

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

CYPE SP 85

Ymateb gan: Gwasanaeth Addysg yr Eglwys Gatholig

Response from: Catholic Education Service

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

The Catholic Education Service ('CES') is the education agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (Bishops' Conference). The Bishops' Conference is the permanent assembly of all the Catholic Bishops in England and Wales and the CES, as the education agency of the Bishops' Conference, is charged with promoting and securing education on behalf of the Bishops. I represent the CES in Wales, and we also have three Welsh Catholic Dioceses each with a Director of Education. There are 85 Catholic schools in Wales which educate over 28,500 pupils.

Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education

Roll-Out of the New Curriculum

The CES recognises the positive opportunities afforded to schools in the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales within their individual contexts. We welcomed the opportunity given to Catholic schools to be involved in the development of the Curriculum for Wales as pioneer schools and also as practitioners contributing to involvement groups for RVE and the RSE code and guidance. Going forward, it is important for the CYPE Committee to ensure the positive work in the development stage is carried through to implementation with clear recognition of the time and work required to do this.



Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should consult with headteachers, teachers and governors as the curriculum is developed in their schools to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation stage and identify where additional support is required.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should consult with learners and most especially with parents now that parents are no longer able to exercise their right of withdrawal. Parents are the primary educators of their children and must be informed and consulted especially on more sensitive matters such as RSE.

Learning the Lessons from COVID-19

Everyone was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways. The CES recognises that some people have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This includes children in Early Years, learners who were taking qualifications at secondary school, and the teachers who were overseeing these learners and assessing them. Learners from deprived communities have also been adversely affected.

The well-being of pupils, together with staff well-being, is what drives all the decisions taken in Catholic schools. It is important that the CYPE Committee focuses on how learning and development have been negatively impacted for pupils, and how the interruption to time in school impacted the well-being of staff and learners alike.

The Curriculum for Wales encourages schools to provide learners with a range of experiences to support their formal learning. The loss of time in schools due to COVID-19 meant that learners missed out on cultural and religious formation and artistic and sporting experiences. It is essential that learners are offered opportunities to catch-up in these important areas of their development.

Catholic schools have always been at the heart of the community. During the pandemic the work of Catholic schools came to the forefront as they provided support to their local communities during an unprecedented time. For further information please see our section on Theme 3.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should assess the success of support provided by Welsh Government to teachers in closing gaps in learning and development in key year groups such as Early Years and learners taking GCSEs or A Levels.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should focus their work on those who took their qualifications during the disruptions to school to identify any issues or positive outcomes that have arisen since taking centre-assessed examinations.



Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should assess the effectiveness of mental health and pastoral support made available to members of staff by Welsh Government in schools following the past 18 months and the additional expectations placed upon teachers to assess examinations centrally.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should assess the extent to which the Welsh Government is supporting learners to experience the religious, cultural, artistic and sporting experiences that they lacked during their time out of school due to the pandemic.

Parental Choice in the School Their Child Attends

The CES acknowledges the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. This principle is embodied in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The ability of parents to choose from a range of schools with different perspectives is one of the factors that enables the State in Wales to provide the pluralistic education system envisaged by the ECHR. The range of different schools in Wales - including Catholic schools - plays an important role in celebrating diversity in Wales.

As primary educators of their children, it is important for parents to be able to choose the education that they envisage for their child, especially if they feel that they would like their child to attend a school of religious character. Accessibility, affordability and availability of transport to schools of their choice, such as a Catholic school, is an important aspect of this, especially if their closest school is not Catholic.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should review the accessibility, affordability and availability of transport to a school of an appropriate character.

Welsh Language

Integral to the CES's approach to the Curriculum for Wales is a commitment to foster and develop ability in, and understanding of, the Welsh language and the culture of Wales. Welsh Catholic history is abundant in such practice and traditions, which is part of the rich legacy that makes up our linguistic and cultural heritage. Catholic schools will be supported to increase their language provision including bilingual provision. In this way Catholic schools will contribute to one of the fundamental aims of the new curriculum to encourage an increase in the number of learners who become confident Welsh speakers using both languages in their everyday life.

However, it is important for the CYPE Committee to recognise the amount of time and financial challenges that come with increasing the amount of Welsh taught and spoken in schools. Schools require support in achieving the goals of Cymraeg 2050.



Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should monitor the effectiveness of support and funding made available to primary and secondary schools who wish to increase the amount of Welsh taught and spoken in schools.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should assess the ease of access to and success of the Welsh Government sabbatical scheme for teachers to improve their Welsh language skills.

Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education

Protecting Catholic Sixth Form Provision

The CES supports the ability of parents to choose from a range of schools, including Catholic schools; a number of which provide education to the age of 18. There is one Catholic sixth form college in Wales and a number of Catholic sixth forms within secondary schools. It is important for the CES that the introduction of the Tertiary Education and Research Bill does not pose any threats to the provision of Catholic sixth forms within Catholic secondary schools. It is crucial that these sixth forms within Catholic schools are offered the support and funding required to enable them to continue educating learners over the age of 16.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should consult with headteachers, teachers and governors on how the Tertiary Education and Research Bill could impact Catholic schools, and find solutions to enable the continuation of Catholic post-16 education in secondary schools and colleges.

Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

Community Development and a Joined-Up Approach to Services

Catholic schools have always been at the heart of their local communities. It was made clearer than ever during the pandemic that schools are community hubs. Many Catholic schools across Wales provided support to their local communities in various ways including running food banks and providing support for vulnerable people in their area. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the necessity of continuing to develop and strengthen a joined-up approach across services to support learners and their families who have been disproportionately impacted. Examples of ways to do this include:

- Providing opportunities for schools to develop wrap-around childcare.



- Encouraging and facilitating schools who are prepared to open their doors to community services.

However, in doing this, schools should not risk becoming overstretched in resources, staffing and finances. It is important that schools are offered the financial and practical support to continue to sit at the heart of their local communities and provide the support required.

Suggested Priority – The CYPE Committee should consult with schools to understand what challenges are most prominent in their local communities and how they feel they could be supported in their role as community hubs.

Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people

Listening to the Voices of Children and Young People

It is the view of the CES that understanding the needs and concerns of children and young people is important. Through our work, it has become clear that a large number of young people have a particular concern for protecting the environment for future generations. More could be done in this area, both by Welsh Government but also in schools.

Suggested priority - The CYPE Committee should consult with learners on how they feel effective and practical steps can be implemented to protect the environment both in schools and in wider society.

