



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Response to the Estyn thematic report on
religious education at
Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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Report title:

Religious education at key stage 2 and key stage 3

Report details:

This report is written in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2017-2018. The report evaluates standards, provision and leadership in religious education at key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Summary of main findings:

Overall, the findings of the report were positive, with some good cases of best practice being showcased in the schools surveyed.

Summary of the characteristics of good practice in standards of religious education at keys stages 2 and 3 include:

- In key stage 2, most pupils make good progress in developing their religious education skills and knowledge, although a minority of more able pupils do not make appropriate progress in line with their ability.
- In key stage 3, most pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve standards in line with their age and ability. However, a minority of schools often repeat work covered at key stage 2.
- In lessons, most pupils engage well with a wide range of fundamental human and religious questions that focus on the search for meaning, significance and value in life.
- Many pupils offer considered reasons for their opinions and listen to the views of others respectfully. In the majority of schools, pupils express their personal responses confidently. Many pupils have a secure understanding of the beliefs and practices of different religions.
- Many pupils consolidate and extend their literacy and thinking and reasoning skills well in religious education lessons.
- Leadership of religious education from headteachers and subject leaders is good overall in the majority of schools.
- Many pupils have a positive attitude towards religious education lessons and contribute with interest to group and class discussions. In many schools, religious education lessons help pupils to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.

Some issues highlighted within the main findings are:

- In key stage 2 most teachers do not plan activities to challenge more able pupils to extend their skills further, or consider more complex religious ideas. In key stage 3, in a few schools, teaching does not engage pupils well enough as teachers do not use a wide enough range of stimulating activities and strategies.
- Only a few schools have developed useful links with organisations relating to faiths other than Christianity.
- The quality of teachers' feedback to pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 3 is variable.
- In key stage 2, only a very few teachers use any standardised material to assist them to make judgements on pupils' achievement in religious education.
- At key stage 2, teachers rarely evaluate the quality of pupils' learning in religious education and, as a result, leaders do not have a secure awareness of pupils' standards.
- In most schools, teachers have very limited access to professional learning for religious education. Local authorities and regional consortia offer very little specialist professional learning in religious education for teachers or subject leaders.
- Most headteachers are aware of the local SACRE but are unsure of its role and purpose.
- There is very little transition work between secondary schools and their partner primary schools relating to religious education.
- In most schools, leaders have a secure understanding of their role and responsibilities under the Prevent duty (HM Government, 2015) relating to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Great Britain, 2015).
- Many schools need advice on how to address sensitive issues with pupils and how to deal with parental concerns on visiting places of worship.

Recommendations:

Estyn's recommendations are directed at schools, local authorities and consortia, and Welsh Government. The recommendations target the improvement of standards in relation to the teaching and learning of religious education, the strengthening of transition arrangements between key stages, improved curriculum planning, and a

requirement for Welsh Government to ensure that religious education is appropriately considered as part of the development of the new curriculum and the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE).

The report recommendations and a response from the Welsh Government are outlined below.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1 Ensure that more able pupils achieve in line with their ability in religious education.

R2 Strengthen monitoring and self-evaluation arrangements in key stage 2 to focus on improving pupils' standards and skills in religious education.

R3 Strengthen transition arrangements so that learning experiences in key stage 3 build on those in key stage 2 and avoid repetition of work.

R4 Evaluate their curriculum for religious education to prepare for the development and implementation of the new Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R5 Work with SACREs to provide:

- a. suitable professional learning opportunities for teachers of religious education;
- b. support for schools to evaluate their curriculum and plan for religious education as an integral part of the development of the humanities area of learning and experience;
- c. advice for schools on how to address sensitive issues with pupils and how to deal with parental concerns on visiting places of worship.

R6 Ensure that all leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

R7 Provide schools with guidance on approved places of worship to visit

The Welsh Government should:

R8 Work with local authorities, regional consortia and SACREs to ensure that there is clarity over the place of religious education within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

WG response:

The Welsh Government supports the recommendations set out in the Estyn report.

The recommendations, which are mainly aimed at consortia and schools, refer to cross-curricular aspects that will be embedded across the AoLEs. These will also help support the development of the four purposes that are at the heart of the new curriculum for Wales.

To address the recommendations in full:

Schools should:

R1 Ensure that more able pupils achieve in line with their ability in religious education.

In February, the Cabinet Secretary announced that £3million has been made available to develop a new national approach that supports our More Able and Talented (MAT) pupils. This includes a review of the current guidance and framework for schools, and independent research of MAT to support our future policy development. We are also extending the Seren Network to younger, more able learners.

Our National Mission commits us to an education system that combines equity with excellence to ensure that all pupils – including our most able – reach their potential and achieve at the highest level.

R2 Strengthen monitoring and self-evaluation arrangements in key stage 2 to focus on improving pupils' standards and skills in religious education

We are currently developing a new Evaluation and Improvement Framework and we will be considering the role of religious education, along with a wide range of other areas as part of that framework. Alongside this, Estyn and the OECD are jointly leading a project on effective self-evaluation in schools. Together, these offer an opportunity to strengthen monitoring and self-evaluation across the whole school.

