

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: Bishop Vaughan Catholic School

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 curriculum leads to a broader balanced purpose led curriculum. It gives practitioners more freedom to create the curriculum. It connects to community and the experiences of learners.

However I am worried about the following: The Bill fails to recognise the professionalism of staff in Catholic schools and it doesn't look at particular context of the Catholic community. I strongly disagree with the change of name to RVE. Value and Ethics should be part of the ethos of a school community. Religious Education/Studies contributes to rather than is responsible for imparting this aspect of school life.

Faith Schools, in particular Voluntary Aided Schools are being subjected to prejudicial judgements and discrimination in the way that they are being treated. Firstly, there is an explicit prejudice in the assumption that there is not a pluralistic approach to the teaching of religion. I would respectfully ask the WAG to read Bishop Vaughan's Estyn inspection report 2018 where there is explicit reference to excellent teaching on Humanism in RE.

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)

What already exists in law is balanced and fair, so we don't want these things changed. Catholic schools shouldn't have to deliver a second syllabus. We already teach pluralistically, including philosophical convictions. We cover atheism, agnosticism and theism and antitheism and so already meet the legal requirements. What we teach and how we teach it is balanced. There appears to be a lack of trust in the pedagogical methods of highly specialised teachers. This is insulting and inaccurate. The assumption that legislation is needed is founded on prejudice. Furthermore, Faith schools are being discriminated against by being expected to providing a second syllabus in RE should parents require it. This will be a burden on schools in terms of workload and cost. As Catholic schools are being treated differently to other schools this amounts to discrimination.

In addition these actions may discriminate against parents who have chosen to have their children educated in a Catholic school. Requiring us to deliver a second RE syllabus may put schools in breach of their trust deeds. The Bill also indicates that post-14, the Welsh Government may change the content of subjects, possibly including RE, which could also affect trust deeds (as not necessarily Catholic RE).

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)

I oppose the removal of the right to withdraw pupils from RE. I am against this because it takes away the right of the parents and also may impact negatively on relationships with parents as it cuts down the dialogue that has always existed.

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 time frame - no additional time for implementation. The WAG hasn't allowed for the impact of COVID-19.

Hard to imagine how Welsh Gov has a clear picture as you haven't published all of the guidance yet and so no idea how these will impact. No evidence that they have taken into account the impact of the additional work burden on Catholic schools.

There is a massive flaw in approach taken by the WAG as the Bill was presented to the Senedd BEFORE the consultation process ended. How can this be considered just or democratically informed?

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 Bill puts Catholic Schools in breach of their legal duty to meet the requirements of the Bishops conference of England and Wales

Unintended consequences - putting Catholic schools in breach of legal duty to comply with trust deed. Post-14 Welsh Government require Catholic schools to engage in courses and studies which do not comply with the Catholic Bishops. Additional burden on Catholic schools to provide two parallel curricular with potentially a financial impact to the school. It creates a negative impression of Catholic schools in that their RE is not balanced and pluralistic in its content. This is not the case. Also RE as a rigorous academic subject may be undermined. The impact on relationships with parents - undermines their rights. Possible increase in home-schooling. The clear discrimination against Catholic schools - could lead to legal challenge. Regarding the trust deeds of Catholic Schools. Current legislation recognises the trust deeds of Catholic schools, but now there is a concern that we will be expected to deliver RSE and RE that doesn't comply with the tenets of the Church. RSE, e.g. the nature of Marriage and Families. In addition, the post-14 proposals may require us to teach something in the future that is contrary to our trust deeds

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)

In the new Bill, there'll be a burden on Catholic schools to provide two RE curricular, whereas this responsibility is with the LA at the moment when it's unreasonable for schools to do so. How does the WAG intend to staff this?

Furthermore, regarding financial implications - curriculum development and professional learning, costs of supply cover to enable collaboration across schools - will there be financial resources available for that?

Increase in fees for the new qualifications. Longer term - emphasis on experiential learning will have significant budgetary implications. Additional financial burden of the preparation and delivery of two separate RE curricular. COVID-19 means that there is a more robust digital platform for training etc - higher cost implication here

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)

The potential for the Welsh Government to make changes to legislation in the future - this could mean that RVE could be removed as a mandatory element. This would be detrimental to Faith schools. For Catholic schools RE is core, and this would impact on the heart of what it is to be a Catholic school. If RE was removed in the future, this would have important consequences for all schools as it is important for all children and all schools to have an understanding of diversity. Traditionally, Welsh education has valued Religious Education. Having been educated in a Welsh grammar school and University I have first hand experience of that. The plans by this government to impose legislation which could be potentially damaging to the future of Faith Schools and RE is utterly disappointing.

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)

It is extremely disappointing that points made in the consultation process have not been listened to.

Catholic schools are perceived as unbalanced and not inclusive, that staff are not trusted to deliver RE in a diverse and pluralistic way. This demonstrates a lack of understanding about what happens in RE in Faith Schools. The Government has failed to take account of the place of Catholic schools in the history of Welsh education - through passing this Bill the Welsh Government will be taking away their historic rights.

Having taught for 36 years in faith schools I have been committed to educating my pupils in a way that fosters respect for diversity and tolerance. I hope that the Welsh Assembly Government affords me the same respect by listening to what I have to say on this matter.

.

