

Religious Education Updates

20th July 2026

Highlights

- England: the biggest development is confirmation that ministers intend to move RE into the National Curriculum, following reported sector consensus.
- The RE curriculum content itself is not yet final: a consultation is expected in September 2026, with first teaching of the revised curriculum from September 2028.
- SACREs remain important during the transition: local advice, annual reports, community links, collective worship advice and school support all stay relevant.
- Qualifications are on a longer timeline: GCSE Religious Studies reform is expected for first teaching from 2029/2030; AS/A-level from 2031/2032.
- Wales is already in a different position: Religion, Values and Ethics is mandatory for ages 3 -16 under Curriculum for Wales, and the new Made-for-Wales GCSE RS is now in delivery.
- NASACRE 2026 strongly framed RE/SACRE work as social cohesion work: “bringing communities together” through encounter, belonging and lived experience.

England: RE moving towards National Curriculum status



- DfE intends to include RE in the National Curriculum for the first time, after consensus among religious, belief and education representatives.
- The aim is a stronger national entitlement and less variation in what pupils receive, while keeping scope for schools to build on the requirements.
- All schools, including faith schools, are expected to meet the national entitlement; faith schools would retain freedom to add depth according to ethos.
- The content is not yet published. September 2026 consultation is the key next milestone for schools and SACREs to watch.

England: SACREs and agreed syllabus work remain central

- SACREs are not disappearing from the conversation. Reform will need to consider the legislation that currently underpins RE, Agreed Syllabus Conferences and local SACRE duties.
- NASACRE is positioning SACREs as local bridges between schools, faith/belief communities, local authorities and pupils lived experience.
- Practical SACRE functions still matter; annual reports, monitoring provision, advising on collective worship, supporting syllabus use and promoting high-quality RE CPD.
- Local Government Reorganisation is a watch point: changes to council boundaries or structures could affect SACRE membership, clerking, funding and continuity.
- Schools should not wait for 2028: curriculum audits, subject knowledge checks and CPD planning can begin now.

SACRE role during reform

Translate national change into local support: community links, accurate advice, school-level monitoring and practical curriculum help.

Immediate school action

Check: time allocation, quality of provision, teacher confidence, representation of worldviews and non-religious beliefs.

Governance angle

Use SACRE annual reports and school self-evaluation to identify gaps before statutory reform arrives.

England: accountability, qualifications and provision pressure

- KS4 performance measures were consulted on from 23 February to 4 May 2026. The direction of travel is a review of Progress 8/Attainment 8 and the future breadth measure.
- Religious Studies remains part of the humanities conversation, so accountability reform could influence GCSE RS entries, timetable decisions and option-block choices.
- GCSE Religious Studies reform is expected later than curriculum reform: first teaching likely from 2029 or 2030, with AS/A-level updates from 2031/2032.
- NATRE evidence continues to raise concerns about non-specialist teaching, inconsistent statutory KS4 RE provision, limited curriculum time and variable access to RE-specific CPD.
- Primary RE evidence is still being gathered nationally, including through NATRE's Primary Survey open until 31 July 2026.

Wales: RVE is already statutory and curriculum-led

- Religion, Values and Ethics is mandatory for all learners aged 3-16 as part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience under Curriculum for Wales.
- RVE is designed to be pluralistic, objective and critical, covering religious and non-religious philosophical convictions.
- The parental right of withdrawal has been removed as Curriculum for Wales has rolled out. This is a major difference from England.
- The Welsh Government has confirmed a review/update of collective worship guidance; the legal daily worship requirement remains a live policy issue.
- The new Made-for-Wales GCSE Religious Studies began teaching in September 2025. First assessment activity is now underway, with first full award due in 2027.
- The legacy GCSE RS has its final full assessment in summer 2026, with a possible resit opportunity in January 2027.

Key contrast with England:

Wales has already moved from “RE” to RVE within a statutory curriculum framework, with a stronger emphasis on pluralism and mandatory entitlement.

Watch point:

Collective worship guidance may change, but that is guidance reform - not necessarily a change in the underlying legal duty.