

VALUES IN PUBLIC LIFE:

Teaching Political Ideologies through RVE



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1. Why Teach Political Values in RVE?



Political Values as a Dimension of RVE

The Curriculum for Wales positions RVE as a discipline that allows learners to explore the richness of human experience through religion, non-religious philosophical convictions, and ethics. At its heart is the recognition that individuals and communities are shaped by values, beliefs, and commitments which influence how they live and interact. Political values and ideologies are a natural extension of this: they represent collective expressions of ethical commitments about justice, authority, rights, freedoms, and responsibilities.

When learners explore political values within RVE, they are not studying “party politics” in a narrow sense. Rather, they are engaging with the underlying ethical questions that political ideologies attempt to answer:

- What makes a fair society?
- How should resources be distributed?
- What responsibilities do individuals have to one another?
- How should cultural or national identity be preserved or expressed?
- How should we respond to the challenges of globalisation and climate change?

In this way, political ideologies provide concrete, real-world case studies of how values shape communities and societies; one of the central themes of RVE in the Curriculum for Wales.

Links to the Four Purposes

Teaching political values within RVE supports the Four Purposes by encouraging learners to become:

- **Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world**
 - Learners explore how values such as justice, freedom, equality, and tradition are expressed through political ideologies.
 - They critically examine how these values shape decision-making in Wales, the UK, and globally.
 - They recognise that political values are contested, contextual, and connected to wider religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions.

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Links to the Four Purposes

- **Ambitious, capable learners**
 - By engaging critically with political ideas, learners develop skills in questioning, reasoning, and evaluating evidence.
 - They learn to identify assumptions and analyse how values inform arguments.
 - This supports their wider progression in critical literacy and reflective judgment.
- **Enterprising, creative contributors**
 - Learners explore how different values and ideologies might offer alternative solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges.
 - They consider how innovation and creativity are linked to values-based decision-making in public life.
- **Healthy, confident individuals**
 - Learners reflect on their own developing values and sense of identity, and how these align with or differ from wider political and cultural traditions.
 - They gain confidence in expressing their views respectfully, listening to others, and engaging in dialogue about complex and sensitive issues.

Critical citizenship and democracy

RVE provides a unique space for developing critical citizenship. The Senedd elections offer an authentic and timely context for learners to see how political ideologies are lived out in the real world. Exploring political values in RVE enables learners to:

- Understand how different visions of society are underpinned by ethical commitments.
- Analyse how parties use values to shape policy and public debate.
- Reflect on the responsibilities of citizenship, including participation in democratic processes.

This does not mean teaching pupils what to think politically. Instead, it equips them with the tools to make informed decisions, weigh competing values, and understand the role of ethics in political life.



1. Why Teach Political Values in RVE?



Reflection, Identity, and Personal Development

RVE is centrally concerned with reflection on the self in relation to others. Political values education offers learners opportunities to:

- Clarify their own priorities (e.g., equality, freedom, tradition, sustainability, community).
- Understand that people may rank values differently, and that this diversity is part of democratic life.
- Recognise the connections between their personal values and broader ideological frameworks.
- Consider how their values might shape their contributions to society as future citizens.

Such reflection is not about encouraging allegiance to a party, but about supporting learners in developing their own ethical voice within a pluralistic society.

RVE as a Safe Space for Dialogue

Finally, RVE provides a safe and respectful space for learners to engage with sensitive political and ethical questions. This is crucial because political values can touch on deeply held identities and beliefs. By establishing clear ground rules for respectful dialogue, RVE teachers help pupils to:

- Distinguish between criticising ideas and criticising people.
- Recognise the legitimacy of different perspectives while still engaging critically.
- Develop empathy and understanding across differences.

This contributes directly to the RVE principle of preparing learners to live well together in a diverse and interconnected world.



2. Political Values and Ideologies – How They Shape Parties

In RVE, learners are encouraged to explore how values and worldviews shape human behaviour, institutions, and societies. Political parties can be understood as groups that embody particular philosophical convictions and act upon them in the public sphere. Their values and ideologies function as their moral compass, guiding how they make decisions, set priorities, and engage with communities.

Political Values as Moral Frameworks

Just as religious and non-religious worldviews are shaped by ethical commitments and guiding principles, political values provide parties with a framework for interpreting the world. These frameworks influence:

- Policy priorities: which issues are considered most urgent (e.g., whether investment should go into healthcare, economic growth, environmental protection, or language preservation).
- Campaign strategies: how they appeal to voters by highlighting values like fairness, justice, freedom, equality, tradition, responsibility, or community.
- Responses to challenges: how they interpret and address key social and moral issues such as climate change, poverty, inequality, cultural identity, or national sovereignty.