R3 Strengthen transition arrangements so that learning experiences in key stage 3 build on those in key stage 2 and avoid repetition of work

The Welsh Government recognises that effective transition arrangements provide the cornerstone for progression and continuity in learning so that pupils maintain and build on the momentum established in primary school.

Good transition arrangements are important to develop and deliver the curriculum in a manner that supports continuity and progression in learning for pupils as they move from primary to secondary school.

A bank of case studies has been developed by the 4 consortia highlighting examples of good practice of transition in schools across Wales. Schools are encouraged to learn from these when evaluating their own transition arrangements.

In the coming years, we will begin to move away from the artificiality of phases and stages and learners will develop at a more natural pace. The focus of transition will be less on data and more on information about individual learners and their journey along the learning continuum. Face to face meetings between primary and secondary teachers to discuss learners' strengths and weaknesses at transition points will be more important than ever before.

R4 Evaluate their curriculum for religious education to prepare for the development and implementation of the new Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

A pioneer network of schools is at the heart of the curriculum development process. These schools regularly engage with their cluster and partner schools to test ideas and proposals throughout the development process.

Welsh Government also regularly publishes curriculum development updates on its website. These updates include the most recent proposals from the Humanities pioneer group and can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=en>

These updates, along with regular engagement with pioneer schools and regional consortia, allow schools to begin evaluating their current arrangements in light of the emerging curriculum.

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R5 Work with SACREs to provide:

- a. suitable professional learning opportunities for teachers of religious education
- b. support for schools to evaluate their curriculum and plan for religious education as an integral part of the development of the humanities area of learning and experience
- c. advice for schools on how to address sensitive issues with pupils and how to deal with parental concerns on visiting places of worship

A wide range of Professional Learning (PL) support is offered via consortia and supported by Welsh Government in terms of the current curriculum as well as the support programme for the PL requirements with the development of the new curriculum. An OJEU tender will go live on 04/06/18 to commission HEI research partners to support the design and development of professional learning for the new curriculum, specifically linked to each Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). This

contract will continue into 2019 and will include a deeper focus on signature pedagogies linked to specific AoLE disciplines through cycles of engagement with the wider school network.

The Humanities pioneer group is currently focusing on developing the detail of the AoLE. Once this has been clarified, further consideration will be given to the support schools will need from the local authorities and SACRES to evaluate their curriculum and plan for Religious Education and the Humanities more broadly.

R6 Ensure that all leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

There is no duty on Welsh Government under the Counter-Terrorism Act 2015; as such we have no direct basis for 'ensuring' that all leaders fulfil their responsibilities.

However, a key feature of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, places a responsibility on schools to 'have due regard, in the exercise of their functions, to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and challenge extremist ideas that support or are shared by terrorist groups'. We would therefore expect LAs and schools to take reasonable steps to encourage compliance with the responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism Act (2015).

The UK Government published the Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales for specified bodies including education providers. We have been working with the Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) on the PREVENT agenda and lock down in schools ensuring they have procedures in place. We will continue to work with the regional consortia, LAs and WECTU to further enhance awareness and training for all education practitioners.

To support the implementation of PREVENT the Welsh Government has:

- Published an updated version of our guidance document 'Respect and Resilience – developing community cohesion'
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160111-respect-and-resilience-update-en.pdf> This includes an associated self-assessment toolkit. The guidance ensures that schools in Wales have information to help them meet the legal requirements of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
- Developed the Keeping Learners Safe Guidance, the Welsh Government guidance on the role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002:
<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/150114-keeping-learners-safe-en.pdf>
- Developed the HWB website – digital learning for Wales, to include an e-safety zone which contains resources, links, advice and support for children young

people, parents/carers and educational professionals and promotes safe, responsible use of the internet by all.

R7 Provide schools with guidance on approved places of worship to visit.

This recommendation is for local authorities and consortia and we broadly agree with the content. The Welsh Government will write to regional consortia and Local Authorities to highlight this recommendation.

The Welsh Government should:

R8 Work with local authorities, regional consortia and SACREs to ensure that there is clarity over the place of Religious Education within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

As outlined in Successful Futures, Religious Education will form part of the Humanities AoLE.

The Humanities pioneer group, which includes representatives with subject expertise from schools across Wales, has been developing a set of What Matters statements for Humanities. The group has, during this work, considered a number of reports and expert input in developing the statements and their accompanying rationales.

The draft What Matters statements make links with the four purposes of the new curriculum and draw on the key knowledge, skills and experiences of the component subjects and disciplines within the Humanities AoLE, including Religious Education.

During the coming months, the Humanities pioneer group will be further developing the detail that will support each of the What Matters statements.

The Humanities pioneer group is led in partnership by Welsh Government officials and regional consortia representatives. Welsh Government officials are also working closely with the Wales Association of SACREs and engaging regularly with the SACRE of each Local Authority to develop the new curriculum for Wales.

Over the coming months, we will be working with key partners – including local authorities, regional consortia and SACREs - to clarify the relationship between the Humanities AoLE and Religious Education at a local level.

Publication details:

The report was published on Estyn's website on 12 June 2018 and can be found at the following link:

www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports