

Standing Advisory Council (for Religious Education)

GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORT

September 2024 - August 2025

Head of the Education Department

Mr Gwern ap Rhisiart

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SAC(RE)'s function in relation to Religious Education

The requirement for LAs as regards Standing Advisory Councils for Religion, Values and Ethics and Agreed Syllabus conferences are set out in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2022, Part 3 Section 9 (3.1A) and Part 3 Section 7(7) and Section 390 of the Education Reform Act 1996.

SAC(RE) advises the Education Authority on matters relating to the provision of Religious Education, Religion, Values and Ethics and collective worship, and is responsible for the establishment of an ad hoc body, the Agreed Syllabus Conference, to produce or consider amendments to the Agreed Syllabus for Religious, Values and Ethics.

1.1 Introduction by the Chairman

It is true to say that Gwynedd SACRE members continue to feel frustrated that our ability to fulfill our core duties is limited due to factors beyond our control, such as the recent change in Estyn's method of inspecting schools. The new method means that less information is readily available to us than before about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision of schools. Likewise, it is not easy to gain a clear picture of what collective worship takes place in schools even though it is a legal requirement.

There was one very positive development this year, however, which was securing specialist support for the SACRE for the first time since GwE support was withdrawn in 2018. It was good to be able welcome Phil Lord to his first meeting, as an Independent Adviser, in June. It is already evident that his expertise in the field will be of great benefit to us in our discussions, providing them with more focus.

We had several interesting and useful presentations during the year. We heard from a representative of the Jewish History Society of South Wales about the bilingual educational resources they have developed about the Holocaust, and from a postgraduate student from Bangor University about ways in which spiritual development could be discussed within the Humanities Learning Area, specifically in the context of Religion, Values and Ethics.

In a period of major curricular change, it is crucial that we hear the views of the teachers as those responsible for implementing the change in the classroom. We received such a presentation from one of our own members, Miriam Amlyn from NASUWT, who updated us on the draft GCSE specification in Religious Studies for September 2025. We heard about positive elements of the new qualification but also about some concerns in terms of its practical delivery. We also had the opportunity to hear, from Dr Gareth Evans-Jones, about the findings of a research project carried out by the recently-relaunched National Centre for Religious Education in Wales to look into RVE provision in Wales. Once again there were positive elements on the one hand and concerns on the other, and this was also true of Phil Lord's presentation about CGM opportunities for Years 10 and 11.

I would like to thank the members of Gwynedd SACRE for their time and dedication during the year. And thanks also to our teachers for their work and their continued efforts to adapt in a period of change which brings opportunities and challenges in its wake.

Councillor Menna Baines

Chair of Gwynedd SACRE, 2024/2025

SECTION 2: ADVICE to GWYNEDD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

2.1 SAC(RE)'s function in relation to Religion, Values and Ethics

The requirement for LAs as regards Standing Advisory Councils (for Religion, Values and Ethics) and Agreed Syllabus conferences are set out in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2022, Part 3 Section 9 (3.1A) and Part 3 Section 7(7) and Section 390 of the Education Reform Act 1996.

SAC(RE) advises the Education Authority on matters relating to the provision of Religious Education, Religion, Values and Ethics and collective worship, and is responsible for the establishment of an ad hoc body, the Agreed Syllabus Conference, to produce or consider amendments to the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

2.2 The Locally Agreed Syllabus

Gwynedd and Anglesey SAC(RE)s have adopted the 'National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3 to 19 year old learners' as the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Gwynedd and Anglesey (2008).

A SAC(RE)'s main function is '*...to advise the authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in county schools and the Religious Education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the authority may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.*' (Education Reform Act 1988 s.11 (1) (a)). Gwynedd County Council held their Agreed Syllabus Conference 1st February 2022 to review the syllabus and to recommend an appropriate syllabus to the Local Authority to adopt.

The Agreed Syllabus on Religion, Values and Ethics was adopted to reflect guidance written by practitioners and Religious Education experts. The purpose of the syllabus is to provide additional support on how Religion, Values and Ethics can be taught within the field of Humanities. Gwynedd Agreed Syllabus for Religion Values and Ethics is based on Welsh Government Guidance for Religion, Values and Ethics. The guidance emphasises that Religion, Values and Ethics are an integral part of the Humanities area of learning and experience. It also outlines the subject's unique and specific contribution to the Curriculum for Wales.

