

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Hybrid – Committee room 2 Senedd
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 24 January 2024

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

(09.00 – 09.15)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.15)

2 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 6

(09.15 – 10.15)

(Pages 1 – 27)

Cllr Ian Roberts, Education Spokesperson for the Welsh Local Government Association

Claire Homard, Chair of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Paper – Welsh Local Government Association

Break

(10.15 – 10.25)



3 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 7

(10.25 – 11.25)

(Pages 28 – 38)

Frank Young, Director of Policy and Research, Parentkind

Attached Documents:

Paper – Parentkind

4 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – evidence session 8

(11.30 – 12.15)

(Pages 39 – 52)

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Lloyd Hopkin, Deputy Director, Curriculum, Welsh Government

Ceri Planchant, Lawyer, Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Paper – Welsh Government

5 Papers to note

(12.15)

5.1 Care Inspectorate Wales: Annual Scrutiny

(Pages 53 – 54)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chief Inspector, Care Inspectorate Wales

5.2 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

(Page 55)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Head of Wales Office, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

5.3 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 56 – 57)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Royal Society of Chemistry

5.4 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

(Pages 58 – 60)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chief Executive of Llamau

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(12.15)

7 Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – consideration of the evidence

(12.15 – 12.30)

Document is Restricted

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil Addysg Awyr Agored Breswyl \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

ROE 23

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru

Response from: Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Local Government Association – The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross-party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support, and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce.

WLGA response

The WLGA has, throughout the timeline of the proposed Bill and its various stages, and specifically through the collating and building of the joint consultation response (March 2023), had many discussions with local authorities regarding the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill.

There has been much support in principle for the aspirations of the Bill, particularly the importance of outdoor education to children and young people's overall education and development, with main benefits being highlighted such as enjoyment, experiential learning, health and wellbeing, increased motivation, and appetite for learning.

Local Authorities are agreed that a guaranteed, free of charge, opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience would benefit children and young people positively, and have considered barriers and equalities considerations which are included in the consultation response. However, LAs require reflection and confirmation on what a 'guarantee' in this context means.

There would need to be formal arrangements with suppliers in place, and for the system to be failsafe, accountable, and meet expectations without risk of litigation.

Finally, and as a critical element of this proposal, this Bill would need to be fully funded at inception and also allow for future potential increased costs (therefore have a review / evaluation process built-in with guarantees on appropriate future funding).

Agenda Item 3

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil Addysg Awyr Agored Breswyl \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

ROE 09

Ymateb gan: Parentkind

Response from: Parentkind

11th January 2024

Introduction to Parentkind

Parentkind is one of the largest federated charities in the UK. Our network of almost 13,000 Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and more than 100,000 parent volunteers means we are a strong voice for parents in education.

Supporting evidence

In December 2023 Parentkind published the National Parent Survey 2023 and National Parent Survey for Wales 2023. The National Parent Survey 2023¹ has a sample size of 5, 126 parents including 768 from Wales. The National Parent Survey for Wales was published alongside the UK research² to give parents, policymakers and education stakeholders in Wales a nation-specific overview.

In providing this submission to the Committee we also draw on survey results from polling conducted in January 2022, the '*Wales reform of the school day and year March 2022 survey*', where Parentkind spoke to 6,843 parents in Wales³. This research was conducted in collaboration with Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG).

¹ <https://www.nationalparentsurvey.com/>

² <https://www.nationalparentsurvey.com/wales-report/>

³ <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/research-and-policy/parent-research/research-library/school-education-policies/wales-reform-of-the-school-day-and-year>

How the Bill could relate to parents and the importance of parent voice

The Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill published on 24th November 2023 rightly mentions parents/carers on twenty-five occasions. This acknowledges the importance of parents in any changes to education policy and recognises that providing residential outdoor education will have to require an understanding of how the move affects parents.

References to the role of parents largely focus on the financial burden that school trips already place upon them, but there is also a recognition of the mental health benefits for their child receiving residential outdoor learning, or parental anxieties about the suitability of it.

The first mention of parents rightly raises awareness of the impact of childhood poverty, quoting Welsh Government guidance where *"one or both parents/carers are in low paid employment and often fall just outside the threshold for their children to be eligible for additional financial support to help with the cost of school, such as free school meals entitlement and so fall between the cracks of the very systems that should be in place to support them."* Our written evidence set out below draws from research on this area to demonstrate the different educational experiences of children living in low-income households.

The same guidance, as the Explanatory Memorandum says, *"goes on to suggest that schools should consider whether the cost of visits is realistic for parents"*.

The National Parent Survey uncovers considerable parental anxiety over school costs, with school trips seen as one of the biggest financial burdens in this area. Paragraph 31 makes clear that the status quo *"means that many schools can only enable a visit to go ahead if they receive enough voluntary parental contributions to pay for it or if they fund it from their own resources."* Reliance on parental contributions creates a barrier to participation for families on low incomes (a point made again in paragraph 110), and perhaps others, such as larger families with more children to pay for. This consideration is raised in paragraph 39 (*"this may be impossible to*

access for parents, with costs making them prohibitive, and the situation is worse for larger families.”)

Paragraph 32 highlights the issue of parents of children in receipt of free school meals (FSM), and paragraph 36 says, *“The ability of parents to contribute to their children’s residential is concerning.”* Paragraph 32 picks out that, *“not all those entitled to FSM take them up due to stigma or embarrassment and, crucially, many low-income families do not meet the threshold of FSM entitlement.”* This is a worthwhile point to make as FSM-eligibility is not the only indicator of poverty and therefore not wholly reliable when taken in isolation from other factors. The Welsh Government's provision of Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) is intended to reduce stigma or the risk of not meeting eligibility requirements for the meals for primary school pupils who would otherwise benefit from them. If the provision of Residential Outdoor Education is seen to benefit mostly secondary school pupils, then it is essential that it is *“free of charge”*, as the Bill proposes several times, to ensure that cost is not a barrier to the participation of FSM-eligible pupils or others in low-income or larger households.

