

## TER 19

Ymateb gan: Grŵp datblygu Ôl-16 y Gwasanaeth Addysg Gatholig

Response from: Catholic Education Service Post 16 development group

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### 1.Executive Summary

- This submission is being made on behalf of the providers of post-16 education in the Catholic sector throughout Wales and reflects the initial thinking in response to the draft bill and potential challenges it may pose for our sector.
- The CES Wales post-16 development group has been formed to develop post-16 education in Catholic schools and St David's College in line with the Commission's strategic duties outlined in the draft bill.
- A strong Catholic provision will contribute to maintaining the diversity of learner choice at post-16 as well as providing continuity of Catholic education 3-18. We would welcome reassurance that the commission will ensure that learners continue to have access to the remaining post-16 provision in the Catholic schools and college in Wales.

### 2.Introduction

Across the three Welsh dioceses, there are six Catholic institutions delivering post -16 education made up of five 11-18 secondary schools and one FE college. There are 86 providers of Catholic education in Wales at both primary and secondary level serving around 28,500 learners. The Catholic community works in partnership with Welsh Government and Local Authorities in its provision of education.

The Dioceses of Cardiff, Menevia and Wrexham are committed to strengthening and further developing Catholic post-16 education across Wales, providing continuity of Catholic education where possible for learners aged 3-18.

### 3.The CES Wales post-16 development group

In February 2021, a group was formed to discuss the future provision of Catholic post-16 education considering the publication of the Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill (February 2021) and the recommendations of Estyn's thematic review of Post -16 Partnerships (January 2021).

The group membership comprises the Headteachers and Principal of the six Catholic institutions providing post-16 education supported by the Wales Adviser of the CES and the Diocesan Directors of Education. It is facilitated and supported by independent senior advisors from the Association of Education Advisers.

### 4.Review

There is agreement amongst the dioceses and Catholic post-16 providers that a review of our sector's provision is required in response to the Tertiary Education and Research Bill.

The Bill will influence our thinking regarding the future of post 16 provision in the Catholic sector in Wales. This review will seek to:

- consolidate and further develop Catholic post -16 provision across Wales
- develop collaborative provision across the Catholic sector and with local schools
- assist with the development of a strategic plan for a secure, sustainable future.

The group is committed to strengthening and further developing Catholic post-16 education in Wales to meet the needs of its learners. A strong Catholic provision will contribute to maintaining the diversity of learner choice at post -16 as well as providing continuity of Catholic education 3-18. In addition, we aim to ensure that the contribution of Catholic education to delivering outstanding provision is widely acknowledged.

It is important to establish how the Commission will ensure that learners continue to have access to the remaining post-16 provision in the Catholic schools and college in Wales.

## 5.Mission and the Four Purposes

- **Mission:** The Catholic church provides schools, including sixth form colleges, to meet the aspirations and needs of learners and communities that we serve. This clearly includes their civic mission of the complete formation of the whole person to enable them to contribute as responsible citizens for the good of Wales and the wider world.
- **Disadvantage:** In fulfilling the mission of Catholic social teaching, our schools and colleges serve some of the most disadvantaged communities and our clear commitment to providing a preferential option for the poor means that we play an important role in ensuring social mobility.
- **Character strengths:** Catholic schools and colleges seek to cultivate Christian virtues (character strengths). Fostering these character strengths will assist Catholic schools to meet their statutory obligation in realising the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and will provide an opportunity to extend the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales into post-16 education.

It would be helpful to providers of post-16 education if opportunities to build on the four purposes are more clearly defined in the bill or accompanying WG guidance.

## 6.Access to Catholic education

- **Equality of opportunity:** The Bill has a clear focus on meeting the needs of learners who want to continue their studies in a Welsh medium setting. However, the needs of learners who wish to continue their sixth form studies within a church school do not appear to have been given due consideration. We would hope for equality of opportunity for students who wish to access post 16 provision in a church school.
- **UNCRC:** We would expect the rights of students to continue to be educated in accordance with their religious convictions and cultural identity in accordance with the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 and Article 29(1)(c) of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the rights of their parents to

ensure that their children are educated in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions in accordance with Art. 2 Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to be respected.

