WHERE ARE THE RVE TEACHERS IN WALES?

Deborah Weston

Company Secretary

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

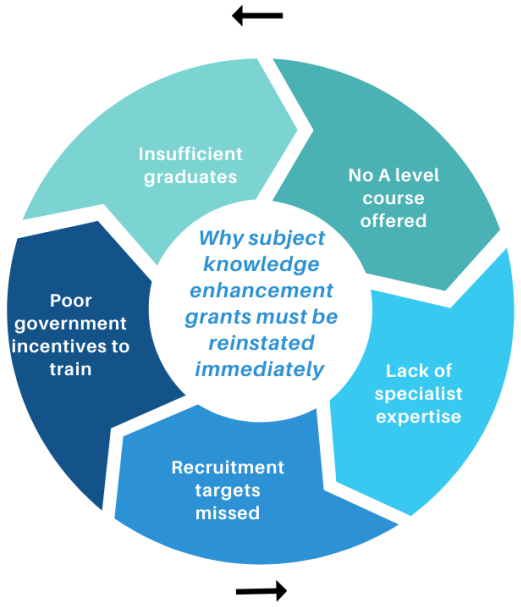
WHERE CAN WE INTERVENE?

Insufficient TRS graduates to supply ITT

The number of graduates in Theology and Religious Studies has fallen

Poor incentives

Recruitment for RVE therefore relies on graduates for different subjects



No A level course offered

When there are fewer teachers who trained to teach RVE on the staff, GCSE and A level are less likely to be offered

Lack of specialist expertise

Lack of trained RVE teachers can lead to removal of school provision, dilution of rigor in RVE and/or the use of TWOs (teachers with other specialisms)

Recruitment targets missed

Discussion: Where and how can we intervene in this cycle?

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TRS
Key Developments:
Bangor University: The School of Theology and Religious Studies at Bangor University was closed, with the course being phased out. In 2010 the department merged with the equivalent department at Trinity Saint David as part of a strategic approach to safeguard and strengthen theology teaching .Church Times

Cardiff University: In early 2025, Cardiff University announced plans to discontinue its Religion and Theology department as part of broader cost-cutting measures. This move would eliminate the last remaining full theology department in Wales .premierchristian.news This move was confirmed in May 2025 (see right)

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Lampeter Campus): Once a historic centre for theological education, the Lampeter campus ceased offering undergraduate courses in theology, philosophy, and religious studies in 2025, effectively ending over 200 years of academic tradition in these fields .premierchristian.news

These closures mean that, as of 2025, no Welsh university offers a dedicated theology or religious studies degree program. This trend has raised concerns among religious and academic communities about the future of theological education and its role in Welsh culture and society .Nation.Cymru

The decline in these programs reflects broader challenges facing humanities disciplines in higher education, including financial pressures and shifting student interests. The potential loss of theological studies in Wales underscores the need for strategic planning to preserve academic diversity and cultural heritage.

Cardiff University set to scale down music and languages degrees but scrap two others

WALES | CARDIFF UNIVERSITY | EDUCATION | Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 4:28pm

Cardiff University has scaled back proposals to make around 7% of its workforce redundant.

Cardiff University has announced it plans to close its ancient history and religion and theology degrees, and scale down its music and modern languages courses.

The university announced plans to make 400 staff – around 7% of the workforce – redundant and reduce a number of degree courses, initially including nursing, in January, with that number then reduced to a proposed 286 in April, after a number of staff had already opted for voluntary redundancy.