The issue of child or parental anxiety about residential trips is the secondary consideration that is nonetheless important. Paragraph 170 of the Explanatory memorandum encapsulates both the barrier and the best solution to overcome it. *“It will be important for pupils and parents to receive information about residential outdoor education so they both know what to expect, which, along with the removal of financial worries related to paying for the visit, will hopefully alleviate any anxieties.”*

The Parentkind Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools⁴ provides a framework of best-practice parental participation that school leaders can map onto existing parental engagement strategies. Clear two-way communication between school and home is one of five key drivers for successful implementation.

⁴ <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-schools/blueprint-for-parent-friendly-schools>

Paragraph 48 promises that, *"The Bill will contribute to easing the pressure on schools and parents, reducing anxiety for parents, children and teachers. By making a course of residential outdoor education an entitlement within the curriculum, every child will have the opportunity to access the benefits, no matter what their circumstances."* From a parental perspective, this issue of universal accessibility and eligibility is an important point which is reflected in Parentkind research contained in this submission.

It is important that parents are considered and consulted when new legislation is created and Parentkind would recommend further direct consultation with parents ahead of any major policy change. We welcome the invitation to submit written and oral evidence to the Committee.

The impact of the Bill upon parents

The wording of the Bill lays out that the guidance *"must provide that residential outdoor education is not compulsory for pupils to attend."*

We set out below (in a section on mental health) that this may mean pupils who have barriers to attendance related to mental health could be at potential risk of missing out on new provision, these children will often have the most to gain from outdoor education. It is important to ensure that schools communicate effectively with parents to overcome potential barriers.

The Bill also states that the guidance, *"must make provision in respect of the costs that it would be reasonable to incur in connection with residential outdoor education."* The National Parent Survey for Wales found half of parents were concerned about the cost of school trips. The Explanatory Memorandum explains that the aim of the Bill is for, *"Welsh Government to provide funding to finance the provision (section 2): The Welsh Ministers will have a duty to provide local authorities with sufficient funding to enable the provision of a course of residential outdoor education under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, as amended by the Bill."* In developing the Bill, consideration will need to be given to ensure that the provision is funded by local authorities rather than additional cost pressures falling onto parents.

The Explanatory Memorandum and pupil access to residential outdoor education

The Explanatory Memorandum cites Welsh government guidance 'The Price of Pupil Poverty'. It mentions families where both parents are in low-paid employment but who nevertheless fall outside the threshold for their child to be eligible for additional financial support to help with the cost of school.

The need to identify those parents who would benefit most from additional support is also raised by the Explanatory Memorandum. Although eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) is one indicator of poverty, it is true to say that *"not all those entitled to FSM take them up due to stigma or embarrassment and, crucially, many low-income families do not meet the threshold of FSM entitlement"* (paragraph 32).

The Explanatory Memorandum states that Option 1 would *"continue with Welsh Government's future plans says that, 'schools and parents would continue to cover the majority of costs to enable pupils to attend residential outdoor activities, which would result in individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, continuing to miss out on participating in residential outdoor activity experiences with their peers'"* (paragraph 228). If Welsh Government opts for Option 1 rather than 2 (which would introduce the Bill and make residential outdoor education *"free of charge"*), then this issue remains acute, especially when voluntary parental contributions would be needed to secure children's access. Currently, the number of families living in relative income poverty is increasing (paragraph 36).

Option 2 contributes to *"easing the pressure on schools and parents, reducing anxiety for parents, children and teachers. By making a course of residential outdoor education an entitlement within the curriculum, every child will have the opportunity to access the benefits, no matter what their circumstances."*

Residential outdoor education and the impact on pupil mental health

The emphasis that the Explanatory Memorandum places on improving children's mental health is likely to be welcomed by parents (paragraph 94). The National Parent Survey shows that anxiety and depression have become major concerns for parents in Wales and the rest of the UK.

A whole system approach that includes developing mental health support services encompassing *"parents, carers and their wider families across Wales"* (paragraph 94) would be supported by our research. Parents tell us they are often unhappy with the support received for their child's anxiety and depression when they report it.

Paragraph 166 mentions *"parental and child anxiety/uncertainty"* as a common barrier to access. These anxieties can be reduced by managing expectations and providing as much information as possible so that families know what to expect. Clear, accessible and concise communications, written with parents in mind, will help to minimise such barriers. See the section on mental health below that details Parentkind's research findings.

Parentkind research on the cost of school day

Parentkind's National Parent Survey has evidence to support the necessity of the Bill's ambition, as the Explanatory Memorandum says, *"to ensure a course of residential outdoor education is provided to registered pupils at maintained schools once, free of charge, during their schooling,"* (paragraph 114).

The National Parent Survey found that an increasing number of families are struggling to meet the day-to-day costs of sending a child to school. Many families on low incomes live in relative poverty but do not meet the eligibility criteria for FSM. Subsidised outdoor residential (paragraph 34) may not be enough to keep costs sufficiently low for families living in reduced socio-economic circumstances.

Many of the issues relating to the burden of cost that would otherwise fall upon parents warned about in the Explanatory Memorandum are evidenced

by Parentkind's National Parent Survey data. The results show that school uniform (53% in Wales, 50% across the UK), school trips (50% in Wales, 44% across the UK) and school meals/drinks (32% in Wales, 30% across the UK) are the top three costs parents are most concerned about when sending their child to school.

Overall, 30% of parents in Wales are concerned about the cost of sending their child to school, although 60% also say that the cost is acceptable. Parents on lower incomes are more likely to struggle with the costs. Out of parents across the UK, 49% of those eligible for FSM say that they are concerned about the cost of sending their child to school. The burden is also higher for households with three or more children, where overall 40% of UK parents in this category indicate concern over school costs (as mentioned above, the Explanatory Memorandum's paragraph 39 acknowledges the impact of costs on larger families).

When it comes to meeting the cost of sending a child to school, 25% of parents in Wales say that they struggle to afford them. The issue is more pressing for parents on low incomes. Overall, in the UK, a full half (50%) of parents whose children are eligible for FSM say that they struggle to afford them, which is double the average percentage for Wales.

