject 'Religious Education'.

The most popular choice from respondents was 'Religion, Values and Ethics' and, as a result, the Minister confirmed the subject name would change when the new curriculum comes into effect.

Key Points for SACRE:

- Removal of right of parents to withdraw their children from Religious Education lessons, which will presumably come into effect when the new curriculum is launched in 2022
- The name of Religious Education to change to Religion, Values and Ethics when the new curriculum comes into effect