The Guidance can be accessed below:

- <https://hwb.gov.wales/cwricwlwm-i-gymru/y-dyniaethau/cynllunio-eich-cwricwlwm/#canllawiau-ar-grefydd,-gwerthoedd-a-moeseg>
- <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum/#religion,-values-and-ethics-guidance>

During the academic year 2024-25, in accordance with the changes to the Curriculum for Wales 2022, Religion, Values and Ethics was taught to all primary school children and learners in year 7, 8 and 9. In the academic year 2024-25, secondary schools continued to teach the pre 2022 curriculum (called Curriculum for Wales 2008), including the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, to pupils in years 10 and 11.

The Agreed Syllabus, conforming to the requirements of the new Curriculum for Wales 2022, relates to the subject titled 'Religion, Values and Ethics'. The previous Agreed Syllabus, still applicable for secondary schools for the reasons described above, relates to the subject titled 'Religious Education'. This is an important distinction.

Gwynedd adopted the 'National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3-19 year olds' as the Locally Agreed Syllabus for 'Religious Education' in 2008. To download a copy of the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education please go to:

- [National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)
- [Fframwaith enghreifftiol cenedlaethol ar gyfer cyflwyno addysg grefyddol i ddysgwyr 3 i 19 oed yng Nghymru - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

2.3 How good are standards?

In previous years Gwynedd SAC(RE) has monitored religious education and collective worship by:

- receiving a summary of a school's self-evaluation report in response to the key questions of ESTYN's Inspection Framework;
- analysing the Local Authority's teacher assessments and secondary examination results;

- reviewing ESTYN inspection reports for references to ‘religious education’ or ‘collective worship’;
- inviting teachers and head teachers to share their good practices with members in the termly meetings, and by,
- accepting schools’ invitations to attend a collective worship session.

2.3.1 Schools’ self-evaluation reports

SAC(RE) members resolved at their meeting on 9 February 2011, to continue to receive copies of schools’ self-evaluation of religious education and collective worship and asked head teachers to use a revised template. No school self-evaluations have been received since the COVID-19 pandemic. Gwynedd schools have not been asked to provide self-evaluations for the Gwynedd SAC(RE) as a result of changes to the Estyn Inspection Framework.

2.3.2 Teacher assessment and external examination results in the secondary sector

KS4 and KS5 external examination results were not discussed during the SAC(RE) meetings held in 2024-2025.

2.4 Response of Local Authority

Mair Huws, Assistant Education Resources Officer for Gwynedd Council ensures that any guidance or recommendations made by Gwynedd SAC(RE) is communicated directly to the primary and secondary head teachers.

Up until April 2018, Gwynedd Council commissioned GwE (School Effectiveness and Improvement Service) to support Gwynedd SAC(RE) meetings and to represent Gwynedd SAC(RE) in regional and national meetings. In March 2018, the Gwynedd SAC(RE) clerk was notified that GwE would no longer be providing professional support to Gwynedd SAC(RE).

Both Primary and some Secondary schools implemented the Curriculum for Wales from September 2022 (and September 2023 in the case of some Secondary schools). Education is therefore in the midst of a period of great change, which made it impossible to monitor standards within Religious, Values and Ethics and Religious Education during the year.

Following a further discussion with the Local Authority it was agreed that Phil Lord, an independent RVE consultant would re-start supporting gwynedd SAC(RE) from summer 2025 term.

2.5 Religion, Values and Ethics and the Welsh Government

Curriculum for Wales

- During 2014-15, Professor Graham Donaldson was commissioned to undertake an independent review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales.
- The Wales Association of SAC(RE)S (WASACRE) is represented on the Welsh Government’s Strategic Stakeholders Group and representatives from the National Advisory Panel for Religious Education (NAPfRE) have attended meetings during the year with representatives from the Welsh Government’s Curriculum Department as they support the pioneer schools and develop a Curriculum for Wales.
- The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2022 established the Curriculum for Wales under the law, replacing the Basic Curriculum (that includes, for example, national and local curricula noted in Part 7 of the Education Act 2002).
- The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2022 notes the four purposes of the curriculum under the law. It also notes the mandatory elements (which includes religion, values and ethics) that encompass the 3 to 16 years old learning continuum:
- Religion, values and ethics (RVE) is, therefore a statutory requirement of the Curriculum for Wales and is mandatory for all learners from ages 3 to 16. RVE forms part of the Humanities Area.
- The guidance on RVE (Religion, values and ethics guidance) contained within the Humanities Area is statutory and published under section 71 of the Act and designed to assist those responsible under the Act for designing the RVE syllabus as part of the school curriculum

2.6 Religion, Values and Ethics and ESTYN

During the academic year, 9 schools' inspection reports were presented to SAC(RE) members. Schools were inspected between Sept '24 and March '25.

- Ysgol Maenofferen
- Ysgol Bodfeurig
- Ysgol Penybryn
- Ysgol Gynradd Rhiwlas
- Ysgol Glan y Môr (Secondary School)
- Ysgol Treferthyr
- Ysgol Borthygest
- Ysgol O.M. Edwards
- Ysgol Gynradd Abererch

There are no subject judgments in the current Estyn inspection framework. Instead, members receive information from the reports relating to Estyn's comments of a schools' provision of SMSC.

There is no expectation for inspectors to report on whether a school meets the statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship, there would be an expectation of a comment in the report if a school were to be found in breach of its statutory duty.

As part of the process of monitoring, Estyn Inspection Reports are analysed for comments on collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). These are compiled and noted by SAC(RE).

One school's inspection report contain no reference to Religion, Values and Ethics, Collective Worship or their Spiritual and moral development. No school received an area of development for RVE, RE or collective Worship.

Gwynedd SAC(RE) recommends the following resources to RE teachers and head teachers:

- 3 www.estyn.org.uk;
- 4 Religious Education in Secondary Schools (ESTYN, June 2013);
- 5 Supplementary Guidance: collective worship in non-denominational schools (ESTYN, October 2017);
- 6 Religious Education in Key stage 2 and Key stage 3 (ESTYN, June 2018)
- 7 '*Equity, human rights and English as an additional language*' (2021)
- 8 Provision to develop pupils' understanding of histories, stories and contributions of black, Asian and minority ethnic people (May 2025)
- 9 Sgwrs Podcast: Towards an Anti-Racist Wales (Feb 2025)
- 10 Promoting pupils' multicultural and moral development. (May 2024)
- 11 How the school uses the wider outdoor environment and community (Cynefin) to enhance pupils' learning experience. (July 2023)

2.7 SAC(RE)'s function in relation to collective worship

Welsh Office Circular 10/94 notes that the LEA should work with SAC(RE) to keep an eye on the daily collective worship provision, and should consider with it any steps which may be taken to improve such provision.

The collective worship must be "of a broadly Christian character". The "determination" procedure permits the suspension of these requirements in relation to some or all of the pupils in a school where they are deemed inappropriate.

- SAC(RE) members and Gwynedd schools have received collective worship guidance documents:
 - 'Supplementary guidance for inspecting collective worship in non-denominational schools' (ESTYN, October 2017);
 - Guidance on Collective Worship (WASACRE, June 2013).
- Gwynedd SAC(RE) previously monitored standard of collective worship in schools by reviewing schools'

self-evaluation reports;

- Supplementary guidance: collective worship in non-denominational schools' (ESTYN, October 2017);
- An 'Update for Inspectors (ESTYN, April 2018)'. The following extract was highlighted in the guidance:-
'A failure to meet the statutory duty might not affect the judgement for IA4. This is something for the team to consider. The team will need to weigh up a number of factors in each specific case, such as the number of pupils that it affects, and the team will have to decide whether this is significant or not and whether it should affect the overall judgement for IA4. Irrespective of whether or not inspectors decide to report on collective worship, they must always report on the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils.'
- Gwynedd SAC(RE) monitors the standard of collective worship in schools by reviewing schools' self-evaluation reports during the meetings.
- No self-evaluation reports were received in 2024-2025.

