

# NSS gives evidence to Senedd committee over Welsh curriculum reform

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The National Secular Society has called for children's rights to be prioritised over religious interests in the formulation of a new curriculum for Wales in evidence to the Senedd.

The NSS's head of education Alastair Lichten made the call as he gave evidence to the Senedd's children, young people and education committee on Thursday, alongside representatives from Humanists UK.

The committee is currently considering legislation for a new curriculum for Wales, which is set to replace religious education with a new subject – religion, values and ethics (RVE).

The plans would continue to allow faith schools to teach the subject from a religious perspective, though they will be required to offer a pluralistic RVE course where parents request it.

**Mr Lichten welcomed the ambition behind the proposals but warned that concessions to faith groups risked undermining the attempt to fulfil it.**

**"The ambition that all children in Wales have access to critical, pluralistic RVE was a really important and positive part of the new curriculum project. It's concerning and sad to see any effort to water that down.**

**"If we start from a child's rights perspective, rather than religious interests or the faith schools lobby's preferences, then it's very hard to justify children not having that entitlement."**

Elsewhere he:

- Commented on the potential removal of parents' right to withdraw their children from RVE. He said this would be likely to be subject to a legal challenge if RVE was still taught through a religious lens to families who did not want that.
- Criticised the continuation of SACREs – bodies which determine RE curricula at a local level – and the failure to consider the requirement to hold collective worship as part of the new curriculum.
- Expressed support for plans to introduce comprehensive, rights-based relationships and sexuality education (RSE), but also voiced concerns over faith schools' ability to [teach the subject through a religious lens](#).
- Said it was "insulting" to LGBT pupils, non-religious pupils or pupils from LGBT and non-religious families to suggest some schools could opt out of mentioning issues relevant to them in the curriculum.

The NSS is lobbying the Welsh government in an attempt to ensure its religion, values and ethics curriculum is genuinely pluralistic and balanced.

The society is urging supporters in Wales to write to their Senedd members over the proposals.

- [Watch the evidence in full](#) (starts after 1 hour 26 minutes).
- [Transcript of evidence sessions](#)

*Image: Witnesses before the committee's session on Thursday. Alastair Lichten is at the top, in the centre.*

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## Stand up for pluralistic education in Wales

Welsh government plans would see Religion, Values and Ethics taught in a more pluralistic way. But they fall short of ensuring every pupil gets genuinely balanced and critical RVE. Find out more and help improve the proposals.

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