

## 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

Organisation: Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

## 1. The Bill's general principles

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

Yes

### 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 specific detail for classroom practitioners. The layer sitting beneath the AoLEs and 'Statements of What Matters' is made up of generalised statements, so as to allow for ownership at a school level. However, consideration should be given to ensuring that there is a core entitlement for all pupils to enable them to have appropriate and purposeful basic skills to allow them to access the work place.

New Curriculum for Wales allows teachers new levels of professional autonomy alongside decentralising power over what is taught from government to schools. This is a strength of the model, in that it builds on the craft of teaching as something dependent on experience, expertise and training. However, it needs to be clear that effective quality assurance is in place and schools clearly have the skill sets to engage in these practices.

Development of the curriculum at a local level has both positives and negative implications for all learners. On the positive, a local curriculum can deliver an understanding of local need and support preparation for local employment. Conversely, if learners move across

Wales, such localised approaches may be detrimental and only serve a fragmented education.

Further clarity is needed in relation to qualifications, and the development 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.

Fascinatingly, aspects of RVE and RSE will be made mandatory in the new curriculum yet other elements of the curriculum, i.e. history/English literature, will not. Once again, it must be noted that 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.

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

## **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 development of this new curriculum potentially has significant funding implications. This could exacerbate already current financial demands placed on schools at this time.

Recruitment and retention is currently an issue particularly in certain areas. Without good quality teachers and leaders with experience and expertise in curriculum construction, is a threat or barrier/risk to the effective implementation of the new curriculum.

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.

Consideration needs to be given to the timing of the implementation of the new curriculum due to the Covid-19 situation. Six months has been lost of effective school working and new strategies have had to be learned and implemented across school for learning and teaching. Funding and well-structured time is needed.

## **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 does not cover all potential barriers stated above and 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 notion that teachers should be empowered to do as they see fit for their own learners is compelling, and built on the assumption that all teachers are good teachers and all schools are good schools. Currently, evidence from Estyn inspections suggest that teaching and learning is the area for development across Wales.

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. This could be alleviated if end of key stage 4 criteria was known. 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. Without a core entitlement curriculum, children who move from school to school, region to region, potentially could have a very fragmented educational provision. This would disadvantage them and prevent them from having the best curriculum entitlement to which they deserve.

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.

The gap in time from progression step to progression step may result in learners regressing in their skills and knowledge if teachers collectively do not have a heightened understanding of their role in facilitating and securing progression year on year.

## **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)*

It is important to remember that schools have always had to develop. They have always had to improve and to take account of staff development through high quality professional learning. They have always had to set aside budget for this and allocate time from the given hours and Inset days. Implementing a new curriculum is not additional to this - it enhances it and ensures that schools focus their time more carefully and productively on their learners. Some schools may need to think about how they utilise budget, time and resources differently. However, the current situation – Covid-19 – may create shortfalls in school budget and this will need monitoring.

## 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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