Parental concerns about the cost of school trips

Half (50%) of parents in Wales say the cost of school trips is a concern. That compares to 44% of parents in the UK overall, demonstrating that this concern is already higher among parents in Wales. Out of those parents in Wales, mothers (55% vs 46% of fathers), parents with a child at secondary school (56% vs 45% of primary parents), parents with a child eligible for free school meals (59% vs 48% not eligible) or with a child with Additional Learning Needs (58% vs 48% with a child without ALN) are all more likely to be concerned about the cost of school trips than other parents in Wales.

Parentkind's evidence lends weight for the need of the Bill to ensure that any residential outdoor education provision does not increase the costs on parents, and particularly those in low-income households.

Learning activities as a family

The National Parent Survey for Wales found that almost two thirds (64%) of parents in Wales report doing learning activities as a family outside of school (e.g. visits to museums, nature walks) at least monthly.

The figure is higher for younger parents (73% of parents aged 18–34 and 69% of parents aged 35–44 vs 59% aged 45–54 and 49% of parents aged 55+), parents with two children (70% vs 58% of parents with one child) and those with a child at primary school (82% vs 58% of parents with a child at secondary school).

Just 60% of parents in the UK whose children are eligible for FSM report doing so at least monthly, and one barrier is likely to be cost. These results show that parents, regardless of background or financial circumstances, recognise the importance of opportunities for children to learn outside of the classroom. This includes activities outdoors that can demonstrably improve wellbeing (see the section on mental health).

Children taking part in activities outside of school

The '*Wales reform of the school day and year March 2022 survey*' was run in conjunction with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG). Results show that more than four in five parents in Wales (83%) would welcome the opportunity for their child to take part in activities at school outside of core school hours. Parents expressed an interest in a range of extra-curricular activities, with the most popular across primary and secondary being physical activity and sports (65%). Primary school parents also expressed interest in extra art and drama activities (53%) and music (52%), while secondary school parents wanted a stronger focus on additional opportunities for academic learning (39%) and access to homework clubs (41%).

Mental health

The Explanatory Memorandum section on mental health (paragraphs 92–95) picks up on the benefits of outdoor education on children's wellbeing.

Children's mental health is a major concern of many parents regardless of

socio-economic circumstances. The educational experience of children from low-income households (taking eligibility for FSM as an indicator of poverty) reveals some stark differences in wellbeing. Initiatives to improve the mental wellbeing of all pupils would be welcomed by most parents. However, it is children from less affluent households who stand to benefit the most from the provision of outdoor education. The National Parent Survey 2023 found the following key differences between parents across the UK:

- Just under six in ten (59%) parents of children eligible for FSM say their child enjoys learning at school. This compares to just over seven in ten (71%) parents whose child is not eligible for FSM.
- Just over half (52%) of parents of children who are eligible for FSM say that their child enjoys wider school life, compared to more than six in ten (63%) parents whose children are not eligible for FSM.
- Just under two thirds (65%) of parents of children who are eligible for FSM say that their child feels safe at school. This compares to more than eight in ten (81%) parents of children who are not eligible for FSM.
- Parents of children who are eligible for FSM are significantly less likely to say that their child is happy (70%) than parents of children who are not eligible for FSM (83%).
- Parents of children eligible for FSM are both significantly more likely to be worried about depression (31%) than parents of children who are not eligible for FSM (19%). They are also more likely to say that their child has experience of it (23% vs 12%). Overall, they are more likely to say that their child has experienced at least one mental health issue (84%) than parents whose children are not eligible for FSM (75%). They are also more likely to be concerned about their child self-harming (16% vs 10%) and say that their child has experience of it compared to parents of children not eligible for FSM (12% vs 6%).

Parents recognise the benefit of outdoor activities on their children's mental health and wellbeing. The *'Wales reform of the school day and year March 2022 survey'* found that parents identified a need for activities that support

their child's mental and emotional wellbeing. More than two in five (45%) of all parents say they would appreciate these activities being offered at their child's school. For families living on a lower income, this need was higher still with nearly half (49%) requesting this option. Families on a lower income were also more likely to want to take part in wellbeing and learning activities as a family at their school, suggesting they might not have as many opportunities to do this elsewhere. This suggests that many parents of all backgrounds would recognise the wellbeing benefits of their child experiencing a week of outdoor education.

Paragraph 170 identifies childhood experience of anxiety as a common barrier to attendance at residential outdoor education. Yet the benefits of outdoor education are laid out in paragraph 174. The provision of information to parents about residential outdoor education should highlight the potential mental health benefits of the scheme. For parents who may struggle with literacy or whose first language is not English, direct communication through the ready availability of members of staff who are ambassadors for the scheme may help to ensure that children who will benefit most, but who may be resistant to join, understand what they may gain. This will ensure that, in conjunction with their parents, a decision can be reached about whether or not they will attend.

Eligibility for entitlement to residential outdoor education

To ensure that new provision of residential outdoor education is as inclusive as possible the Welsh government (paragraph 119) should consider how children educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS) might be included as part of new provision. Effective communication with parents will be important so that children not attending a mainstream school do not miss out on new provision.

Parentkind suggests that access to the scheme should be as broad as possible, encompassing all families who feel that the child would benefit from it.

Methodologies

National Parent Survey 2023

The National Parent Survey was conducted online by YouGov. The fieldwork took place 5th – 26th June 2023 amongst 5,126 parents in England (3,067), of which 476 are from the East of England, Scotland (1,032), Wales (768) and Northern Ireland (259) who have at least one child aged 4–18 in school. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK parents aged 18+. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Wales reform of the school day and year March 2022 survey

Parents and carers across Wales were invited to take part in an online survey during January 2022. The survey was available in English and Welsh. In total, we heard from 6,843 parents and carers. 5,350 had a youngest child in primary school, and 1,493 had their youngest child in secondary school. 1,676 were either in receipt of, or in the process of applying for, means-tested benefits. This represents 25% of the entire sample; we refer to these respondents as ‘lower income families’ in our analysis.

