

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: Together for Children and Young People (2) Programme

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

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)

The new Curriculum and Assessment Bill provides a once in a generation opportunity to transform education and its assessment in Wales.

The ethos of the new curriculum, which will be driven by purpose rather than content, will have the potential and flexibility to meet every child's needs, this alongside the change in approach taken by ESTYN should lead to great empowerment and a shift in culture which meets the diverse population needs.

The curriculum clearly sets out the four purposes/principles, which are to enable pupils to develop as:

Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives

Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;

Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; The curriculum clearly sets out the four purposes, which are to enable pupils to develop as:

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Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;

Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The above requires a clear foundation that extends beyond the school gates and as such needs to consider the social determinates that will impact on whether a learner is in fact ready to learn. Understanding the needs of the child must extend to a greater understanding of the needs of the family as part of a whole system approach. The link between this bill and the cross sector offer needs to be clearly aligned and coordinated to maximise resources as a whole. For this to be applied we return to the earlier point about a common language and training; it is now apparent that ASD is better recognised but the debates continue regarding dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD. Neurodiverse children's rights must be respected.

The programme acknowledges that the statutory guidance under the "What matters code" which aims to set out the key concepts for each AoLE has now been finalised. There remain a real opportunity to engage across sectors and to coproduce with key stakeholders beyond education the interpretation of these statements beyond the "what" and into "how" these will be implemented. The programme would welcome further detail on the use of peripatetic support as part of the development of the implementation planning.

Consideration needs to be given to the roll out of the autism code and any unintended consequences as a result of this work.

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The mandatory elements

Section 3 requires four mandatory elements to be taught within the AoLEs:

English;

Welsh;

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE);

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE).

The programme accepts that these mandatory elements have now been decided and want to highlight the potential to extend the relationships element to include emotional wellbeing and the importance of peer support. This work is currently being developed as part of the EHES framework and could add to the work of the whole school approach.

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)

Not in a position to comment on this.

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)

Education and training

Teacher training and support for wider staff training will be critical to achieving the ambitions of the Bill. The programme would be keen to have assurance as part of the

discussions on the Bill and (including the outline proposals for the subsequent guidance) to ensure that proposals for training will include training on neurodiversity (in recognition that 1 in 5 children are neurodiversity) and the impact of neurogenetic and environmental factors on brain development and functioning. This training would encompass a trauma informed approach and could underpin the development of an agreed coherent language and approach, with associated training tools.

The programme has been working across sectors to develop an Early Help and Enhanced Support National framework which seeks to establish links with the work on the Additional Learning Needs Bill and its rollout, the Whole School Approach and the work on the Autism Code. The coordination of these substantive areas of work will be critical and our engagement events have highlighted the importance of education, training and development to be consistent and rolled out beyond education (including a common language) in order to provide a connected whole system approach that meets the child and family's needs in an effective and efficient way.

The Programme feels it will be important for there to be clarity on how will the new curriculum and associated standards/performance management will align to the work on ALN and future plans to roll out neurodiversity training as part of a whole system approach.

The work on the EHES framework has served to highlight the importance of a broad range of skills being available and the importance of a trusted adult to feel supported to meet the needs of the child. Many of the stakeholders have raised concerns about their confidence and ability to support children, young people and their families who may be experiencing poor emotional wellbeing. Therefore, future education and training needs to cover the three key pillars of knowledge, skills and experience in a holistic and coordinated way which seeks to minimise transitions and develop the essential life skills of our future generations and it would be useful to ensure this has been fully considered at an early stage in the development of this legislation.

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)

Training and education of the workforce across the whole system needs to be considered as a whole. The landscape and coordination of this needs to support the bringing together

of coordinated plans across the key sectors, health, education social services etc and a prioritisation of this work jointly.

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)

Consideration needs to be given to the roll out of the autism code and any unintended consequences as a result of this work. The work of education is critical and needs to be seen as part of a whole system approach with all its constituent parts being awarded the same status and priority. Consideration needs to be given to the mechanisms required to connect the whole system (including ESTYN) in a way that drives a whole system cultural shift.

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)

Not able to comment on this

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)

Not able to comment on this.

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)

Impact of Covid

The impact of Covid on children and Young people has brought about many challenges, however it has also accelerated some areas including accessing work remotely and digitally. The programme has been encouraged by the access to blended learning that has enabled some families to engage more flexibly. The continued use of remote learning tools and resources as part of the core offer could provide a more flexible access to families that are struggling with school refusal and for a period of time whilst early or enhanced support is being sourced for emotional wellbeing and poor mental health. This could be considered under the potential to extend the ALN exceptions.

Engagement through the programmes works teams and groups have served to identify many positive experiences to the changes brought about through COVID19 including enhanced multiagency working the challenge is likely to be sustaining this once a “new normal” emerges.

Environmental factors

Whilst the Curriculum and assessment Bill set out the ethos of the curriculum, it is also important to note the impact that the environment has on pupils and staff wellbeing and their ability to thrive. The programme would welcome an extension to the current content to include consideration to the way the school is set out in order to be as inclusive as possible to learners and staff who are considered to be neurodiverse. Schools must consider sensory processing needs as part of the holistic consideration of a child's wellbeing – children cannot learn if they are stressed. Heightened needs can result from trauma as well as neurogenetic neurodiversity. The implications of class size must also be considered.

Many of the identified Neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD is seen as an executive function and the environment must scaffold the child in real time if they to achieve their attainment potential, any curriculum must recognise this.

Local school-level curricula within a national framework

The concept of delegating the design of the curriculum to the head teacher in principle is welcomed on the basis that it considers the broader cross sector and whole system approach. However, it is important that the appropriate time is allocated to the coproduction of the design to include all key stakeholders. Future review and evaluations should include a broad spectrum of stakeholders to share what works and continually evaluate and learn from areas that require further development.

Section 44 of the regulation seeks to set out the approach that will be taken as part of the ALN (Wales) Act.

The programme would welcome an expansion of broad and balanced teaching and learning to include blended and digital based approaches in line with the recommendations set out above.

Part 3 of the Bill sets out the curriculum requirements for education provided under section 19A of the Education Act 1996 (Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS)), which is predominantly in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

The programme would like to highlight the importance of a clear connection between the PRU and mainstream education. This approach could provide opportunities for pupils to benefit from moving into and out of both provisions on a needs led basis as part of a blended access to learning. This will require joint planning and coordination of resources and could over time support the needs of children young people and their families in a more flexible way and maximise capacity within the system as a whole.

Assessment of progression

The programme acknowledges that there is relatively little detail on the face of the bill given to progression, and that the intention is for Welsh Ministers to issue a "progression code". The programme would like to see some core values considered as part of the code, which are consistent with those values set out in the face of the bill.

The purposes of assessment is likely to be reflected in Regulations made under section 58 as part of The Welsh Government separate statutory assessment guidance, there is an opportunity to clearly align this to the ESTYN inspection framework which focusses on culture and values.

Innovation Schools evaluation

T4CYP would be keen to have more detail about the scope of the evaluation of the innovation schools and how cross agency/sector involvement will be achieved. Whilst the number of schools remain small (15), this could provide further opportunities to ensure a national framework seeks to maximise connections across sectors as part of a whole system approach (qualitative and quantitative).

The programme values and appreciates the opportunity to offer comment and feedback

Thanks

