

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: St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School

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)

I fully support the provision of a balanced purpose led curriculum and I welcome the opportunity for practitioners at a local level to design a curriculum that is relevant and connects to the community and experiences of learners.

However, I find it insulting that this doesn't recognise the professionalism of staff working in Catholic schools and fails to acknowledge the particular context of the catholic community.

RVE:

I disagree with the change of name. Religious Education is a demanding academic subject. Values and ethics are instilled through the ethos of the school and all that contributes to the hidden curriculum. RE contributes to this. Catholic schools should not be expected to deliver a second RE syllabus. RE in Catholic schools is already pluralistic and prepares pupils to know and understand people of all faiths and none. It is balanced in its content and its teaching. It is firmly rooted in education and not indoctrination. This bill implies a lack of trust in the RE curriculum delivered in catholic schools. I feel that this is

discriminatory. Parents choose to send their children to a catholic school in full knowledge of the curriculum that is on offer.

This bill could put the governors of the school in breach of their legal duty to comply with the objects of the Trust Deed. I find it unacceptable that the Welsh Government could specify the content and teaching of Catholic RE for pupils above the age of 14. This may not be in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Bishops. I find it unacceptable that the WG could introduce these requirements by regulation without the opportunity for appropriate scrutiny or challenge.

Removing the right to withdraw could damage relations with parents when currently, there is very little withdrawal due to the dialoge and relationships that we have with parents.

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)

The current legislation recognises the trust deeds of Catholic schools and I find it unacceptable that an alternative would not comply with the trust deed.

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)

The lack of dialogue with those of us working in the catholic education sector has been very disappointing. In 27 years of teaching in a number of diocese across England and Wales, I have never before been made to feel like our voice didn't matter. The apparent lack of understanding about the nature and purpose of Catholic education has left me feeling mistrustful of the motives for this Bill.

In addition to this, there are several other barriers including cost and workload.

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)

The Bill has not taken account of these barriers.

It has not accounted for the impact of COVID 19 on the timeframe, it hasn't addressed the workload issues or the financial implications of planning two RE schemes. We don't know all of the barriers as the consultation is not complete.

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)

The Governors in a Catholic school will be in breach of their legal duty to comply with their Trust Deed.

Catholic schools are told what to teach in RE by the Wales Government and some schemes may not meet the requirements of the Catholic Bishops.

This need for dual curricula implies that what we currently teach is not broad and balanced. It implies that there is something not quite right with RE in a Catholic school.

It undermines our view that RE is a rigorous academic subject.

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)

Supply cover

Collaboration across schools

Increase in fees

Experience based learning

pPeparing and delivering 2 curricula

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)

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.

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 at the lack of engagement with those working in Catholic education. For the first time in a long career, I feel undervalued and second best. I feel this more keenly after working in the Archdiocese of Liverpool where Catholic schools shared parity of esteem with academies and LA schools.

I am disappointed at the perception created that Catholic schools teach RE that is not inclusive. I am disappointed at the implication that RE teachers in Catholic schools do not

teach RE in a balanced way. I am horrified by the implication that denominational RE is seen as less balanced and in fact, I would argue the opposite.

Catholic schools have made a valuable contribution to society in Wales, producing the current shadow Home Secretary. Catholic schools in Wales today have some of the most diverse student populations and teach children from all backgrounds. I am disappointed that Catholic schools in Wales, which have educated people as diverse as Ian Rush and Baron Murphy of Torfaen, could be seen as providing a narrow and unbalanced RE curriculum.

I am disappointed that this Bill makes me feel like my community is being discriminated against and that the people responsible for it, can't be bothered to engage in meaningful dialogue with my community.