Determinations

There was no request from any school for a determination in relation to collective worship

SAC(RE)'s Recommendations to Gwynedd Council

Ensure that schools conform to the statutory requirement for collective worship and provide quality collective worship sessions;

Encourage schools to invite Gwynedd SAC(RE) Member to attend collective worship within schools

SECTION 3: ANNEXES

3.1 General information about the composition of SAC(RE)

a) SAC(RE) was established by Gwynedd Education Committee in 1996 to

include: Christians and Other Faiths, namely,

- The Methodist Church
- The Union of Welsh Baptists
- The Presbyterian Church of Wales
- The Church in Wales
- Union of Welsh Independents
- The Catholic Church

Teachers, namely;

- The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- National Union of Teachers in Wales (UCAC)
- National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
- National Union of Teachers (NUT)
- Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

Elected members

b) The Constitution of Gwynedd SAC(RE) was reviewed in April 2019 to include:

- **Christianity and other religions-** keep at 6. Propose to invite one representative from the Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and the Humanist beliefs
- **Representation of Teachers and Headteachers** - keep at 5
- **Elected Members** - keep at 7
- **Co-opted** - SAC(RE) Committee to retain the right to co-opt members
- there are 3 votes, namely 1 for each Group - the Co-opted members do not have a vote

c) The Constitution was further reviewed in September 2022 to amend the Teacher group as follows:

- Representation of Teachers and Headteachers – retain at 5

The seats to be allocated as follows:

3 seats to be shared between the recognised Teachers' Unions (NAS/UWT; UCAC; NEU; ASCL and NAHT) – to be decided by the Gwynedd Teachers' Union Forum.

1 seat to be filled by the Primary and Special Catchment Areas Consultative Group (GYDCA)

1 seat to be filled by the Gwynedd Secondary Headteachers Group (GSCU)

3.2 SAC(RE) membership of Gwynedd 2023-24

Christians and Other Religions

The Methodist Church
Union of Welsh Baptists
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Church in Wales
Union of Welsh Independents
The Catholic Church
Buddism
Humanists
Judaism
Islam
Hinduism

Parch Nick Sissons
Eurfryn Davies
Gwawr Maelor Williams
Naomi Wood
Bethan Davies Jones
Eirian Bradley Roberts
Patrycja Bielak Smith
Edward Parri-Jones
Nathan Abrams
Mr Mohamed Arabi
Dr Sibani Roy

Teachers' representatives

UCAC
NASUWT
NEU

Emma Roberts (Ysgol Botwnnog)
Miriam Amlyn (Ysgol Eifionydd)
Heledd Owen (Ysgol Friars)

Secondary Headteachers group (GSCU)
Primary Headteachers group (GYDCA)

Eleri Moss (Ysgol y Moelwyn)

Local Members

Councillor Paul Rowlinson
Councillor Meryl Roberts
Councillor Elin Walker Jones
Councillor Menna Baines
Councillor Jina Gwyrfa
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones
Councillor John Pughe Roberts

Plaid Cymru
Plaid Cymru
Plaid Cymru
Plaid Cymru
Plaid Cymru
Independent
Independent

Co-opted members (non voting)

Officers

Gwern ap Rhisiart
Mair Huws

Head of Education Department
Assistant education resources officer and
SAC(RE) clerk

Rhodri Jones

Democratic Services officer

3.3 SAC(RE) meetings 2024-25

Dates of meetings may be obtained by visiting Gwynedd CySAG . During 2024-2025 Gwynedd SAC(RE) met three times through Zoom:

19th November 2024

4th February 2025

24th June 2025

The following matters were discussed and further details are provided in the minutes and the main body of the report:

a) 19th November 2024

- The meeting opened with a presentation by Klavdja Erzen from the Jewish History Association of South Wales (JHASW), highlighting the organisation's work in preserving Welsh Jewish heritage and combating antisemitism and Holocaust denial. She introduced a suite of twenty bilingual Holocaust education resources developed in partnership with Aberystwyth University, tailored for learners aged 9–14 and aligned with the Curriculum for Wales. These resources span multiple Areas of Learning and Experience and are freely available online. JHASW also offers free professional development sessions for teachers to support the use of these materials. The committee praised the initiative, especially its emphasis on local history.
- Councillor Menna Baines then provided an update on the development of Collective Worship Guidelines, noting limited responses to a previous outreach and that further feedback was expected by January 2025. She also presented a report from the Wales National Centre for Religious Education, which revealed widespread concerns about the teaching of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in schools. Key issues included a lack of Welsh-language resources, inconsistent training, and insufficient curriculum time. The report suggested that many schools may not be meeting legal requirements, prompting calls for urgent action. The committee resolved to escalate these concerns to the Education Department and Wales SAC(RE), and to write to WJEC and the Minister for Education regarding the translation of course materials.
- Finally, Miriam Amlyn from NASUWT shared updates on the draft GCSE Religious Studies specification for September 2025. While the new content was generally welcomed—particularly its inclusion of non-religious beliefs and human rights—concerns were raised about the lack of bilingual coursebooks, insufficient teaching hours, and the impact of new coursework requirements. The potential for AI-assisted cheating was also discussed, with suggestions for mitigating strategies. The committee agreed to contact relevant stakeholders to advocate for improved resources and support, including exploring the development of a new Welsh-language coursebook.