Agenda Item 4

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee on the Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

ROE 24

Ymateb gan: Llywodraeth Cymru

Response from: Welsh Government

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1. The General principles of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

1.1. The proposal is for a Bill which places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that young people receiving maintained education are provided with the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education, for at least one week at some stage during their school years. In effect it seeks to create a statutory entitlement to at least 1 week of residential outdoor experience (ROE) for all pupils in Wales.

1.2. There is currently no such entitlement in legislation at the moment.

2. The Need for the Legislation

2.1. The Bill is unnecessary as schools already have the legal powers to provide residential outdoor education if they wish. It will add to the financial burdens of schools and local authorities and the Bill is drafted in such a way that its legal effect is unclear and is defective. The Bill makes amendments to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (The 2021 Act) which are not appropriate as they do not fit with the legislative scheme or the principles of that Act. The Bill will have the effect of distracting schools from the vital task of implementing the new curriculum.

2.2. The new curriculum makes ample provision for outdoor experiences and the Explanatory Memorandum for the Bill does not adequately make the case for why pupils must be offered residential outdoor education. The Bill has the effect of making ROE compulsory.

3. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act)

- 3.1. The Welsh government believes that the Bill does not further the aims of the WFG Act in a meaningful way and undermines the overarching aims of the principles of the new curriculum in the 2021 Act.
- 3.2. The seven goals identified in the WFG Act already press the importance of developing a healthier Wales as well as emphasising socio-economic goals, including the importance of developing a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities. There is ample opportunity in the new curriculum for schools to include outdoor education and residential outdoor education if that is appropriate. The new curriculum requires schools and other settings to take design their own curriculum within the legislative framework set by the 2021 Act. That will enable those schools and other settings to tailor the curriculum to the needs of its pupils.
- 3.3. The Bill adopts a one size fits all approach by effectively requiring all schools and settings to offer a ROE and for all pupils to undertake a ROE. The effect of the Bill is to make ROE compulsory and so it undermines that flexibility the 2021 Act now provides for schools and other settings.

4. Stakeholder Concerns

Consultation Responses

- 4.1. On 31 January 2023, Sam Rowlands MS launched a consultation on his proposal for the then Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill, inviting people to give their views on the policy objectives of the proposed law. The consultation closed on 17 March 2023.
- 4.2. Whilst respondees were largely in support for the principles behind the proposal, we note that eleven respondees (6%) disagreed with the principles behind the proposal, and that seven of these were head teachers, whilst another was the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT).
- 4.3. Those in disagreement predominantly gave the following reasons:
 - Concern that funding will be diverted away from schools' core budgets, which they believe should be the priority for any available spending on education.
 - Concerns about staffing implications if this is made statutory – having sufficient numbers of school staff to accompany pupils and the impact and pressure on those that are willing to go.

- Fears that schools will not receive funding for the full costs of the staffing requirements – either paying overtime to those supervising visits or sourcing supply cover during their absence.

4.4. While broadly supportive of the principles behind the proposal, there were many observations of matters respondents believe require further consideration. These include:

- Concerns about the negative staffing implications if this is made a statutory requirement.
- Concerns as to whether this should be a universal free entitlement or whether resources should instead be targeted at those who face specific barriers, such as low-income households.
- Concerns that ROE should be seen not just a one-off but something that is consolidated with lead-up and follow-up activities and learning.
- Concerns over the quality of provision and how appropriate standards will be ensured.
- Concerns over the capacity of the sector and the arrangements in place (including governance and funding) between Welsh Government, local government and providers.
- Concerns over the range and diversity of outdoor education provided, recognising that children and young people have different needs and interests.
- Concerns that the practicalities and importance of meeting some pupils' complex needs, for example those with medical, emotional or learning needs, or disabilities.
- Concerns as to whether outdoor education necessarily needs to be residential and how it can also be embedded within school and community life.
- Questions as to how the proposed Bill can complement the promotion of the Welsh language and culture, including increasing opportunities for children and young people to hear and speak Welsh.

4.5. The Welsh Government's view of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill recognises these concerns from those stakeholders closest to the delivery of residential outdoor education in schools in Wales and, in particular, has very serious reasons for choosing not to support it in three key areas:

- Curriculum Delivery
- Legislation
- Finance

4.6. These concerns are set out in detail in the rest of this document.

5. Curriculum Delivery

Overview

- 5.1 The Curriculum for Wales places a strong emphasis on experiential learning. Learning outside is far broader than a single residential experience. It is recognised as being of primary importance to a child's progression as well as their development, and well-being, including their social, emotional, physical, cognitive, cultural and personal development – making experiences richer and more memorable. This is especially true at early years but extends throughout learners' time in school.
- 5.2 Effective use of the learning environment is a key enabler for the curriculum across the whole 3-16 age continuum. When designing their curriculum, practitioners will need to consider how their school environment and locality, both indoors and outdoors, can support learners of all ages to experience authentic learning opportunities.
- 5.3 The statutory guidance for Curriculum for Wales, which all schools must consider, emphasises the importance of the learning environment as a key enabler of the curriculum and states that learners of all ages should experience “authentic learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors”. The pedagogical principles outlined in the guidance also emphasise the importance of learning outdoors.
- 5.4 There is therefore a clear expectation that learners engage outdoors on a regular basis and that this helps learners become healthy, confident individuals. The details of this will differ in relation to the school's physical space, the age, development and needs of learners and the focus of the learning. Schools then ensure that they embed outdoor learning in a variety of ways.
- 5.5 This recognises that what engages learners and best supports them to develop positive behaviours around the outdoors will differ from learner to learner and there is no 'one size fits all' approach.
- 5.6 This also recognises that positive, long-term behaviours need to be built over time and those behaviours are most effectively developed through continuous exposure to the outdoors in the school's context, allowing learners to appreciate the benefits of the outdoors at all ages. This is considerably wider than a single intervention.

Curriculum for Wales Framework

5.7 Outdoor learning is encouraged across the Curriculum for Wales, in particular in Health and Well-being, Science and Technology, and Humanities. This is highlighted in the “Designing your Curriculum” sections for each of the Areas of Learning and Experience (“AoLEs”), which form part of the statutory guidance provided for under Section 3 (1) of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 that all schools must consider in developing their curriculum. This includes:

Health and well-being:

- *What opportunities for physical activity will your learners find enjoyable and meaningful? What motivates them to engage in a variety of roles, responsibilities and environments (e.g. indoor, outdoor, in and around water)?*
- *For example, enjoyment of activities outdoors will influence learners’ mental health and emotional well-being.*

Science and Technology:

- *Exploration and experience of the world through inquiry, including fieldwork, investigating environments indoors and outdoors in a safe and systematic way, are crucial for all learners across the 3 to 16 continuum.*
- *This can help build learners’ understanding of different environmental issues and help them to learn to demonstrate care, responsibility, concern and respect for all living things and the environment in which we live.*

Humanities:

- *A range of opportunities to learn outdoors to:*
 - *experience and reflect on the wonder of the natural world*
 - *engage with a variety of landscapes, historical and geographical features, environments and places*
 - *learn in local natural spaces and historical sites*
 - *conduct enquires and fieldwork both independently and collaboratively, in partnership with organisations, groups and individuals when appropriate*
 - *engage with historical, cultural and religious sites, including places that are significant to those whom faith and belief are important*
 - *spending time outdoors supports learners’ social, emotional, spiritual and physical development, as well as their well-being.*
- *Being outdoors also helps them to develop an awareness of the need to show care and respect for living things.*

Pedagogy

- 5.8 Using the outdoors to extend learning beyond classroom boundaries is integral to the pedagogy of a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, providing first-hand, authentic contexts for learning. This year, for example, we have awarded funding to Mudiad Meithrin to enable eight new affiliate Outdoor Thinking trainers to qualify to deliver the new certificate in Outdoor Practice qualification through the Welsh language. The qualification is specific for the early years, enabling the practitioner to become proactive in enhancing the provision, practice and management of the outdoor environment for well-being, play, learning and development. It is also strong on child development, empowering the practitioner to enact effective early years pedagogies in their work setting.
- 5.9 The [Enabling Learning](#) guidance emphasises that while the 12 pedagogical principles should apply to all curriculum design, particular attention should be paid to key approaches that are essential to foundation learning – such as outdoor learning and play.
- 5.10 The Pedagogy section of the Curriculum for Wales framework and key parts of the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) guidance, outline the importance of outdoor learning across the whole education continuum. While traditionally outdoor learning has been associated with early years education, the Curriculum for Wales encourages its use for all age groups, where it can support learning through providing authentic, inspiring experiences and contexts.

Conclusion

- 5.11 It is for these reasons (curriculum principles, pedagogy and the nature of the AoLEs) that the Curriculum for Wales does not tie outdoor learning to a specific experience at a particular point in a learner's pathway. Any additional requirement of the nature proposed, if it related to the curriculum would likely be going beyond the principles and ethos of the Curriculum, set out in the Curriculum Framework.
- 5.12 We consider the most effective way to develop learners' positive behaviours around and relationship with the outdoors to be a continuous experience of outdoor learning throughout their learning journey. We will, of course, continue to support outdoor learning through our approach to resources and supporting materials and we intend to work with the profession through the National Network, our platform for engaging with the teaching profession on the Curriculum for Wales.

6. Legislation

- 6.1 Currently there is no legal duty to provide pupils at maintained schools in Wales with a ROE in either the “old curriculum” or in the “new curriculum”. Wales is currently phasing out the old curriculum which is primarily contained in Part 7 of the Education Act 2002. At the same time, it is phasing in the new curriculum which is primarily contained in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021. The last year of the transition will be for year 11 pupils in the 2026-27 school year, at which point all pupils in Wales of compulsory school age will be studying the new curriculum. It is a matter for schools as to whether they chose to provide ROE or not. There is nothing in legislation that prevents or requires it.
- 6.2 If ROE is provided as an extra curricula activity then schools are entitled to charge for the cost of providing ROE. However, if that is provided as part of the compulsory curriculum, whether under the old or new curriculum then no charge may be made for the ROE provided.
- 6.3 In light of that the EM states that: “The proposal was to establish a Bill to place a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that young people receiving maintained education are provided with the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education, for at least one week, at some stage during their school years”. We have taken that to mean exclusively on local authorities. However, the Bill does not place the obligation to provide the residential outdoor education on local authorities, as stated in the EM, but instead places it directly on the Welsh Ministers. It requires them to provide ROE and also to seemingly fund that as if that ROE were provided by a 3rd party.
- 6.4 Separately, the Bill requires the Welsh Ministers to make it a compulsory part of the new curriculum so that the schools must provide it as part of their designed curriculum offer. Therefore the Bill is not clear what the legislative intent is as to who is to provide the ROE.
- 6.5 The EM further states that “Children and young people will be encouraged but not compelled to participate in residential outdoor education”. Unfortunately, in requiring the Welsh Ministers to make ROE a mandatory part of the curriculum, it does make it compulsory. The Bill does not add up to a sensible set of legislative provisions.
- 6.6 The new curriculum set out in the 2021 Act is a huge change for schools and other settings. They will need time and support to fully implement that in order to achieve the best results for learners. The changes proposed by the Bill, whatever the actual policy intent is, will place additional burdens on them and detract them from that mission.

