

# Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

## Children and Young People's Survey Analysis

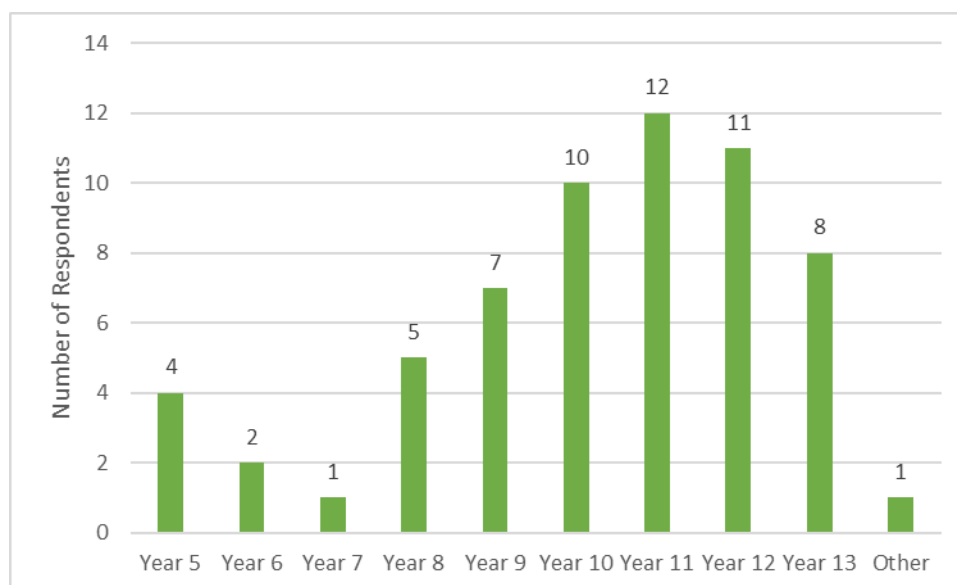
October 2020

This briefing paper summarises children and young people's responses to the survey.

### Background

In order to include their voices in discussions surrounding the Bill, children and young people were invited to complete a survey. It asked a series of questions designed to explore their views across a range of issues relating to their education. This included participating children and young people's perceptions of the current curriculum, as well as towards aspects of the Bill. For details on how the information provided to participating children and young people, and the questions they were asked, please see the Annex at the end of the document.

A total of 61 children and young people kindly shared their thoughts and reflections.<sup>1</sup> They represented a range of communities across Wales and age groups, including children and young people from Year 5 to Year 13:



<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the survey's privacy notice, authorisation is needed from a parent or guardian for under 13s' information to be used. Permission was not explicitly granted in the case of all under 13s who responded. In those cases, the information submitted could not be used or analysed.

In order to understand the views of respondents, we completed a number of analyses designed to understand trends and strength of feeling amongst those that responded. The analysis should be interpreted as providing an indication of the views and perceptions held by those that responded to the consultation, rather than providing a definitive account of the views of children and young people across Wales.

## 1 Main Messages

On the whole, the children and young people that kindly responded to the consultation were broadly supportive of some of the key principles underscoring the Bill. There was broad consensus amongst respondents, for example, of the proposals surrounding Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), including the removal of the parental right to withdraw. There was also broad support for the emphasis on learning both Welsh and English in the Bill.

In terms of the current curriculum, 95.1 percent of respondents wanted to learn more in school that would help them make the transition into adulthood and into employment. What was less clear was precisely the skills and expertise they felt would help them to make that transition. Respondents offered a diverse range of academic and applied subjects and skills that they felt would be valuable, from astronomy through to car mechanics. This issue was reflected in the finding that 49.2 percent of respondents felt they would like to see greater choice around what they study.