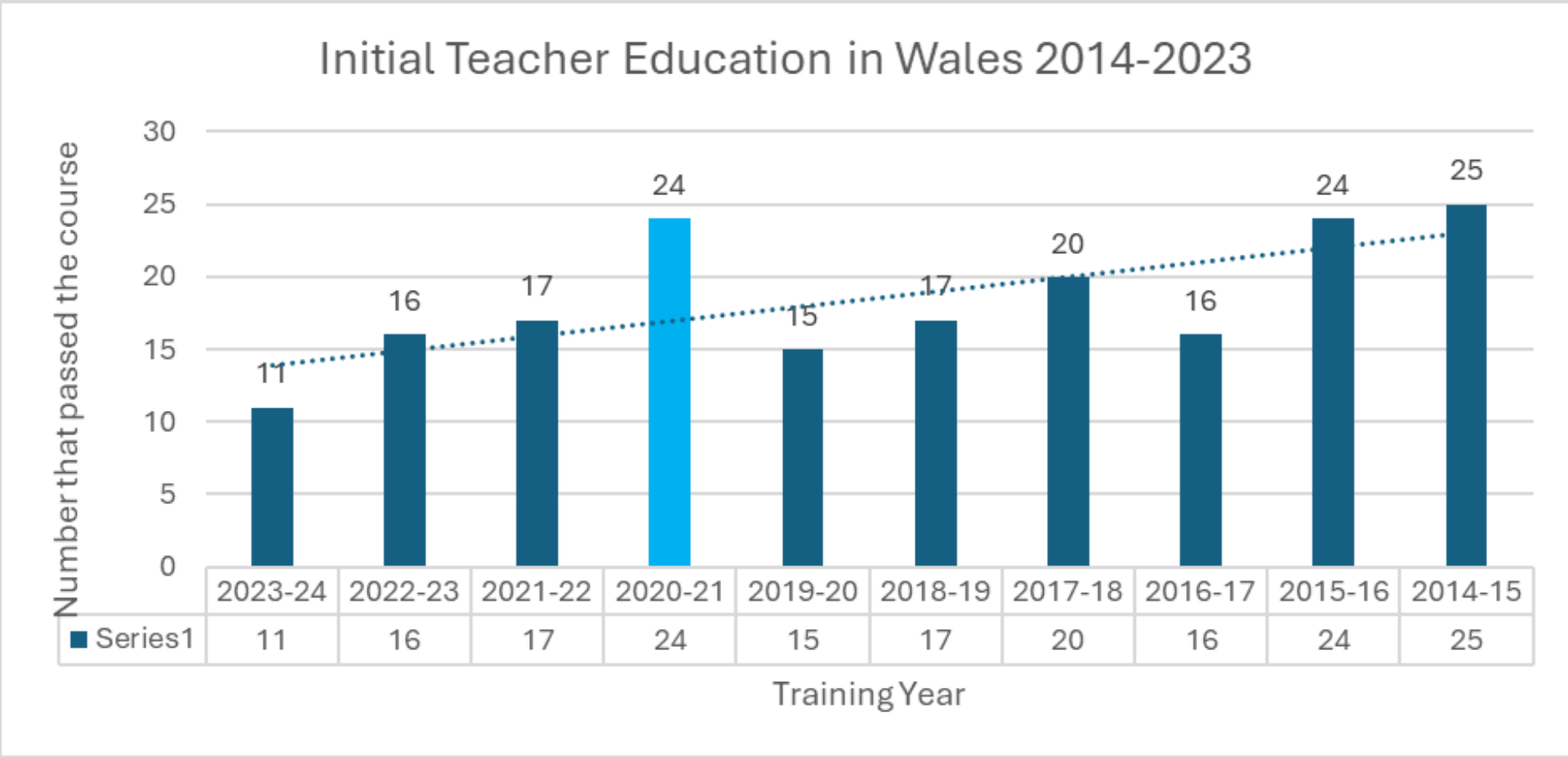
In an update sent to staff on Tuesday, Cardiff University's vice-chancellor, Professor Wendy Larner, said it now proposes to retain its offerings of modern languages and music research and education but with revised structures and a smaller staff base, within a new School of Global Humanities.

That new school would continue to offer undergraduate and postgraduate music degree programmes, but with revised entry targets and content, while also continuing its offering of modern languages programmes, but to smaller cohorts and primarily in French, Spanish, Mandarin and Japanese.

But degrees in ancient history, and religion and theology, would come to an end after students enrolling this September for 2025-26 complete their courses.

Cardiff University set to scale down music and languages degrees but scrap two others | ITV News Wales

THE NUMBER OF TRAINEES THAT PASSED THE COURSE BY YEAR OF TRAINING.



BAD NEWS!

DESPITE POOR RECRUITMENT – RVE HAS NOT BEEN DESIGNATED AS A PRIORITY SUBJECT FOR 2025/26

Eligibility criteria for the incentive

You must:

- hold a degree qualification of 2.2 or higher
- be on a postgraduate ITE programme in Wales leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- meet the eligibility criteria for the payment instalments

You must also study on of these priority subjects as your main subject:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design & Technology
- Information Technology
- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)
- Physics
- Welsh

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN WALES

Providers

The following institutions offer a one-year full time PGCE Course. They are presented as a partnership as follows:

Cardiff Metropolitan University

University of Wales Trinity St David and Bangor University

For other subjects, there are Open University salaried and unsalaried routes. However, RVE is not offered.

Source: How to Become a Teacher in Wales

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/2021
Cardiff Metropolitan University	14	14	14	14	14	16
University of Wales Trinity St David **(Yr Athrofa: Professional Learning Partnership)**	11	11	11	10	10	10
Bangor University	11 (?)	11 (3)	11 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	10 (3)

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) Wales

Private group · 1.7K members

Why is there a decline in RS exam entries and teacher recruitment in Wales?

Over the last decade, A level entries for RS in Wales have dropped by around 60% and recruitment to both TRS degrees and ITE in RE/RVE has also declined sharply. This year, there is a 15% fall in the number of GCSE RS entries, too. These facts raise serious questions about the future of our subject.

The RE Council of England and Wales is holding a meeting in June for member organisations with an active interest in Wales. We'll be discussing the challenges facing higher education and teacher recruitment/retention and gathering ideas for action.

As an REC officer, I'll be sharing data at that meeting — but I'd really value your insight:

- Why do you think A level entries have dropped so significantly?
- Why do you think there has been a fall in GCSE RS entries this year?
- Why is RVE trainee teacher recruitment in such decline?
- What *needs to happen* to reverse all this?

Please feel free to comment below or send me a message directly. Your voice matters!

What do teachers think?

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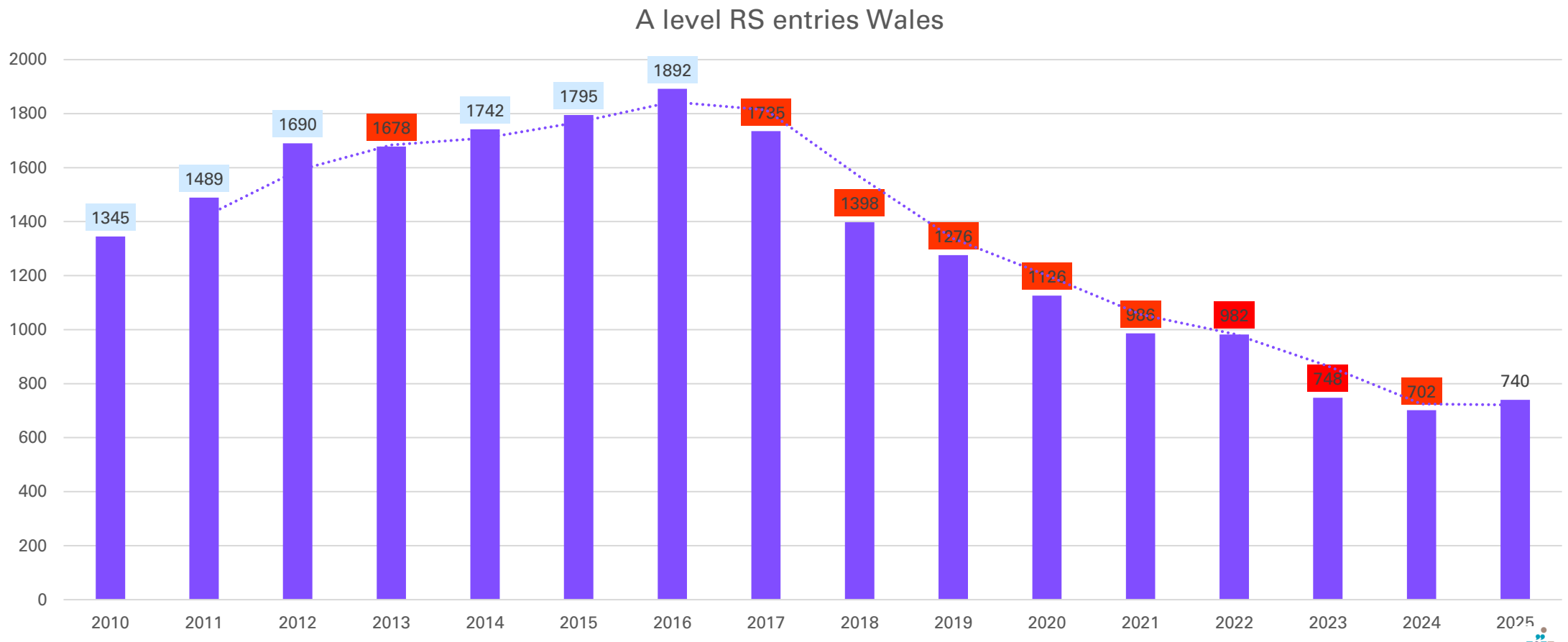
- Introduction of Welsh Bacc
- Limited curriculum time at KS3 – not on a par with other subjects in the Humanities AOLE
- Parents and others e.g. careers advisers appear to promote subjects such as Business Studies, Computer Science
- Lack of accountability for statutory provision
- No training bursary for those beginning ITE
- Content heavy GCSE and A level
- Teachers always have to fight for the subject, staff, time etc
- Subject often taught by teachers that mainly teach another subject
- GCSE RS is often taught on less timetable time than other GCSEs
- Mismatch between KS3 RVE and new GCSE

