

EB 03

National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

Education (Wales) Bill : Stage 1

Response from : Governors Wales

Governors Wales promotes the effective governance of schools in Wales and provides support to individual governors, local governors associations, fora and other groupings. Governors Wales is committed to the promotion and effective management of quality provision in schools in Wales.

There are approximately 23,000 school governors in Wales. They give their time, skills and expertise in a voluntary capacity, to help their schools provide children with the best possible education.

Governors Wales recognises that governing bodies are accountable for the strategic direction of their school and for the quality of education provided.

Governors Wales' role, therefore is to support governors by:

- Encouraging effective and efficient governance of schools;
- Providing advice and guidance to governors and governing bodies;
- Identifying their training needs;
- Promoting their entitlement to training;
- Identifying and disseminating best practice;
- Raising the profile and status;
- Helping governors to focus on the consequences of their work for children;
- Representing the views, concerns and aspirations of governors and governing bodies to policy makers.

Governors Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on The Education (Wales) Bill and offers the following comments:

- 1.1 Governors Wales welcomes The Education (Wales) Bill to develop workforce planning and promote consistency of approach.
- 1.2 We are mindful, however, that full consultation and dialogue needs to take place on some of the specific proposals when further details are available. We hope to liaise closely with the relevant stakeholders as the Bill goes through the different legislative stages.

2.0 Education Workforce Council – registration and regulation of teachers and the wider workforce

- 2.1 Governors Wales welcomes the extension of registration to a wider group of education workforce practitioners. The change of title of the proposed council is sensible to encapsulate all who work within the wider education workforce, but rather than include the term “workforce”, The Education Professions Council may be preferable.

- 2.2 We note that “flexibility” has been catered for to meet any future changes of the education workforce, i.e., to extend the functions of the Council as appropriate – this seems a sensible approach.
- 2.3 We reinforce our comment submitted earlier on the consultation “Proposals for Registration of the education workforce in Wales, in that we feel that a differential fee rate would be preferable, than that of a flat rate. We are mindful however, of concerns regarding costs to individuals and suggest that further consultation is required on this area. There must be a consistent approach across the education workforce to how the registration fee is paid for i.e., as per the fee for teachers.
- 2.4 Whilst a single code of practice and conduct will allow for consistency, we wonder whether there might be specific requirements relating to the identified groups that would need to be included.
- 2.5 We also feel that the newly constituted council needs to retain true independence.
- 2.6 We note the omission of the requirements to register teachers and support staff in independent schools and feel that this should be revisited.
- 2.7 Paragraph 30 indicates that Welsh Ministers will be able to request / consent to the council providing advice on various issues as outlined. Whilst this will be appropriate in certain circumstances, there needs to be flexibility inbuilt to allow for the council to provide advice / information in a timely and consistent way without the necessary requirement to seek consent.

3.0 Post-16 assessment of educational and training needs and specialist Further Education

- 3.1 The proposals set out in the Bill will help to ensure both effective and consistent transition provision across Wales. This will also help to reduce bureaucracy.

4.0 School term dates

- 4.1 Governors Wales generally agrees with the proposals to “harmonise” term dates.
- 4.2 Whilst power to direct Local Authorities and relevant governing bodies may be necessary, Governors Wales believes that this should only be necessary where reasonable steps to reach agreement for setting term dates have not been taken.

5.0 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, which contains a table summarising the powers for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation)

- 5.1 The appropriateness of the powers of the Bill sets out clearly the provision for subordinate legislation to be made so no further comment to add, other than to urge consultation on the key aspects of the Bill.