

## CAW8 Individual

# Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

## About you

Individual

### 1. The Bill's general principles

#### 1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Partly

#### 1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)*

The current national curriculum is dated and due a refresh. The purposes are sound and can't be easily disagreed with, however, the new Curriculum for Wales in its current form lacks detail. The layer sitting beneath the AoLEs and 'Statements of What Matters' is deliberately nondescript, so as to allow for subsidiarity at a school level. This however means there there is currently no way of ensuring that all pupils, in all schools, are taught the same things.

On the one hand, a very deliberate rowing back from prescription affords teachers in Wales new levels of professional autonomy – and decentralises power over what is taught from government to the site of practice. This is a strength of the model, in that it builds agency and respects the craft of teaching as something dependent on experience, expertise and training.

But on the other hand, the liberation of teachers from curriculum rules and regulation is also an inherent weakness; by definition, it encourages a break from uniformity and opens the door to a disparate system characterised by difference. In lieu of any steer on content, what children do learn might be dependent on an individual teacher's ideology, lens or general aptitude. This is a significant risk and in the absence of a mechanism to ensure at

least a level of consistency across the piece, there is a very real danger that pupils in Wales will grow up with little or no understanding of some of the major cultural and historical influences of our time.

It is interesting that aspects of RVE and RSE will be made mandatory in the new curriculum (a decision on the latter being made with no public consultation), yet other elements of the curriculum, i.e. history/English literature, will not. How can the Welsh Government justify the compulsory inclusion of some, and not other content? A common core across all AoLEs would ensure at least a level of consistency, and give pupils across Wales an introductory grounding in key events and themes. These too should be considered in the list of codes presented in the Bill.

Further clarity is also needed in relation to qualifications, and the evolution of pupils from a purpose-led curriculum into a curriculum shaped by GCSEs and A-levels at ages 16 and 18. It is not yet clear how the freedom of teachers to teach as they see fit will marry with the more specific learning content prescribed by examination boards from 16.

With regards to RVE in particular, consideration needs to be given to the different denominations of school, and their teaching of specific religious beliefs. It might not, for example, be appropriate for a school of Catholic denomination to teach of the Islam faith, and vice versa. Parental choice of school dictates what religious denomination is appropriate, and while an introduction to various faiths is to be encouraged, regular and repeated reference to alternative religions would risk losing focus and threaten to diminish the strength of religion itself.

### **1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

Yes, else there is no point in putting the Bill forward at all.

## **2. The Bill's implementation**

### **2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

The curriculum's development has significant funding implications, both at the site of practice and in terms of preparation and ongoing collaboration. The struggle of schools to accommodate significantly reduced budgets is well-documented, and the advent of the new curriculum - and demands on professional learning of the education workforce - threatens to exacerbate these challenges. The professional autonomy afforded by the new curriculum is great, albeit the art of curriculum-making is not straightforward and will require significant investment in the education workforce. A nationwide programme of professional learning, to upskill all teachers in becoming curriculum-designers, is needed - as will the cost of additional supply needed to accommodate staff absence.

## **2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

The Bill should ensure a long-term and healthy financial investment in the education system, in order to deliver on the expectations laid out in statute.

## **3. Unintended consequences**

### **3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

The idea that teachers should be empowered to do as they see fit for their own learners is as romantic as it is compelling, and built on the rose-tinted assumption that all teachers are good teachers and all schools are good schools. A potted history of education in Wales since devolution tells you that, regretfully, this is not the case.

There is a genuine fear that if teachers are free to teach whatever they consider appropriate from one school to the next, it is inevitable that gaps will develop and children will emerge from their compulsory education with a random medley of knowledge and understanding. Granted, pupils leave school with varying abilities and competencies now – but they do so within the confines of a common structure that stems, at least in part, from nationally-agreed and moderated content.

Moving forward, what is taught could depend solely on an individual teacher's ideology, lens or general aptitude – and without any expectation as to what pupils should have

learned by the age of 16, we run the risk of widening the chasm between our more affluent and deprived communities. Forced to rely on the views of others, children from more supportive families will find it easier to plug holes in their knowledge, not least because of their access to technology or a particularly committed parent.

## 4. Financial implications

**4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

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## 5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

**5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)*

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## 6. Other considerations

**6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?**

*(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)*

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