

# Parents set to lose right to withdraw children from RE in Wales

Posted: Tue, 21 Jan 2020

The Welsh government plans to remove parents' right to withdraw children from lessons on religion, relationships and sexuality and to rename religious education as 'Religion, Values and Ethics'.

In an [announcement](#) on Tuesday morning, ministers said children would have "universal access" to the "full curriculum", which is due to become active in 2022.

The Welsh government said it had chosen 'Religion, Values and Ethics' as a name to replace RE as it had proved the most popular during an eight-week consultation on the issue.

It also said the right to withdraw from relationships and sexuality education (RSE) would be removed.

**In response the National Secular Society said the changes to RE "must be contingent on substantial reforms" to ensure religion is taught objectively in all schools, including faith schools.**

**The NSS welcomed the decision to remove the parental right to withdraw from RSE.**

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."

She added that the decision would need "careful and sensitive implementation".

**NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "Religious education is a highly contentious area of the curriculum. Removing the parental right of withdrawal must be contingent on substantial reforms to ensure the subject area is genuinely objective, critical and pluralistic.**

**"Faith schools still being permitted to teach the subject in accordance with their faith ethos will fail this test, rendering the Welsh policy incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.**

**"The decision to remove the right to withdraw from relationships and sexuality education is welcome and sensible. This will safeguard children's right to access information which is crucial both to their own wellbeing and that of others."**

Mr Evans is due to meet the minister next week to discuss the potential implications of the changes.

**Relevant NSS campaigning**

- The NSS has engaged with the Welsh government throughout the process of drawing up the new curriculum.
- In response to the recent consultation the NSS [urged](#) ministers not to remove the parental right to withdraw children from RE until the subject was fully reformed to make it objective, critical and pluralistic.
- The NSS [argues](#) that all children should be entitled to an impartial religion and belief curriculum.

## New curriculum in Wales

- Last year the Welsh government's published plans for the new curriculum [included](#) an explicit reference to pupils learning about "non-religious worldviews" for the first time and moved RE into a wider area of Humanities study.
- The NSS expressed broad support for these changes but warned the curriculum would allow faith schools to continue to use RE to promote their worldview and to distort RSE.

Image by [klimkin](#) from [Pixabay](#).

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The Secular Charter outlines 10 principles that guide us as we campaign for a secular democracy which safeguards all citizens' rights to freedom of and from religion.

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