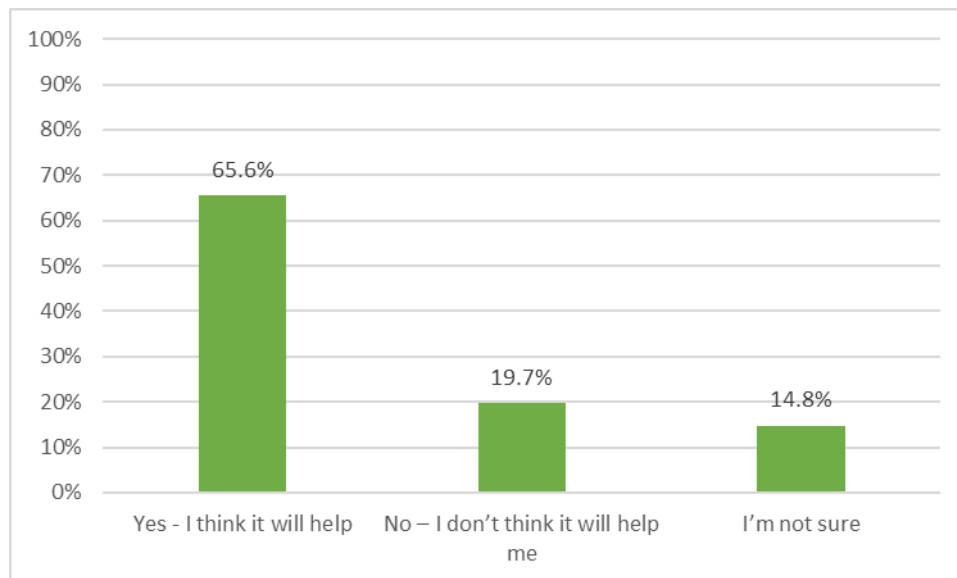
As with RSE and RVE, more broadly across the curriculum almost two thirds of respondents suggested that it was important for all children and young to receive the same learning opportunities at school. Whilst not as pronounced as the support for universal RSE and RVE provision, this may suggest that respondents feel that there are benefits to children and young people receiving a common curriculum. Additionally, 80.3 percent of respondents felt that those educated in other settings, including at home, should also receive the same opportunities as those in school.

In terms of feedback that respondents currently receive from teachers surrounding their learning, over two thirds felt that it could be improved either somewhat or substantially. Whilst this should be interpreted with caution, this finding suggests that feedback may be an area that could be improved in support of learning and progression.

In conclusion, respondents were asked what they thought about how children and young people should be taught in the future. Of the 26 respondents that offered suggestions, a key issue raised was the importance of including the voices of children and young people at all levels of the decision making, including within and across schools.

## 2 Perceptions Around the Value of Learning

Respondents were first asked if they felt that what they were currently taught in school would help them when they get older. The question itself explores the connections between what a respondent is being taught currently in the classroom, with what they feel it will be important to know in future. Overall, 65.5 percent of respondents felt that what they were currently learning in schools was valuable and would be helpful to them as they grow older:



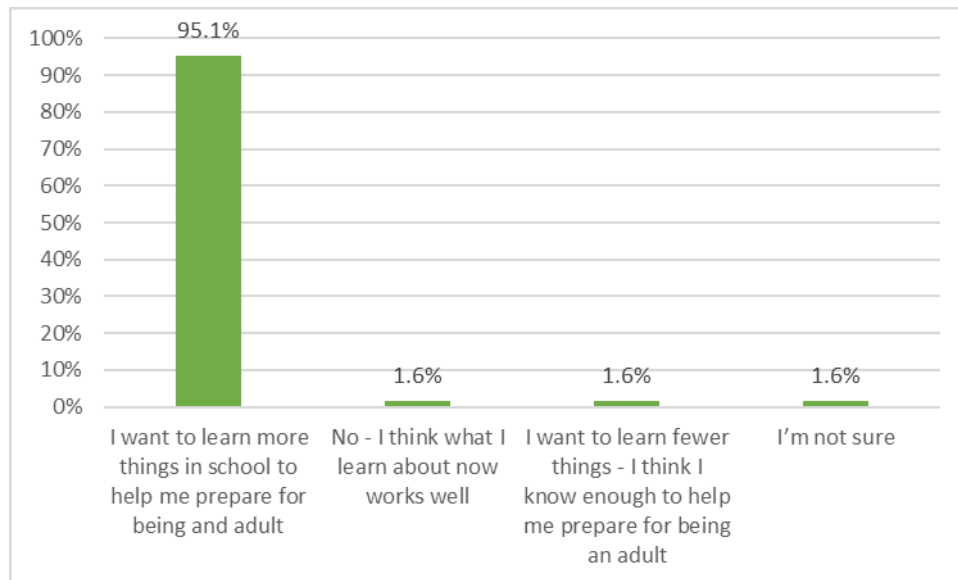
Almost 20 percent of respondents felt that what they were learning in school would not help them in future. This suggests that amongst these respondents there may be a disconnect between what they understand they need to know in future, and what they are currently learning. Whilst the significance and scale of this finding should be interpreted with caution, it does highlight a potential barrier for some children and young people to engagement in learning implicit within the current curriculum. There is broader evidence, for example, to suggest that perceptions around the value of education and teaching content can influence engagement in learning and ultimately levels of attainment.<sup>2</sup>

Within responses to this question there were no discernible and statistically significant trends across different year groups.