Duty to provide ROE

- 6.7 As noted above, the Bill does not achieve its stated purpose of establishing a statutory duty *on local authorities* to ensure young people are provided with the opportunity to experience ROE. There are no duties placed directly on local authorities in the Bill. All duties are placed on Welsh Ministers. However, in requiring the Welsh Ministers to make it a *What Matters Statement* schools and other settings will be required to deliver it.
- 6.8 Accordingly, section 64A of the Bill seeks to place a duty on the Welsh Ministers to take all reasonable steps to ensure that ROE is provided to all pupils at a maintained school. However, there are several problems with that approach.
- 6.9 The Welsh Ministers do not *provide* education directly (i.e. deliver education to learners). Instead, their duties are confined to the provision of financial resources or other support in the form of guidance etc. It is not appropriate to place such a duty on the Welsh Ministers.
- 6.10 Such a duty is particularly out of step with the legislative scheme of the 2021 Act, where education delivery duties are placed on the settings themselves (e.g. head teachers, governing bodies, teachers in charge of a PRUs etc).
- 6.11 This duty is also phrased in terms that the Welsh Ministers must take *reasonable steps* to ensure ROE is provided. It is not clear how far that duty would require the Welsh Ministers to go to provide the ROE. The Bill provides reasonable steps includes making it a key concept i.e. a compulsory element in the curriculum and making guidance. As the Welsh Ministers appear to be required to do both of those things it is not clear what else, if anything, the reasonable steps duty would require them to do.
- 6.12 In requiring the Welsh Ministers to make it a key concept, it has the effect of making it a compulsory part of the curriculum. That means schools and other settings would be obliged to ensure ROE is provided. That is inconsistent with the statement in the EM that the purpose of the Bill is to require the local authorities to do this or the provisions in the Bill that actually require the Welsh Ministers do this. The Bill is not clear on who must provide the ROE.
- 6.13 It is also not clear what the outcome for the pupil/parent is to be if the child does not want to go on a ROE. There could be many reasons for a child not wanting to attend. If it is a compulsory part of the curriculum, then there must be some sanction for failing to take part in it. Presumably that would involve disciplinary action being taken for non-attendance at a required school curriculum event in the same way as it would for not attending a normal class session. Whilst the EM states it is to be voluntary that is not the legal effect of the Bill.

- 6.14 It is possible given what is said in the EM that the real intention for section 64A(1) is for it to only require the Welsh Ministers to exercise their existing functions so as to facilitate other bodies to deliver the ROE themselves (i.e. the local authority and/or schools), rather than the Welsh Ministers directly provide the ROE. Section 66 of the 2021 Act already provides that the Welsh Ministers must exercise their functions with a view to facilitating the performance of functions conferred on those under Part 3 and 4 of the 2021 Act. In other words, they should ensure resources in the form of money etc are there to enable the settings to actually deliver the new curriculum. However, if that was the intention of section 64A then it fails to achieve it.
- 6.15 As noted above, section 64A(2) provides that taking reasonable steps includes making ROE a key concept within an AoLE and issuing a code as to how a curriculum is to make provision for ROE. However, ROE conceptually is not a subject and therefore does not sit well as a key concept within the legislative scheme of the 2021 Act. That underscores the point that ROE does not fit in the 2021 Act. Further, making it a compulsory part of the curriculum does not mean the LA must provide it. As noted above the Bill does not have that legal effect.
- 6.16 As this is to be a compulsory part of the curriculum, then presumably Estyn will need to inspect. It is not clear how that will work given it is provided off site by 3rd parties and often private businesses. Estyn has powers to enter, inspect and remove documents in respect of school inspections but has limited powers to do that where part of a pupil's education is provided off school site. It would not extend to children attending ROE below the age of 15. No provision is made in respect of that in the Bill.
- 6.17 As a compulsory part of the curriculum and arranged by the schools, then the school will be in locus parentis. In other words, they will be held to be legally responsible for each pupil as if they were a responsible parent. That is the case when attending the school site but that it is a more onerous task if attending ROE on a 3rd party bodies premises and using its equipment.
- 6.18 Section 64A(1) provides that the duty must be discharged (i.e. a duty to ensure ROE is provided) before pupils cease to be a registered pupil at a school. The Bill only applies to maintained schools in Wales. Therefore, if a pupil ceases to be registered as a pupil at a school in Wales at any time and for any reason - e.g. in order to leave Wales, to attend a PRU, or is provided with EOTAS then the Welsh Ministers will have failed in that duty. That would be an untenable position for the Welsh Ministers as they simply cannot know when each and every pupil will cease to be registered at a school in Wales.
- 6.19 The Bill also has implications for the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (the STPCD). It is not clear whether teachers are going to be required to supervise and so attend these overnight residential activities. They are not currently obliged to do that and so it seems to officials there would presumably have to be an amendment to the STPCD.

Guidance

- 6.20 The draft inserts a new section 71A into the 2021 Act. That provides that the Welsh Ministers must issue guidance under section 71 of the 2021 Act. There are several problems with that approach.
- 6.21 The section 71 guidance making power is a power and not a duty i.e. it is discretionary. It is not appropriate to turn the discretionary guidance making power into a mandatory making guidance making power for the purposes of ROE. If mandatory guidance making was wanted, then it should be a free-standing provision and not linked to section 71. The proposed section 71A would introduce an inconsistency in the approach to guidance making powers in the 2021 Act. It is not clear why ROE guidance is treated differently to guidance on other important matters in the new curriculum e.g. RVE, RSE or any of the AoLEs. As it is, the Bill presents a confusing and misleading picture to the reader.
- 6.22 It is also unclear as to who is to be the target audience for the guidance issued under section 71A and 71. Section 71 has wide target audience but most of that audience is not relevant to the functions in section 64A. Section 64A only applies to maintained schools in Wales and so not PRUs, independent schools, funded non-maintained nursery education, forms of EOTAS. Yet, as drafted, the Bill provides that the Welsh Ministers would be able to issue guidance on that wider audience which have no functions in respect of ROE.
- 6.23 The drafting of the guidance provisions implies that guidance can include mandatory requirements. For example, the Bill provides that the guidance must include a number of matters including provision that ROE be provided in Welsh. It also states that the guidance may impose requirements before a person is merited to provide ROE. That is not appropriate as guidance can only contain advice and not requirements.
- 6.24 The guidance making powers also provides that any guidance must provide that ROE is not compulsory. However, the effect of other provisions of the Bill is that is to make it a compulsory part of the curriculum and so the Bill provisions are inconsistent.
- 6.25 In any event it is not advisable to include such restrictions on the Welsh Minister guidance making power. The very nature of guidance making powers is that they are to be used to help those with functions better exercise those functions. In order to do that, the guidance needs to have the scope to evolve over time. It may be that evidence will suggest in the future that the 4-day requirement is not best practice. In that case we would have to amend primary legislation before we could amend the guidance. That is not workable and inappropriate in our view.

