

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: St Padarn's RC Primary 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)

We do not support the principles of the bill in regard to Catholic education, though we acknowledge that the bill leads to a broader, balanced, purpose led curriculum, linking more to the community than has hereto been addressed by the present curriculum.

We disagree with the change of name from RE to RVE as in Catholic schools, values and ethics have always been taught across the existing curriculum and through the subject of RE.

We disagree with the possible implementation of two parallel curricula.

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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)

Catholic schools should not be discriminated against by being forced to deliver a second syllabus. As noted above, Catholic schools already teach a balanced, pluralistic syllabus relating to other religions and philosophies and meet the legal requirements on this. The implications relating to this bill are that the Senedd does not trust Catholic schools to deliver a balanced curriculum.

Forcing Catholic schools to deliver a second syllabus will place an unnecessary burden upon them in terms of workload and cost. Catholic schools are being singled out and treated differently from other schools and this is discriminatory. It also discriminates against those parents who have specifically chosen to have a Catholic education for their children.

The requirement of a second syllabus will put Catholic schools in breach of their trust deeds.

The current legislation recognizes the trust deeds of Catholic schools, but the new legislation expects Catholic schools to deliver the new RVE curriculum which is not in accord with the tenets of the Catholic Church

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 Welsh Catholic head teachers' letter to the Senedd voicing their strong opposition to this bill has been injudiciously ignored.

The Senedd should better understand the impact Covid 19 has had upon schools throughout Wales. It needs to appreciate the current workload and strain placed upon the teaching profession due to the pandemic. The focus at present is on pupil and staff safety, well-being and upon the pupil accelerated learning programme. We would question whether this is the time to drive forward with this bill.

As if this were not enough, as the bill proposes a new RVE syllabus, additional staff would have to be employed to cover for staff training for the new curriculum. The Senedd has not indicated whether there will be extra funding to cover these costs.

The Senedd has not evaluated the strength of parents' feelings in relation to the above.

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 take into account the potential barriers discussed in 2.1 above, as it is evident that the impact of Covid 19 has not been considered. Nor have the additional work burdens and costs this bill places upon Catholic schools been considered.

A major breach of the Senedd's protocol has occurred in relation to this bill as it was presented to Senedd before the consultation was finished.

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)

1. The Bill places Catholic schools in breach of compliance with the legal requirements of their trust deeds.
2. It places an undue burden upon staff in Catholic schools by requiring them to teach two curricula.
3. It introduces courses and studies not meeting the requirements of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
4. It creates an unjustified negative impression of Catholic school teaching by erroneously implying that RE is not taught in a balanced and pluralistic manner.
5. RE as a rigorous academic subject is being undermined.
6. It undermines parents' right to choose the type and nature of the education they would wish for their children once they have made the decision to send their child to a Catholic school. The likely consequence of this will be an increased demand for home schooling.

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)

1. The new curriculum requires greater inter-school collaboration with concomitant financial implications.

2. In Catholic schools the teaching of a second syllabus would place a considerable additional burden and strain upon the staff. The practicalities of delivering both the RE and the RVE syllabuses have clearly not been evaluated, particularly in relation to maintaining a full staff complement at the present time. The cost of running two curricula places an additional financial burden on Catholic schools.

3. Longer terms with the emphasis of experiential learning will have significant budgetary implications as will education in the community involving visits to museums, art galleries, historic places of interest etc.

4. Covid 19 has resulted in a greater digital focus: another unforeseen cost that needs to be addressed further.

5. Will school budgets reflect the additional costs required to administer all aspects of the new curriculum and its attendant resources plus the cost of running two parallel religious curricula?

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)

1. The bill provides a potential for the Senedd to make changes to the curriculum in the future which could mean that religious education is removed as a mandatory element. RE is at the core of the curriculum of Catholic schools and its removal would impact the very heart of what it is to be a Catholic school.
2. As a Faith School, we have concerns that amendments without consultation may be made that would erode our primary privilege of teaching and living our Catholic Faith and thus impacting negatively on the vital relationship between school, family, parishes and the wider community.

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)

1. The Senedd is taking away from Catholics, the historic right of religious freedom as set out in the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1791.
2. It is disappointing that the Senedd so openly discriminates against Catholic schools by implying that they do not teach RE in a balanced and pluralistic way.
3. Catholic schools have always valued the freedom of parents to withdraw their children from certain classes and this bill, in a totalitarian fashion, denies this right to parents; impacting negatively upon the valued dialogue that has always existed between the school and parents.
4. Additionally, we support the CES and diocesan response to this consultation.

