

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)

As a Governor of a Catholic primary school, I am broadly in favour of a new curriculum, which is balanced and purpose led. I believe it will afford practitioners more freedom to create a curriculum that connects to community and experiences of learners, which is a good thing.

However, I am concerned about the elements of RE/RVE and how it potentially will be taught. The way RE is taught in Catholic schools isn't just down to the approach apoted by the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Archdiocese of Cardiff - we teach and promote the Jesuit Pupil Profile (or Catholic Schools Pupil Profile) - [http://www.jesuitinstitute.org/Pages/JPP/JPP%20Cardiff/JPP%20Booklet%20RCADC%20\(2018\).pdf](http://www.jesuitinstitute.org/Pages/JPP/JPP%20Cardiff/JPP%20Booklet%20RCADC%20(2018).pdf)

but it is also a testament to the professionalism of Catholic teachers and educators working in our schools. They teach RE and RSE (see link <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/consultation-on-re-and-relationship-and-sex-education-in-wales/>) in a well balanced and age appropriate way that fully takes into account the Catholic ethos and community within which the school is an integral part. I am concerned that this will be lost in the new currciulum.

I fundamentally disagree with the change of name. Values and ethics are instilled by the whole school and RE as a curriculum subject contributes to this.

RE in Catholic schools already engages with a range of religions and philosophical convictions- legal (key request for the Catholic Bishops Conference interms of promoting mutli-fath and diversity). It is balanced in content and teaching and should not be diluted. Moreover, staff in Catholic schools should not have to prepare to deliver a second RE syllabus.

Moreover, to require a school Governing Body to provide agreed syllabus RE in a Catholic school is likely to place the Governing Body in breach of its legal duty to comply with the objects of the Trust Deed.

It also means that the Welsh Government could specify content and teaching of Catholic RE for pupils above the age of 14. The Welsh Government could require pupils in Catholic schools to engage in courses of study which do not meet the requirements of the Catholic Bishops Conference. The Welsh Government will be able to introduce these requirements by regulation, which means that the changes would be made without the opportunity for appropriate scrutiny and opportunity for challenge.

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)

Current legislation recognises the trust deeds of Catholic school. There is a real concern that new legislation would require schools to deliver an alternative syllabus that is not compliant with trust deed. RSE /sex education within the tenets of the church protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate to age and religious belief.

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)

There is a feeling of a loss of trust from Catholic schools in the Government's vision because of the lack of real dialogue. For example, the recent Headteachers letter

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/catholic-schools-religious-education-wales-18470657>

These are things that Catholic education sector has raised over the past few years but there is a lack of understanding from Government, which goes right to the very top of Government with the Education Minister herself.

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)

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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)

This raises a number of concerns:

1. The ability of the Welsh Government to make changes to legislation, including to primary legislation, through regulation is extremely concerning. It would allow for RVE to be removed as a mandatory element of the curriculum and for other important changes to be made that would impact on the provision of RE.
2. For Catholic schools, RE is at the core of the core curriculum. Any proposed changes to RE would be of such significance that may well impact on the ability of Catholic schools to remain Catholic. Therefore, any proposed changes which would have such a fundamental impact on the existing dual system that has been in place since 1944 need to be taken forward in a transparent way that is open to appropriate levels of scrutiny and challenge at Senedd level.

3. For other schools also, RE is vital to ensuring that all pupils, whichever school they attend, become religiously literate – something which is becoming increasingly important in an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural Wales and to understand the wider world.

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)

I am disappointed that the Bill is implementing a change of name for Religious Education and the removal of the parental right of withdrawal. The Catholic Education Service, and large numbers of teachers and leaders in Catholic schools in Wales, objected to these proposals, outlining the centrality of parents as the primary educators of their children as a fundamental tenet of Catholic education and rigorous and formative RE as a fundamental feature of every Catholic school.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 guarantees that State involvement in education is only ever auxiliary to the parents: it always exists to assist parents to educate their children, not to usurp them in doing so. It is my belief that by removing the hard-won and long-standing right of parental choice in RE, the Welsh Government is at risk of undermining the trust of parents and contributing to a further rise in home-schooling where parents are unwilling to accept this removal of choice by the Welsh Government.

The changes also demean a core subject which, in Catholic schools, is not just a rigorous, academic discipline but it's also an opportunity for personal development.

The incidence of withdrawal in Catholic schools in Wales is currently negligible or non-existent. The extremely low rate of withdrawal has been used as a reason for removing the right. However, the low level of withdrawal is an indicator of the long-standing success of the current, finely balanced arrangements first set down in 1944. In practice, the right to withdraw provides the opportunity for important dialogue with parents so that they understand what the RE curriculum entails. It is through these interactions that parents can be provided with sufficient assurances as a result of which they will often change their minds and trust their children's school.

The Bill removes this important right and replaces with an unequal and inequitable set of measures which discriminate unfairly and unjustifiably against parents of faith and Church schools.

I am disappointed that the proposals appear to be premised on a false implication about RE in Church schools: that denominational RE is not balanced in its content and manner of teaching in the same way as non-denominational RE. This is fundamentally not true. In fact, denominational RE both meets existing legal requirements and provides a rigorous, academic core to the curriculum in Church schools.

I am deeply concerned about the impact the proposed changes will have on the quality of RE in all schools in Wales, particularly in voluntary aided Church schools. By changing the current framework, faith schools will become the only schools asked to offer both denominational and locally agreed syllabus RE; therefore, the Welsh Government threatens to make RE more prescriptive and less academically rigorous.

This change also undermines the historical position of the Catholic Church as a government partner and co-provider of education in Wales. The character of Catholic schools, and in turn the onus they place on Religious Education, has been protected in law in Wales for decades. We hope that the Senedd can acknowledge this long-standing and

carefully balanced relationship, and the contribution Church schools have made to Welsh society, by amending these damaging provisions.