7. Finance

- 7.1. The First Minister has been very clear with the Senedd and the public over recent months that the budget situation for public services is under extreme pressure. In response to the UK Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement, the Finance Minister stated that the Welsh Government's "budget in 2024-25 is now £3 billion lower in than it would have been if it had grown in line with the with the economy since 2010".
- 7.2. The 2024-25 draft budget has been the most difficult budget since devolution with the Welsh Government's budget being worth up to £1.3bn less in real terms than when it was set in 2021. As a result, we have had to re-shape the indicative spending allocations within our budget to provide extra funding and protection for the services which matter most to people and communities across Wales – the NHS and the core local government settlement, which funds schools, social services and social care and other everyday services.
- 7.3. Within the Education and Welsh Language portfolio budget we have re-prioritised funding so we can protect school funding as much as possible. Unfortunately, our overall funding settlement is not sufficient to meet all pressures and allow us to do all the things we want to do. Spending more in a specific area means there is less to spend in other areas. Where hard decisions have been required, we have sought to identify those areas where the relative impacts are lesser than their alternatives and we have sought to take action to mitigate impacts as far as possible.
- 7.4. We recognise that the cost-of-living crisis is putting schools and local authorities under significant pressure, and that there are no easy answers to resolving the issues being faced. During challenging financial times visibility and transparency around funding is even more important. Through the 2024-25 draft budget we are proposing further simplification and streamlining of the funding to local authorities and schools in order to provide more flexibility for schools and local authorities in the use of the funding. The proposal in the Bill to provide very specific and directed funding goes against our principle and approach to provide more flexibility in the use of grant funding.
- 7.5. The Bill places an absolute obligation on the Welsh Government to both provide and fund all outdoor residential education provision, whatever that may be, and whatever the cost. The EM estimates the additional cost to the tax payer would be up to £19.7m a year. Whilst we sympathise with the principles of encouraging ROE, what is being proposed by the Bill is simply not affordable and prioritising funding on ROE will mean less funding in other priority areas in education, such as school budgets.

Cost implications of the Bill

7.6. The EM states that the Bill will establish a statutory obligation for providers of maintained education to be allocated funding to enable them to provide ROE. In other words, it imposes an absolute statutory duty on the Welsh Ministers to fund the entire cost of whatever is provided by way of ROE.

The costings in the EM over a 5-year period are replicated below:

Costs (£)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Attending outdoor activity centres (Ongoing costs)						
Low range	12,397,720	12,317,360	12,209,800	11,868,800	11,559,000	60,352,680
High range	16,321,040	16,216,240	16,074,080	15,623,920	15,216,720	79,452,000
Transport (Ongoing costs)						
Low range	1,330,759	1,322,353	1,309,809	1,272,148	1,239,749	6,474,818
High range	1,861,574	1,850,044	1,833,195	1,780,829	1,735,735	9,061,377
Teacher cover (Ongoing costs)						
	1,554,335	1,535,813	1,498,348	1,447,457	1,388,414	7,424,366
Total costs						
Low range	15,282,814	15,175,526	15,017,956	14,588,405	14,187,163	74,251,864
High range	19,736,949	19,602,097	19,405,623	18,852,206	18,340,869	95,937,743

7.7. These costings are largely in-line with the estimates previously calculated for the Bill by officials. However, officials believe that the likelihood of these costs reducing year on year over the 5-year period, as shown above, is unlikely given the current rate of inflation.

7.8. In addition, and to be clear, the Bill imposes an absolute obligation on the Welsh Government to fund the provision whatever is provided. There is a significant risk that costs could become unaffordable in the current and future financial climate. In addition there are no indicative budgets post March 2025, therefore committing to forecast costings with no indicative budgets is risky.

Unquantified costs and disbenefits

7.9. These costings however do not cover the staffing implications of the Bill in terms of the likely required changes to the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (the STPCD), which has provision around the maximum hours worked in the year and when a teacher can be required to work additional hours. Supervising pupils on a week residential would be outside normal school session times and, at the moment, we presume schools manage this by asking for volunteers from teaching staff. There are also specific limits for those teachers working part-time. If a residential trip was to become compulsory, the STPCD would likely need to be amended to reflect that as that will need to be supported by teachers. The STPCD are given legal effect by an order and the content of the STPCD is negotiated with trade unions.

School financial position

7.10. There are increasing concerns within the education system of a funding crisis in Welsh schools. There are significant pressures on school budgets, and we are hearing that schools are needing to make very difficult decisions because of budgetary pressures.

7.11. The amount of funding set aside for school budgets is for local authorities to determine, the Welsh Government does not fund schools directly. The Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities for pre-16 provision in schools in Wales mainly through the Local Government Revenue Settlement in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

7.12. Once the local government settlement has been distributed to local authorities, it is the responsibility of individual authorities to set budgets for their schools which are determined by a local funding formula. The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 require 70% of funding for schools' budgets to be distributed on the basis of pupil numbers. Local authorities have discretion to distribute the remaining 30% on the basis of a range of factors so that they can take account of individual school circumstances.

7.13. Local authorities are required by law to have an established School Forum. The purpose of a School Forum is to help develop informed and confident dialogue between local authorities and their schools on budgetary issues.

7.14. The high level of reserves reported over the past few financial years has come as no surprise, due to many activities being paused during the pandemic. Schools continued to receive their normal core funding plus additional Covid-19 funding whilst having reduced expenditure due to various periods of school closure.

7.15. We knew that this would be a temporary position and although, on the face of it, schools have been in a much healthier position, the high level of reserves is depleting rapidly.

7.16. In the latest statistical release (published in October), school reserves have decreased from £301m in 2022, to £208m as of 31 March 2023; a decrease of £93m which is a 31% fall from the previous year.