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<sup>2</sup> See Wang and Eccles (2013) for an interesting discussion on factors influencing engagement (paywall): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959475213000327>

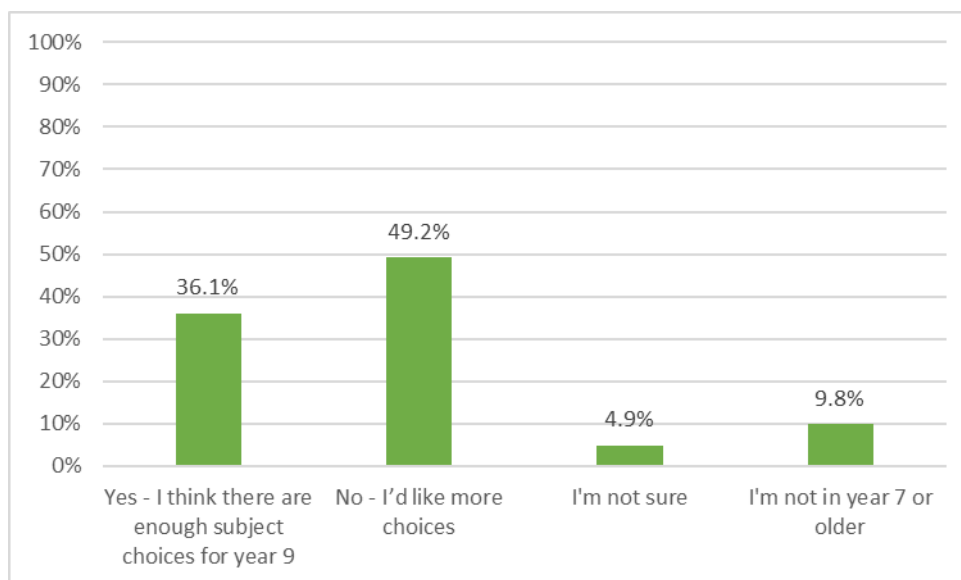
In order to explore the views towards the value and utility of learning further, respondents were then asked a more focused question around employment and becoming an adult. 95.1 percent of respondents felt that they would like to learn more in school about getting ready for being an adult and getting ready for a job:



This finding could suggest that, for the vast majority of respondents, the curriculum could do more to help children and young people prepare for life after school. Implicitly within responses is the perception that the current curriculum does not offer respondents the things that they think will be important to them in finding work and transitioning to adulthood. Broader qualitative reflections offered by respondents later in the survey may support this observation. For some children and young people, for example, the curriculum could be strengthened by providing a greater range of practical subjects such as financial literacy or life skills.

### 3 Learning and Choice

Respondents were then asked whether they felt that they had enough choices about what they study in year 9 and older. This sought to explore the extent of subjects available to children and young people, and whether this provided a sufficient range of learning opportunities within the current curriculum arrangements. Overall, 49.2 percent of respondents felt that they would like greater choice, and a further 36.1 percent suggested that current choice was sufficient:



Respondents were asked a follow up question exploring which subjects they would like to have the opportunity to study. 30 respondents offered thoughts and ideas (49.1 percent), often suggesting a range of subjects that they would be interested in studying:

*More language options and life skills.*

Pupil, Year 12

*I think that politics and economics should be subjects that if not mandatory then at least optional. Also I think that we should be taught more [about] climate change and the ecological crisis, maybe this even needs its own subjects as it's such a broad topic that affects many aspects of life.*

Pupil, Year 11

The types of subjects respondents raised were hugely diverse in nature. This included subjects ranging from the humanities, arts and the social sciences through to subjects often more associated with further or tertiary education, such as medicine, law and astronomy.

Alongside the diverse range of subjects, the number of responses was low which limits our ability to highlight any meaningful trends. Those subjects that did receive significant attention from four or more children and young people included:

- Modern Foreign Languages
- Government and Politics
- Psychology
- Journalism and Media Studies
- Life Skills e.g. car and house maintenance, financial literacy.

