

CYPE(5)-26-20 - Paper to note 4

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

Dyddiad | Date: 22 October 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill: Stage 1**

Dear Kirsty,

Thank you for attending committee along with your officials this week to give oral evidence on the general principles of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.


During the meeting you committed to provide the following:

- a written explanation of why the Welsh Government feels it would be inappropriate to place duties on relevant persons/bodies exercising functions under the Bill to have due regard to the UNCRC and that such duties should only be on the government and Ministers;
- details of the amendment(s) you intend to table, should the Bill progress to Stage 2, in respect of requirements to teach English prior to age 7, enabling Welsh immersion;
- an update on the estimated costs of the Bill following the resumption and completion of relevant work with stakeholders.

We also indicated that we would write with questions not reached during the session due to time constraints. Please find these listed in the annex to this letter.

In light of our reporting deadline of 4 December, I would be very grateful to receive this written information by Thursday 5 November.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



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ANNEX

The questions below were not reached during the session on [21 October](#). The Committee would be grateful to receive a written answer to inform its report and recommendations.

The Bill's approach

- Do you remain fully confident that the approach the Bill sets for the new Curriculum for Wales, providing a high degree of flexibility to schools and discretion to headteachers through the ending of a heavily prescribed national curriculum, is the best means of achieving school improvement and raising standards across the board? You have pointed to the shortcomings of the current system as part of the reason for change but how can you be certain that this particular form of change will improve, rather than worsen, school standards and performance?
- You have explained how matters such as mental health and well-being, and equality and diversity, will be taught under the Curriculum for Wales, through the AoLEs, What Matters Code and the statutory guidance, arguing there is no need for them to be included on the face of the Bill. Why is this approach not regarded as sufficient in the case of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), which are both mandatory elements specified on the face of the Bill?

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE)

- We have received evidence from faith organisations that although the denominational RVE provided by voluntary aided schools is already, and will continue to be, “pluralistic”, requiring them to design and deliver (if requested) RVE **that accords with** the agreed syllabus may cause individual schools to be in breach of their trust deeds. Is this your understanding of the position?
- Is it possible for denominational RVE to **accord with** the agreed syllabus, even where the denominational RVE is pluralistic?
- If it is not possible, does it follow that voluntary aided schools will always have to design two syllabi (one that accords with the schools trust deed/tenets of the religion, and one that accords with the agreed syllabus)?
- Why is the position different for voluntary controlled schools, who are required to design and deliver RVE **having regard** to the agreed syllabus? Does the fact that they only have to **have regard** to the agreed syllabus mean that it is easier for them to provide one syllabus that does this and, at the same time, **accords** with the school's trust deed/tenets of the religion?
- You said that no formal data is collected on the number of parents withdrawing their children from sex education lessons at present but that, anecdotally, it is believed to be minimal. Does the same apply to the number of parents withdrawing their children from religious education lessons at present?
- Given that this is a bespoke Curriculum for Wales, why does section 62 of the Bill refer to religious traditions and non-religious philosophical convictions in “Great Britain”, rather than “Wales”, in the requirements for RVE?