7.17. In 2022, there were 44 schools in a deficit position, this number has increased to 117 schools as of March 2023.

7.18. Although school reserves still seem high, it is vital to note that they are decreasing at a significantly rapid rate and we must not forget that there are already many schools in a deficit position.

Conclusion

7.19. The Welsh Government's view is that the Bill will put significant and unnecessary additional pressure on education budgets at national, local authority and school level, at a time when they are arguably already as strained as they have ever previously been. Our view, therefore, is that the Bill is unaffordable at this present time.

Jayne Bryant MS, Children, Young People and Education
Committee Chair.
SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales

Eich cyf/Your ref:

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 12 January 2024

Dear Jayne Bryant MS

Annual Scrutiny

I am writing in response to your letter dated 20 December on the ongoing work of the Children, Young People and Education committee in relation to the radical reform of services for care experienced children and young people.

I can confirm I will be in attendance at the session on Wednesday 20 March 2024, whereby the Committee will focus on:

- the performance of local authority children's services
- the recent rapid review of child protection arrangements
- the use of unregistered accommodation for children in care
- care homes for children operating without registration
- Deprivation of Liberty Orders
- criminally exploited children and young people
- missing children
- workforce issues and
- other matters relevant to the CIW 2022-23 Annual Report.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. Baranski', written in a cursive style.

Gillian Baranski
Chief Inspector
Care Inspectorate Wales



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

15 January 2024

Dear Jayne Bryant MS,

RE: Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee evidence session with the Minister for Health and Social Services on Thursday 11 January

We are aware that comments were made by the Minister for Health and Social Services in response to Laura Anne Jones MS's question on speech and language therapy support at the committee scrutiny session last week.

The Minister stated that there has been an 11% increase in speech and language therapy training places in the past year. Training places for speech and language therapy have not increased since 2020 despite the advent of a second course at Wrexham University and have remained at 49. We understand that an anticipated increase of 8% in training places (from 49-53) for 2024/25 is not now due to go ahead due to budget pressures. We have repeatedly raised concerns that the Wrexham course is the smallest course in the UK (10-11 places) and that our membership data suggests that we have less speech and language therapists in Wales than any other part of the United Kingdom. We recognise the Minister's comments with regards placements but wanted to place on record that both our higher education institutions and health boards believe that the expansion of commissioning places is both possible and necessary.

We would be grateful if this letter could be brought before the attention of the committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pippa Cotterill', written in a cursive style.

Pippa Cotterill,
Head of Wales Office, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Agenda Item 5.3

Dear Jayne and Clerks of the Children, Young People and Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Royal Society of Chemistry. As Chair and Clerks of the Children, Young People and Education Committee I wanted to share with you the results from the recently published [Science Teacher Survey 2023](#).

A total of 2,932 teachers and technicians across secondary schools and FE colleges in the UK and Ireland responded to our questions. Out of these responses 117 were from Wales. We have written to the Minister with the findings and thought they would be of interest to the Committee. I've provided a summary of the Welsh results below:

Class-based and school-wide barriers and challenges

It has been a difficult time for teachers and technicians who are teaching science. While, like you, we are grateful for their work, it is hard to ignore how challenging their job has been of late, and these challenges have been articulated in this edition of the survey.

Teachers in Wales identified a number of challenges in their classrooms. The biggest challenge was student behaviour (80% of respondents picked this as a challenge they faced), followed by limited literacy (70%), limited numeracy (61%), insufficient classroom equipment (41%) and not enough technicians (35%).

70% of teachers identified insufficient funding as a school-wide issue, followed by poor pupil attendance (51%). To help meet these challenges, 71% of teachers suggested more non-contact time, and 72% suggested more funding.

Challenging student behaviour is a specific barrier to running practical work in science lessons. 66% of teachers identified this as the biggest barrier, followed by 58% of teachers citing a lack of time for practicals to be taught alongside theory. The lack of time in the curriculum was also a major challenge identified in the 2022 edition of the survey.

Challenges experienced by teachers extend to their own professional development. 74% of respondents in Wales who teach any level of chemistry did not access any subject-specific professional development (SSPD) in the last 12 months. 57% of teachers who teach any level of chemistry felt the amount of SSPD they received was insufficient or somewhat insufficient. The RSC provides high-quality SSPD, which is often free. However, teachers need more funding, time and cover to access these opportunities available to them.

Subject-specific professional development has a role to play in tackling teacher shortages. While enabling teachers to develop their expertise for the benefit of student learning, it also has the potential to improve teacher retention. By tackling issues such as unmanageable workload and prioritising ongoing professional development, we believe the need for short-term financial incentives to attract new teachers will be reduced.

The school workforce

Our survey shows pressures with the teaching and technician workforce. 29% of respondents reported their department was understaffed in chemistry, and 52% understaffed in technicians. Perhaps suggesting an ageing workforce in Wales, 27% of respondents are planning retirement in the near future, with a further 27% planning to leave the state sector (to move into the private sector or for a career change). Worryingly, amidst these workforce challenges, 36% of respondents indicated having low wellbeing. However, on a positive note for fostering Welsh identity, the ability to teach in Welsh was a more significant factor in school choice than pay or the workload policy of the school.

Teachers' working conditions (including excessive workload) and the declining appeal of teaching as a profession must be addressed, both to help attract new chemistry teachers, and to stem the flow of experienced teachers leaving the profession. We want to see long-term solutions to make teaching a more desirable profession that can withstand population and economic fluctuations. That requires a balance between getting the right financial incentives and making teaching a job people want to do because they enjoy it.

Preparing young people for their next steps

There are positive signs from our survey around the confidence of teachers in providing young people with context in the curriculum and advocating for possible future pathways for learners when deciding on their next steps. 76% of teachers are confident in linking the curriculum to real-life contexts, and 73% confident in linking to careers.

The full UK and Ireland Science Teacher Survey 2023 results can be found [here](#). I hope the results are of interest and as ever I'm more than happy to provide more information and to link you up with colleagues in our education policy team.

Kind regards

Niall

Niall Sommerville

Public Affairs Manager (Devolved Nations)

Royal Society of Chemistry

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Agenda Item 5.4

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted