

**This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into the general principles of the \[Tertiary Education and Research \\(Wales\\) Bill\]\(#\)](#)**

**TER 37**

**Ymateb gan: Ysgol Gatholig a Chanolfan Chweched Dosbarth Sant Joseff**

**Response from: St Joseph's Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre**

---

This response is from St Joseph's Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre in Port Talbot, a school within the Local Authority of Neath Port Talbot and Catholic Diocese of Menevia. The school has a strong history of delivering a diversity of student choice at Post 16 by complementing the tertiary offer within the Local Authority (NPTC Group) and Welsh-medium institution at Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera. The school would welcome reassurance from the committee that the newly established commission will ensure that students across the Local Authority, and indeed Wales, will continue to have access to Post 16 education within the Catholic schools in Wales.

The school is currently part of the CES Wales Post-16 Development Group which was formed in February 2021 to discuss the future provision of Catholic Post-16 education following the publication of the Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill and recent Estyn thematic review of Post-16 Partnerships.

As part of our contribution to this group we agree that the review and subsequent establishment of the commission will influence our strategic thinking regarding the future provision within our own school and those similar across Wales. The group is committed to strengthening and further developing Catholic Post 16 education across Wales in order to meet the needs of students and also continue to offer choice to all students. The strong Catholic provision that we offer at St. Joseph's and contribute to with other partners contributes to maintaining the diversity of student choice Post 16 as well as providing young people with an opportunity to continue their education within a faith setting, as is their right under the UNCRC. We would ask the committee to consider how the future commission will continue to support student choice across the country.

The school values each individual to have a duty of care for the poor and educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. In fulfilling the mission of Catholic social teaching, we believe we 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. Indeed, St Joseph's as the only 11-18 English-medium school within Neath Port Talbot is classified as the most deprived when Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is used and is the school with the significant proportion of students eligible for FSM.

St Joseph's along with the other Catholic schools and colleges seek to cultivate Christian virtues (character strengths) and form personal values, rooted in the Gospel of Christ, and expressed in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Fostering these character strengths through virtues education will assist Catholic schools in meeting their statutory obligation in realising the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. The commitment of Catholic schools to virtues education, provides an opportunity to extend the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales into post-16 education.

Similar to the view of the CES, we can identify that 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. 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.

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.

The school, in partnership with other Catholic providers, has been working on developing a collaborative approach to the delivery of its curriculum in order to ensure quality and breadth. Currently the group are exploring different models in order to develop our curriculums to contribute to the choice available to students within the Catholic and non-Catholic sector. The approach to online provision has been trialled this year with St Joseph's offering AS Welsh Second Language as an online offer to students from across Wales (particularly the Catholic schools sector) delivered online and outside of the timetabled day. This has increased the choice, offer and aims to contribute, in a small way, to the Welsh Government priority of 1m Welsh speakers. We would ask would the Bill and future commission support this? And what support is available to schools wishing to develop this types of partnership networks?

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 schools with sixth forms will be included as consultees. We would be concerned that insufficient weight will be given to the views of the learners in the Catholic sector which covers a large number of students across the country.

The school, and wider Catholic sector, would welcome the opportunity to contribute to such plans and continue to work directly with officials. This has happened recently and we would hope this would continue.

**On behalf of St Joseph's Catholic School & Sixth Form Centre**