For learners, this means recognising that political decisions are not neutral but shaped by deeper questions of ethics, values, and identity.



3. Political Values and Ideologies in Welsh Parties

Below are summaries of the main political parties in Wales framed through their values and ideological influences. These descriptions are simplified for classroom use but remain accurate to the broad traditions of each party.

Welsh Labour

- Core values: Social justice, equality, collective responsibility, and solidarity.
- Ideological roots: Socialism, social democracy, and the history of trade unionism.
- How these values are expressed: Policies often focus on reducing inequality, supporting public services such as the NHS and education, and emphasising the role of community and government in creating fairness.
- RVE connection: Learners can reflect on how ideas of justice and collective well-being link to ethical traditions about care for others and responsibility for the vulnerable.

Plaid Cymru

- Core values: Cultural identity, self-determination, environmental sustainability, and social justice.
- Ideological roots: Civic nationalism, green politics, and social democracy.
- How these values are expressed: Policies highlight the importance of the Welsh language and heritage, environmental protection, and the possibility of Welsh independence as a way to ensure self-governance and cultural preservation.
- RVE connection: Learners can reflect on questions of identity, belonging, and how values shape the way communities see themselves and their future.

Welsh Conservatives

- Core values: Tradition, personal responsibility, economic freedom, and support for the union with the UK.
- Ideological roots: Conservatism and economic liberalism.
- How these values are expressed: Policies often prioritise stability, business growth, and giving individuals freedom to make their own choices, while also maintaining established institutions and relationships, such as the union.
- RVE connection: Learners can explore how values of continuity and responsibility link to ethical discussions about change, stability, and the balance between individual and community.

3. Political Values and Ideologies in Welsh Parties

How Values Shape the Political Landscape in Wales

These values don't exist in isolation. Parties often share common ground:

- Social justice is claimed by Labour, Plaid, and the Greens (though framed differently).
- Freedom is valued across the spectrum, though the Conservatives emphasise economic freedom, while the Liberal Democrats stress civil liberties.
- Tradition and identity matter to both Plaid Cymru (in terms of Welsh language and culture) and the Conservatives (in terms of the Union and British institutions).

Learners can be encouraged to see how different parties interpret the same values differently. For instance:

- **Equality:** For Labour, this may mean redistributing wealth; for Conservatives, it may mean creating equal opportunities rather than outcomes.
- **Freedom:** For Reform UK, freedom may be linked to national sovereignty; for the Liberal Democrats, it may mean protecting individual rights and diversity.



4. Supporting Learners to Reflect on Their Own Values

One of the key aims of RVE within the Curriculum for Wales is to enable learners to develop and express their own values, while understanding those of others. When teaching political values and ideologies, the focus should not be on encouraging learners to adopt a particular party-political stance, but on deepening their ethical awareness and critical reflection.

Reflective Questions for Learners

Encourage learners to reflect in ways that connect their personal development to political literacy:

- Which values resonate with me most strongly?
 - Learners might consider values such as fairness, freedom, equality, security, tradition, community, sustainability, or responsibility.
- How do I see these values being discussed in political life and debate?
 - For example, freedom might be debated in terms of individual economic choice or freedom of expression, while equality might appear in discussions about welfare, education, or gender rights.
- Do my values align with the values promoted by any one political party, or do I find that I share aspects across several parties?
 - This helps learners see the complexity of political identity and prevents over-simplification into “either/or” categories.
- How do my values shape the way I view issues that affect my community, Wales, the UK, and the wider world?
 - This connects political reflection to lived experience and community engagement.

Pedagogical Emphasis

- Values not parties: Make clear that the exercise is not about choosing or endorsing a political party, but about understanding the role of values in shaping political thought and action.
- Critical comparison: Learners should be encouraged to see how the same value (e.g., justice) can be interpreted differently by different parties or ideologies.
- Personal development: Reflection on political values is part of a wider journey of ethical formation, self-understanding, and preparing for democratic participation.

5 Example Classroom Activities

5. (Curriculum for Wales: RVE Context)

The following activities are designed to support meaningful and authentic exploration of political values and ideologies in RVE. They link directly to the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales

a) Values Sorting Task - Prioritising and Reflecting on Values

Description:

- Provide pupils with a set of cards with values such as freedom, equality, tradition, security, fairness, sustainability, community, individuality.
- Learners work in pairs or small groups to sort them from “most important” to “least important” in shaping society.
- Pupils then compare their ranking with other groups and identify where values conflict or overlap.

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Encourages ethical reflection on the importance of different values in forming personal and collective worldviews.
- Builds skills of dialogue and respectful disagreement when values clash.

Extension: Ask pupils to connect their top three values to political ideologies (e.g., freedom → liberalism, equality → socialism, tradition → conservatism).

b) Party Values Matching - Identifying Ideological Themes

Description:

- Provide pupils with short statements of principle (anonymised) such as:
 - “We believe protecting the environment should come before economic growth.”
 - “We believe in giving individuals more freedom to decide how to spend their money.”
 - “We believe in the importance of preserving cultural identity and heritage.”
- Learners work in groups to match statements with parties, then discuss their reasoning.

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Develops critical thinking and interpretation skills, as learners must connect values with ideologies without explicit party labels.
- Encourages pluralistic understanding — recognising that worldviews are expressed through different traditions and systems, including political ones.

Follow-up: Pupils reflect individually or in discussion: Which of these values resonate most with me, and why?

5 Example Classroom Activities

5. (Curriculum for Wales: RVE Context)

c) Values Line Debate - Exploring Ethical Tensions

Description:

- Teacher reads a statement such as:
 - “It is more important to protect tradition than to embrace change.”
 - “Freedom matters more than equality.”
- Learners position themselves physically along a spectrum in the classroom from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”
- Teacher facilitates dialogue about why learners chose their positions, linking back to values and ideologies.

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Promotes dialogue across difference, developing respectful listening and reasoned response.
- Supports pupils in seeing how ethical and political values can be in tension, and that plural views can coexist.

Extension: Compare learners’ positions with how different Welsh political parties might respond.

d) Reflective Journals - Linking Political Values to Personal Identity

Description:

- Learners keep a private journal where they reflect on:
 - Which values matter most to them.
 - Where they see those values reflected in political debate.
 - Whether their values align with one or more ideologies, or cut across several.
- Teachers provide prompts but emphasise that journals are not assessed for “right answers.”

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Supports the personal journey of meaning-making, linking societal values to the learner’s own developing worldview.
- Encourages metacognition and self-reflection as part of RVE’s exploration of identity and belief.



5 Example Classroom Activities

5. (Curriculum for Wales: RVE Context)

e) Scenario Task - Applying Values to Real-World Issues

Description:

- Present groups with a scenario such as:
 - A government must decide between raising taxes to fund health services or keeping taxes low to support businesses.
 - A community faces a choice between building a wind farm to tackle climate change or preserving a local beauty spot.
- Groups discuss which value should take priority (e.g., sustainability, fairness, tradition, economic growth).
- They explain their decision and link it to how a political party might argue.

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Encourages applied ethical reasoning: how abstract values influence practical decision-making.
- Develops collaborative problem-solving and engagement with plural worldviews.

f) Mock Cabinet or Parliamentary Session - Experiencing Political Worldviews

Description:

- Divide the class into groups representing different parties or ideological positions.
- Give them a real-world issue (e.g., the cost-of-living crisis, climate change, Welsh independence, healthcare funding).
- Each group prepares a short “cabinet pitch” or speech, guided by the values of their assigned ideology.
- The class then debates, votes, or negotiates to form a collective decision.

RVE and Curriculum for Wales connection:

- Provides an experiential encounter with how worldviews (including political ones) shape community and national decision-making.
- Encourages pupils to engage in role-play and perspective-taking, developing empathy for values different from their own.
- Links directly to the four purposes by fostering active citizenship and the ability to work collaboratively in democratic contexts.

Variations:

- Senedd Simulation: Students take roles as Members of the Senedd and debate a motion.
- Cabinet Meeting: Smaller groups act as ministers balancing competing values in decision-making.
- Cross-Party Coalition Task: Students must form alliances and compromise, mirroring real Senedd dynamics.

6. Teaching Sensitively and Without Bias

Teaching political values and ideologies within RVE requires careful attention to sensitivity, impartiality, and inclusivity. Learners should be supported to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world, one of the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. The focus is not on persuading students to adopt particular positions, but on exploring values, developing critical awareness, and engaging respectfully with diversity of thought.

Presenting Parties Fairly

- All major political parties in Wales should be introduced in terms of the values and ideologies that underpin their ideas, rather than through personalities or campaigning slogans.
- The emphasis must remain on helping learners recognise how values (e.g., fairness, freedom, sustainability, tradition, identity) inform political approaches.
- This approach aligns with the RVE emphasis on worldviews: learners explore political ideologies as worldviews that help people interpret and organise society.

Encouraging Critical Thinking

- RVE is committed to the development of critical and reflective learners. Questions should guide learners to consider:
 - Which values are being expressed in this policy or statement?
 - How do different ideologies balance competing values, such as freedom and equality?
 - What are the ethical implications of prioritising one value over another?
- This approach encourages learners to explore the complexity of values-based decision-making, rather than reducing discussion to which party is “right” or “wrong.”



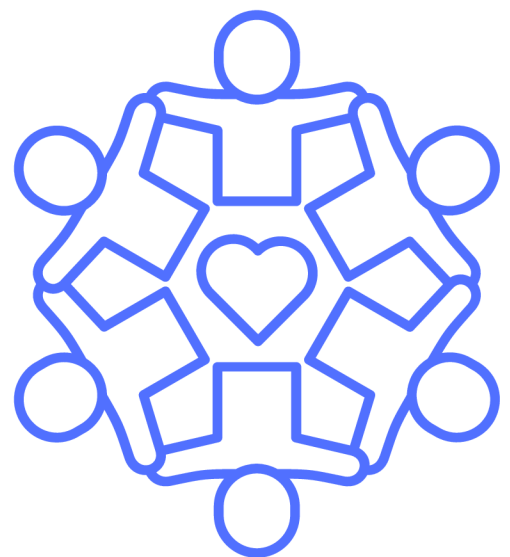
6. Teaching Sensitively and Without Bias

Avoiding Campaigning

- Teachers must remain politically neutral in line with professional responsibilities. RVE classrooms are spaces for exploration, dialogue, and reflection, not political campaigning.
- Lessons should not encourage students to support or reject any particular party. Instead, teachers should frame activities around shared human questions such as:
 - What makes a fair society?
 - How should we care for the environment?
 - What role should tradition and identity play in shaping laws and policies?

Respecting Diversity

- Learners may come from families or communities with strong political traditions, and some may already hold developing political views. RVE must create a classroom culture that respects diversity of thought, mirroring its commitment to religious and non-religious diversity.
- Establish clear ground rules for discussion: listen actively, disagree respectfully, and avoid personal attacks.
- Teachers should draw on values such as dignity, respect, and community that are central to RVE, ensuring that all learners feel safe to share, question, and reflect.
- Where disagreements arise, teachers should reframe them as opportunities to explore underlying values rather than to “win” arguments.



7. Managing Behaviour and Sensitive Issues in RVE Discussions on Political Values

Exploring political ideologies and values within RVE is not about teaching students which political party to support, but about enabling them to reflect on how values shape societies and identities. These conversations can sometimes lead to passionate debate, as political identity is often deeply connected to personal and family values. For this reason, careful management of behaviour and sensitivity is essential.

Establishing Ground Rules for Respectful Dialogue

At the outset, teachers should co-construct ground rules with learners. This models democratic participation and gives pupils ownership of the learning environment. Ground rules might include:

- Listen actively to others without interruption.
- Disagree with ideas, not with people – recognising the dignity of each individual.
- Use respectful language when challenging views.
- Allow space for quieter voices to contribute.

This approach reflects the Curriculum for Wales emphasis on learners becoming ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world who can engage critically and respectfully with different perspectives.

Using Neutral and Inclusive Language

Teachers should model non-partisan, balanced language. For example:

- Instead of: “This party is right about the economy,”
- Use: “This party emphasises freedom in economic choices, while another prioritises fairness through redistribution.”

This ensures learners see political ideas as part of a spectrum of values, not as prescriptions of what they should believe. In RVE, this aligns with the principle of presenting a range of worldviews fairly and without bias, fostering reflective rather than prescriptive teaching.



7. Managing Behaviour and Sensitive Issues in RVE Discussions on Political Values

De-escalation and Refocusing on Values

Political discussions can sometimes become emotionally charged. Teachers can use de-escalation strategies rooted in RVE pedagogy:

- **Pause and reframe:** “Let’s pause here. Which underlying value do you think is being expressed in this statement?”
- **Redirect personal conflict towards conceptual inquiry:** “Rather than focusing on who is right, let’s ask: which values are in tension here – freedom, equality, or tradition?”

This maintains a reflective, values-based approach, consistent with RVE’s focus on examining beliefs and worldviews through philosophical, ethical, and social enquiry.

Safeguarding and Creating a Safe Space

Political conversations can sometimes draw out exclusionary or discriminatory comments, particularly around sensitive issues such as immigration, religion, culture, or identity. Teachers must:

- Intervene calmly but firmly when comments undermine inclusion.
- Reaffirm classroom expectations: “In RVE, we listen respectfully to all worldviews, even if we disagree.”
- Ensure all pupils feel safe to participate, recognising the Curriculum for Wales’ commitment to equality, human rights, and diversity as part of cynefin – learners’ sense of belonging within local, national, and global contexts.

Reflection, Not Persuasion

Learners should be continually reminded that the aim is not to persuade others to adopt a particular political position, but to reflect on values and consider how they shape both personal beliefs and collective life. Teachers can emphasise:

- The goal is understanding rather than winning an argument.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their own informed viewpoints, but also to remain open to the perspectives of others.
- Reflection should link to their own developing ethical literacy – the ability to articulate, question, and evaluate values.