b) 4th February 2025

- The main focus of the meeting was an update presented by Dr Gareth Evans-Jones on the teaching provision of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in Welsh schools. He introduced the work of the National Centre of Religious Education for Wales, relaunched in August 2023, which aims to promote understanding of diverse religious and philosophical traditions. Over the past year, the Centre has delivered a wide range of activities including A-level revision sessions, CPD training on Buddhism and Hinduism, a summer school, Holocaust education events, and the development of resources such as the 'Teaching Peace' pack and artefact boxes for classroom use.
- Dr Evans-Jones also shared findings from a nine-month research project exploring RVE provision across Wales, prompted by teacher requests for support. The study, based on responses from 58 schools (mostly secondary), revealed both positive engagement with training and areas of concern. Notably, the integration of RVE into Mixed Humanities at GCSE level has led to fears about diminishing subject expertise and insufficient teacher training. While training exists for the

integrated model, standalone RVE teaching lacks adequate support, highlighting a need for targeted professional development and clearer structural guidance.

c) 24th June 2025

- The committee accepted the SAC(RE) Annual Report for 2023/24 with one noted correction. A significant portion of the meeting focused on a presentation by postgraduate student Jennie Downes titled "Translating the Untranslatable," which explored spiritual development within the Humanities Area of Learning through the Cynefin lens, particularly in the context of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE). Her research examined how learners at Progression Steps 1 to 3 could engage with spiritual elements in RVE, drawing on Welsh legislation, the Curriculum for Wales, and the Welsh Bible. Key findings included the importance of safe learning environments, the value of using authentic Welsh cultural resources like Bible translations, and the need to foster emerging practices in RVE. The presentation prompted discussion on how best to share these insights with schools, with suggestions including collaboration with the Bible Society and integration into local history themes. Plans were mentioned to publish the research and explore further questions around narrative, translation, and cultural transmission.
- The committee also reviewed Estyn inspection reports, noting that while collective worship is a legal requirement, Estyn only reports when schools fail to meet it. Many schools fulfil this through reflective sessions aligned with values such as kindness and respect. Regarding the content of SAC(RE) annual reports, members agreed that current guidelines are outdated and called for clearer aims and forward-looking action plans to improve future reporting. Finally, Phil Lord presented on RVE opportunities for Years 10 and 11, outlining curriculum changes including the removal of the right to withdraw and the legal requirement to teach RVE to learners aged 3–16. He highlighted the importance of spiritual development, the use of seven RVE lenses, and the shift from Agored Cymru qualifications to a new Skills Suite by 2027. Concerns were raised about teacher workload and the risk of losing disciplinary clarity in interdisciplinary approaches.

3.3.1 Gwynedd SAC(RE) has affiliated with the Wales Association of SAC(RE)s and its members regularly attend meetings held by WASACRE.

3.3.2 The following provide SAC(RE) with professional support:

Gwern ap Rhisiart	Head of Education Department
Mair Huws	Assistant education improvement officer and SAC(RE) clerk
Rhodri Jones	Democratic Services Officer
Phil Lord	Independent RVE Consultant

Enquiries should be sent to the SAC(RE) Clerk at the Education Department, Gwynedd Council, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 1SH

3.3.3 The SAC(RE) report was sent to the following organisations:

Electronic copies of the annual report are to be distributed to the following:

- Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government
- Head of Gwynedd's Education Department
- Gwynedd Council Leader
- Wales Association of SAC(RE)s
- Gwynedd schools

A copy was distributed to:

- Members of Gwynedd SAC(RE)

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