- **Parental choice:** Parents seeking a school for their children at any age, should have a choice between secular teaching and faith-based teaching. There should be access to provision for Catholic students across Wales including those areas where there is no Catholic provision available.
- **Community outreach and civic mission:** Often schools are the hubs of their communities and the outreach from schools is an essential part of community life. If the closure of sixth forms was an unintended consequence of the bill, in schools may therefore be at a cost to the community that the school serves. This would also have a detrimental impact on communities and affect the ability to deliver a 'civic mission'.

The Commission must ensure that learners have equality of opportunity if they wish to access post -16 provision in a church school.

## 7. Quality and breadth

- **Curriculum:** Catholic schools and colleges seek to offer high quality, cost-effective academically sound solutions for Catholic post-16 education in Wales. To achieve this aim, we are exploring the development of a curriculum model across the schools/college with national virtual college to support. This model would include the expansion of a vocational offer and the development of online provision using the best practice lessons learnt during the pandemic.
- **Online provision:** A key element of online provision should be something that reflects our Catholic identity. Such an approach would strengthen provision by offering breadth of choice, rationalise teaching in undersubscribed subjects and offer a Catholic dimension to the studies of students who do not have access to a Catholic sixth form. A Professional learning offer developed by St David's College would run alongside the curriculum offer.

It is important to establish how the bill and the Commission would support this work.

## 8. Collaboration

- **Partnership:** There is openness to collaboration across the Catholic schools in Wales to enhance curriculum opportunities for learners. We will continue to develop collaboration with secular partners to meet the needs of learners and continue to serve areas of socio-economic deprivation.
- **Technology enhanced collaboration:** Technological developments of the kind proposed above are the only means by which the geographic barriers to Catholic sector collaboration can be overcome and with the development of an effective system of delivery is a clear start-up cost implication.

It would be helpful to identify what support is available for schools wishing to develop collaborative networks in this way.

- **Financial considerations:** Account also needs to be taken of the financial impact of increasing collaboration between providers. What will this mean in terms of students moving between education establishments? There will be additional cost involved in organising this if it leads to students moving elsewhere.

Greater clarity is required regarding funding for additional costs, including increased costs of transport for students moving beyond their local communities.

## 9.Promoting the Welsh language

- **Learners:** Integral to the future for post-16 education is a commitment to foster and develop ability in, and understanding of, the Welsh language and the culture of Wales. In this way Catholic schools will contribute to one of the fundamental aims of the Welsh government to encourage an increase in the number of learners who become confident Welsh speakers using both languages in their everyday life. This will include developing opportunities at post-16 for students to maintain and further develop their skills in spoken Welsh.
- **Professional development:** We will support staff members who wish to access the Welsh Government sabbatical scheme for teachers to improve their Welsh language skills. We seek to engage with Welsh Medium Providers offering, translation of materials produced into Welsh and develop where practicable, bilingual delivery.

It is important that the Commission supports the efforts of English medium schools and colleges in delivering the Welsh Government's policy objectives around the Welsh language.

## 10.Engagement

- **Consultation:** There is a requirement for the Commission to consult such persons it considers appropriate before issuing guidance. We would expect that consultation will be wide and include the institutions that will be affected by it. We would also expect that dioceses with any sixth form colleges or schools with sixth forms will be included as consultees. We are concerned that insufficient weight will be given to the views of the learners in the Catholic sector given that there is only a single Catholic sixth form college.
- **Constructive partnerships:** Catholic schools have welcomed the opportunity to respond to proposed legislative changes and to work directly with officials. We would hope that this constructive partnership working will extend into the work of the Commission enabling Catholic education to flourish in Wales.

We will welcome the Commission's engagement with the Catholic sector in Wales.

## 11.Working with Welsh Government

The Catholic Church as a co-provider of education in Wales, shares the Welsh Government's core values of self-determination, subsidiarity and cultural nationalism. We recognise the positive working relationship with Welsh Government which has been strengthened during the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales and look forward to Catholic schools playing their part in developing post -16 education.

We are prepared to lead change through quality systems and organisational development in collaboration with WG. We will do this through our virtual college a pan -Wales Ed tech development, which will provide outstanding professional development for staff and collaboration between institutions across the sector. Moving forward, it is important to ensure that we are open in our discussions with Welsh government officials as we formulate the long-term plan for post-16 Catholic education in Wales.