Another issue highlighted by eight, predominantly older children was the role of compulsory subjects. Some felt that they felt served to limit the choices available to them, for example, whilst others did not want to study them altogether:

*Geography, History, triple science & a language. This is impossible when Welsh, R.E, and the Welsh bacc are all compulsory*

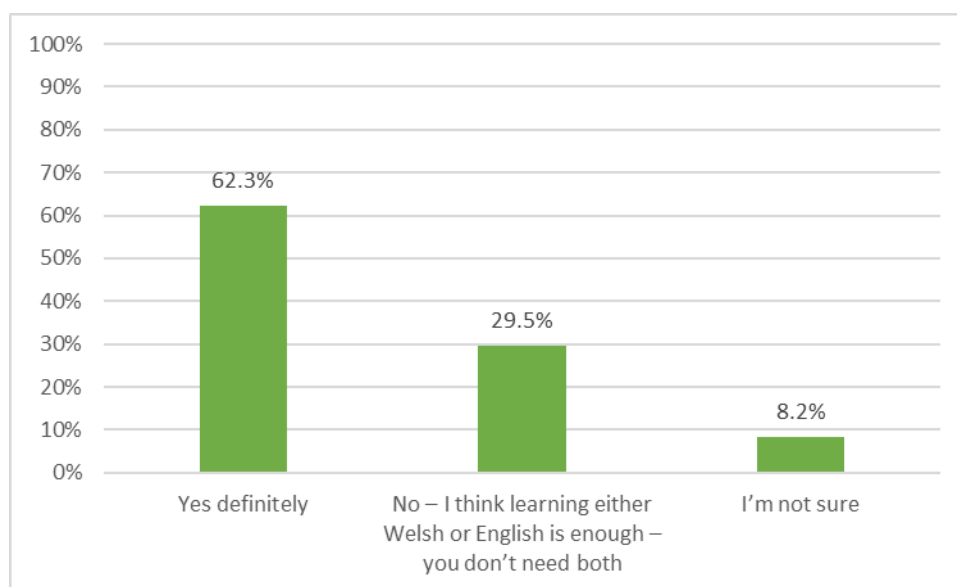
Pupil, Year 12

*I would like the choice not to study Welsh to GCSE level.*

Pupil, Year 10

## 4 Welsh and English Medium Provision

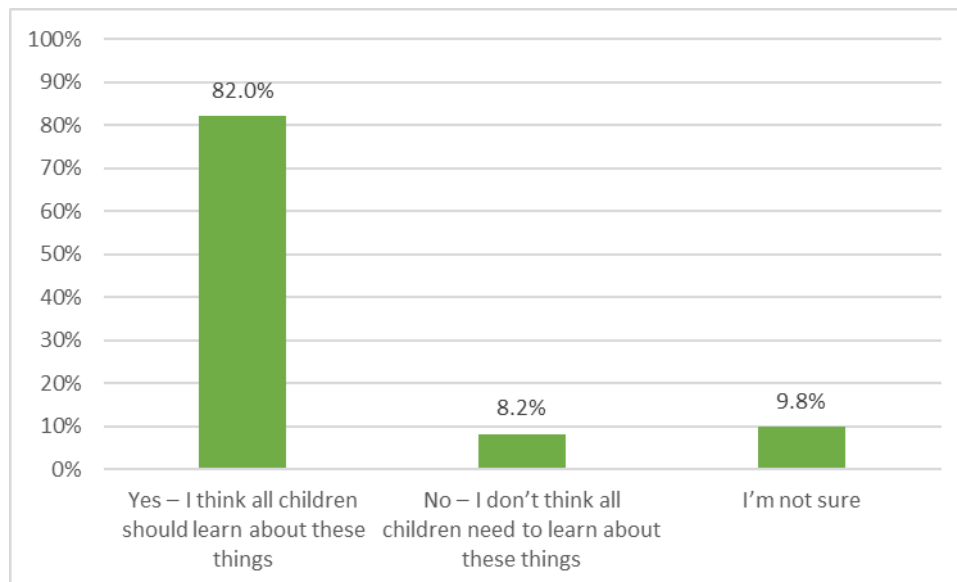
Respondents were then asked if it is important for all children and young people to learn both the English and Welsh language in school. Almost two thirds of respondents suggested that it was important to learn both in schools, which suggests broad support for the proposals contained within the Bill:



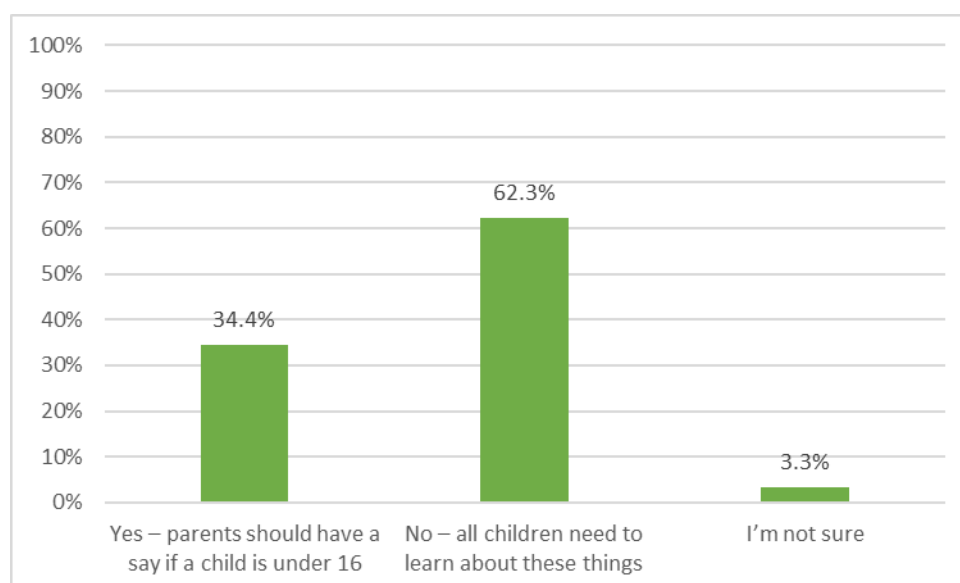
A further 29.5 percent of respondents, however, suggested that they felt it was not important to learn both languages, and that learning either Welsh or English was sufficient. This observation is supported by responses to other qualitative answers, including from those that felt they wanted to opt-out of certain provision, such as Welsh GCSE.

## 5 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

There was significant support for the proposals surrounding RSE. 82 percent of respondents agreed with the proposals for all children and young people to learn about how to have healthy friendships and relationships:



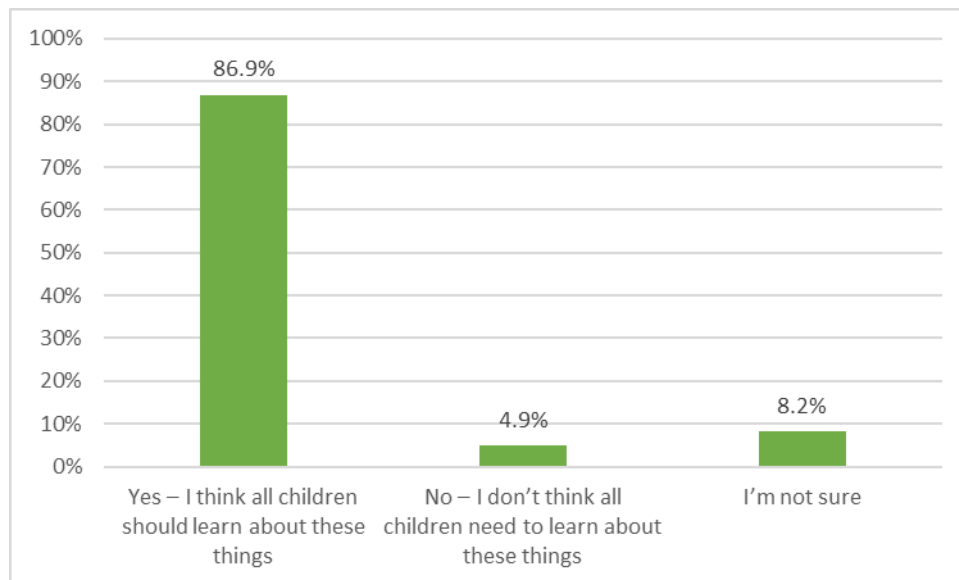
Exploring perceptions further, 62.3 percent of respondents felt that parents and carers should not have the right to withdraw children and young people from RSE provision, thereby agreeing with the position set out in the Bill:



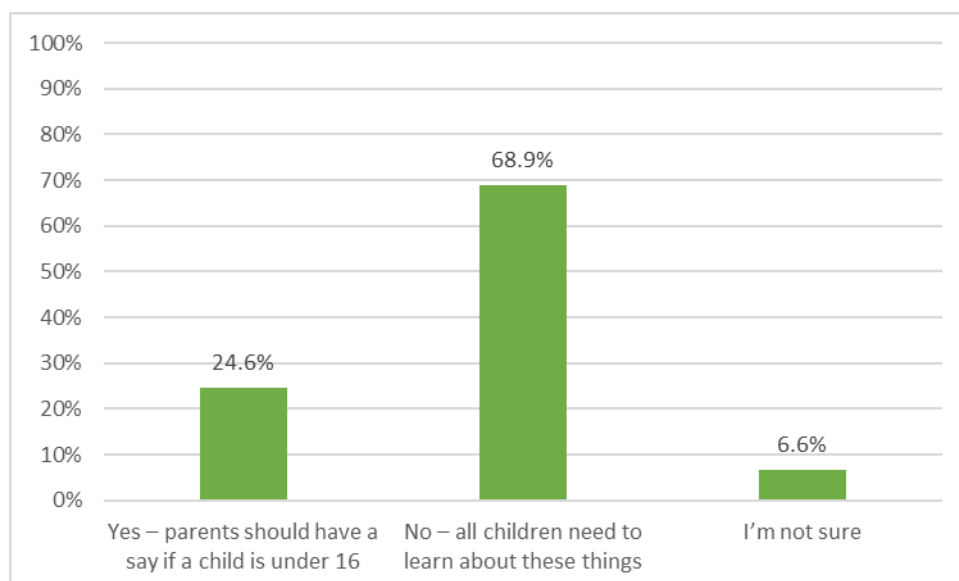


## 6 Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE)

Similarly, there was significant support from respondents surrounding the proposed reforms to RVE. 86.9 percent of respondents supported the proposals, including for all children and young people to learn about religions, beliefs, and different views about how we should treat each other:

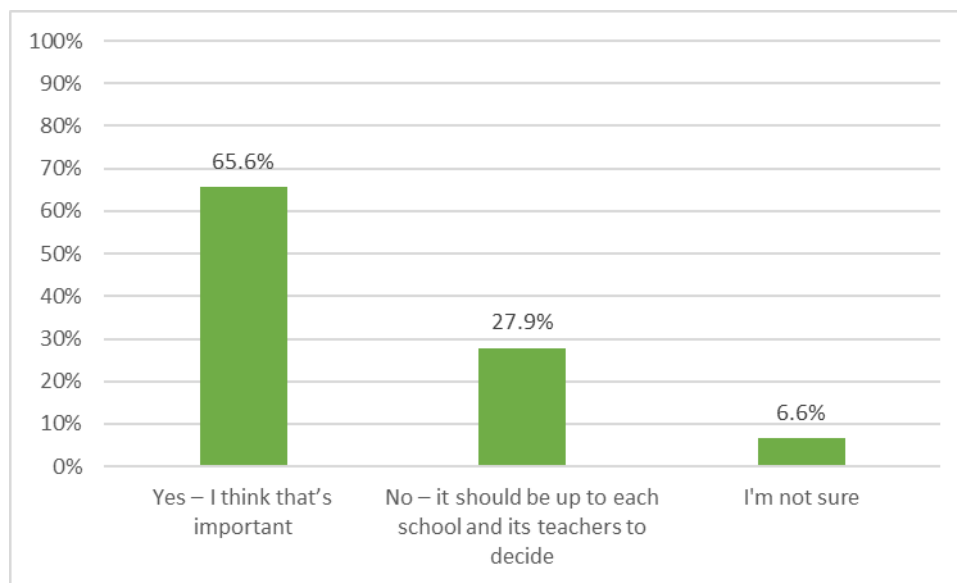


Again, there was significant support behind the withdrawal of parental opt-out of RVE provision. 68.9 percent of respondents felt that parents and carers should not have the right to withdraw children and young people from RVE provision:

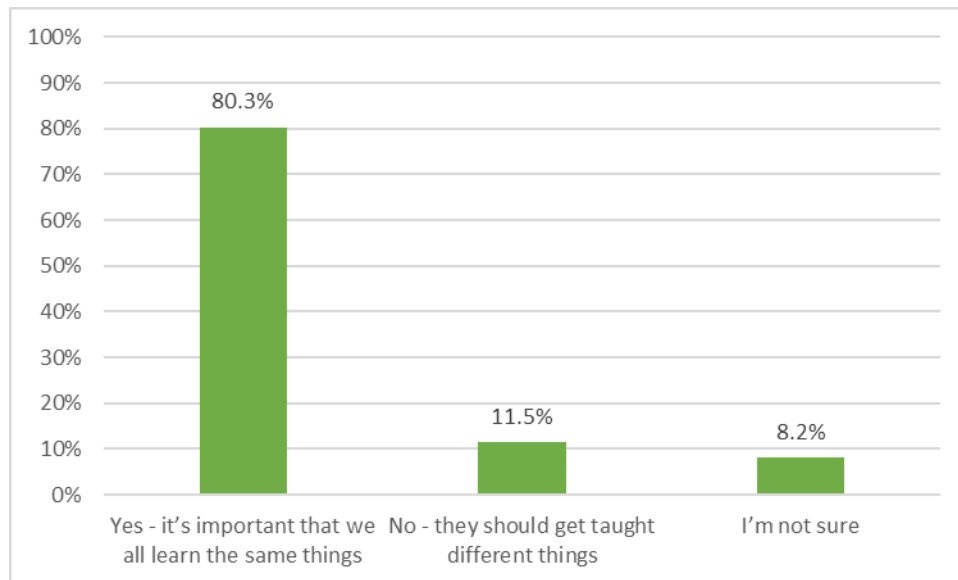


## 7 Uniformity of Learning Opportunities

In order to explore the views of respondents towards other aspects of the curriculum, respondents were asked if all children and young people in Wales should learn about the same type of things. Almost two thirds of respondents suggested that it was important for all schools across Wales to teach children and young people the same types of things. Whilst not as pronounced as the support for universal RSE and RVE provision, this may suggest that respondents feel that there are benefits to children and young people receiving a common curriculum.

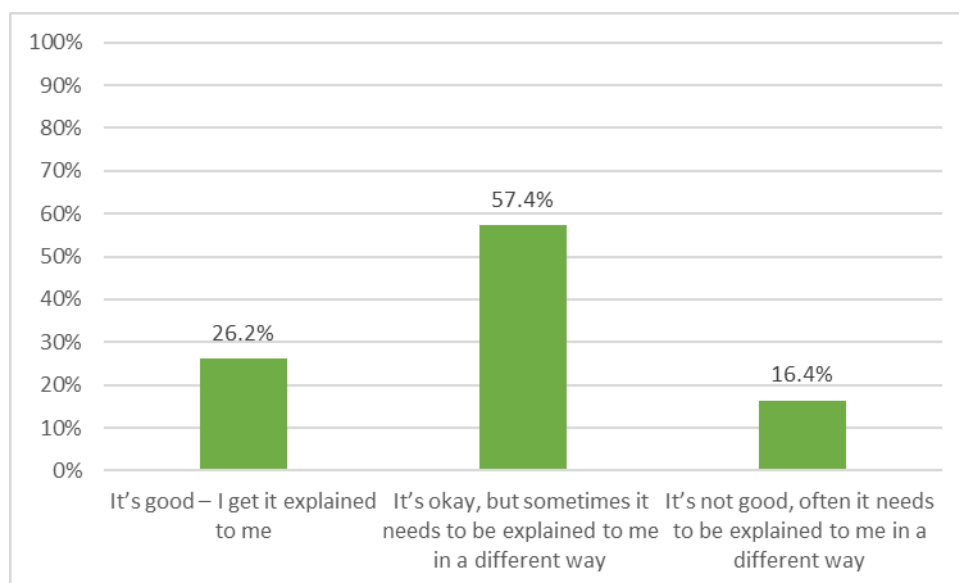


To explore this issue further, respondents were also asked whether children and young people who receive their education outside of school settings, including in the home, should learn the same things as other children. 80.3 percent of children agreed that it is important that all children learn the same things:



## 8 Perspectives on Feedback

In order to explore respondents' views towards feedback on their learning, they were asked if they thought about the way teachers communicate how they are doing and the things that they could do better. Feedback is an important part of learning. There is a significant body of research suggesting that effective feedback can have very high effects on learning and attainment.<sup>3</sup> Overall, 57.4 percent of respondents gave conditional support for the feedback they received. From this perspective they felt that the feedback they receive from teachers was okay, but sometimes needed to be explained in different ways. A further 26.2 percent of respondents felt satisfied with the feedback they received, whilst 16.4 percent felt that it could be improved:



The significance of these findings should be interpreted with caution. There are many factors that shape effective feedback, and these may not accurately express the thoughts and perceptions of children and young people beyond those that responded. However, it does suggest that improving feedback could be an effective approach to supporting more positive outcomes, including pupil's perceptions of teaching but also learning and attainment. The data is not statistically significant, however in terms of raw numbers older young people are more likely to report that they feel feedback could be improved than younger year groups.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, the Education Endowment Foundation (2018) for a summary of the evidence supporting effective feedback:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/generate/?u=https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/toolkit/?id=131&t=Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Toolkit&e=131&s=>

## 9 Turning to the Future

In conclusion, respondents were asked what they thought about how children and young people should be taught in the future. Of the 26 respondents that offered suggestions, a key issue raised was the importance of including the voices of children and young people at all levels of the decision making, including within and across schools:

*I think that children need to be taught in a less oppressive and free environment, the current education system doesn't leave much room for personal preferences or for children and young people to develop independence and their own opinion. Also schools should focus more on things that you actually need to know about in life, for example mortgages or how to get a job or how the government works etc.*

Pupil, Year 11

*Mae angen i ni gael ein trin fel oedolion ifanc a bod athrawon yn gwranddo ar ein barn.*

*We need to be treated as young adults and teachers need to listen on our opinions more.*

Pupil, Year 10, translated from the Welsh

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October 2020  
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## Annex

The survey was promoted via the Senedd's social media channels and drawn to the attention of the Committee's stakeholders to encourage the participation of children and young people.

The survey read as follows:

What children and young people are taught in school is going to change.

There are going to be new rules that schools must stick to – these rules are called a 'curriculum'.

We want to hear from you!

This survey has been designed for children and young people aged school year 5 and above. Answering these questions will help us to decide if the plans for learning in the future could be better or not, for you and other children in Wales. You don't have to write lots, and you can tell us in Welsh or English, it's up to you.

If you are an adult, or would like to provide more information than is possible on this survey, you can respond to the Committee's [call for views](#).

Who are we?

We are the Children, Young People and Education Committee. The Committee is a group of politicians who make important decisions. It's our job to listen to you, and by doing that we can try to make life better for children in Wales.

We ask that you read this [document](#) so that you can understand how we will use the information you provide.

Please note that if you are under 13, you need to ask the adult who's looking after you if you can write to us. This authorisation can be provided by email from your parent or guardian to [SeneddCYPE@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCYPE@senedd.wales)

Along with asking participants to provide their school year and the rough area that they live in, the survey posed the following questions and asked participants to select the answer that best matched their views:

Will what you get taught in school at the moment help you when you are older?

- Yes - I think it will help
- No – I don't think it will help me
- I'm not sure

Would you like to learn more or less in school about getting ready for being an adult and getting ready for a job?

- I want to learn more things in school to help me prepare for being an adult
- I want to learn fewer things - I think I know enough to help me prepare for being an adult
- No - I think what I learn about now works well
- I'm not sure

Do you think all children and young people in Wales should learn about the same type of things?

- Yes – I think that's important
- No – it should be up to each school and its teachers to decide
- I'm not sure

(Only answer this question if you are in year 7 or older)

Do pupils have enough choices about what they study in year 9 and older?

- Yes - I think there are enough subject choices for year 9
- No - I'd like more choices
- I'm not sure
- I'm not in year 7 or older

Tell us what sorts of subjects would you like to have the choice to study

*[Free text answer invited]*

Is it important for all children to learn both the English and Welsh language in school?

- Yes definitely
- No – I think learning either Welsh or English is enough – you don't need both
- I'm not sure

What do you think about plans for all children and young people to learn about how to have healthy friendships and relationships?

- Yes – I think all children should learn about these things
- No – I don't think all children need to learn about these things
- I'm not sure

Should parents and carers have a say about whether a child aged under 16 learns about healthy friendships and relationships?

- Yes – parents should have a say if a child is under 16
- No – all children need to learn about these things
- I'm not sure

What do you think about plans for all children and young people to learn about religions, beliefs, and different views about how we should treat each other?

- Yes – I think all children should learn about these things
- No – I don't think all children need to learn about these things
- I'm not sure

Should parents and carers have a say about whether a child aged under 16 learns about religions, beliefs, and different views about how we should treat each other?

- Yes – parents should have a say if a child is under 16
- No – all children need to learn about these things
- I'm not sure

Should children and young people who get taught outside schools learn the same things as those in a school?

- Yes - it's important that we all learn the same things
- No - they should get taught different things
- I'm not sure

What do you think about the way teachers tell you how you are doing in school and about things you could do better?

- It's good – I get it explained to me
- It's okay, but sometimes it needs to be explained to me in a different way
- It's not good, often it needs to be explained to me in a different way
- I'm not sure

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the way you think children and young people should be taught in Wales in the future?

*[Free text answer invited]*