A level entries

Note A level entries down by 60% in Wales and by 28% in England



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Churches together in Wales Open Letter– March 2025

“We are writing on behalf of the Trustees of Cytûn (Churches together in Wales) to express our deep concern regarding the proposed cuts to teaching and research in the fields of Theology in particular and the Humanities in general in the universities of Wales.

“We affirm the concerns expressed by two leading members of Cytûn member churches on the Bwrw Golwg programme. Professor D. Densil Morgan said: ‘It seems that there won’t be a single theological department in a university in Wales at all – it’s a tragedy. Where you had Cardiff, Lampeter and Bangor offering the whole range of theology, Biblical studies, doctrinal studies, Church history, philosophy of religion – the departments have effectively closed.’

“Dr Rosa Hunt said: ‘These developments are terrible for the academic subject of Religious Studies in Wales. Considering the role of religion in shaping Wales and our diverse world today, it would be a “disaster” to lose this important area of study for students and academics alike.’

“We firmly believe that a good understanding of religion is extremely important in terms of fostering mutual understanding from the local level to the global level, and academic studies in all areas of theology and religious studies are essential to create such an understanding. ….

The letter has been sent to Ms Neagle; Professor Elwen Evans, the Vice Chancellor of University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Professor Wendy Larner, the Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University; Ioan Matthews, Chief Executive, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol; Buffy Williams MS, Chair of the Senedd’s Children, Young People and Education Committee; Tom Giffard MS, the Welsh Conservatives’ spokesperson on Education; Heledd Fychan MS, Plaid Cymru’s spokesperson on Education; and Derek Walker, the Future Generations Commissioner.

DEBORAH WESTON JUNE 2025

Religious Education Council of England and Wales

Open letter to vice chancellors and Cabinet Secretary for Education Lynne Neagle, the three most senior officials of Cytûn say that proposed cuts affecting Christian studies and the Humanities more broadly will damage Welsh culture.

NEWS

Churches condemn ‘tragic’ cuts to religious studies

05 Mar 2025 3 minute read

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle

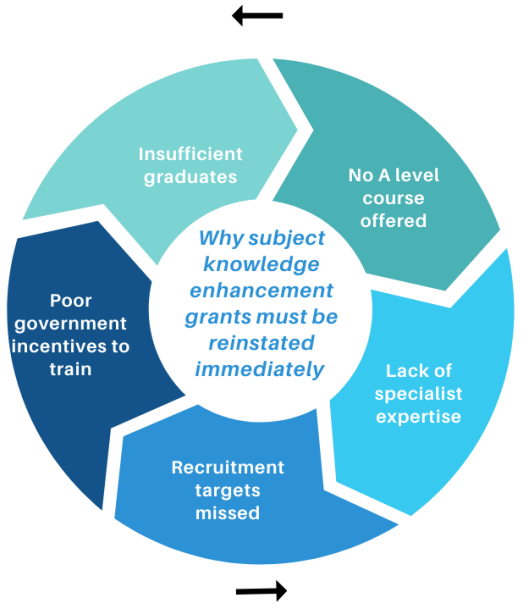
WHERE CAN WE INTERVENE?

Insufficient TRS graduates to supply ITT

The number of graduates in Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) has fallen. Only around 1/3 of successful applicants for RE teacher training have a TRS degree

Poor incentives

Recruitment for RE therefore relies on graduates in different subjects. Philosophy, Social Sciences etc. but the small bursary for RE and lack of subject knowledge enhancement grants* drives them elsewhere



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