

February 1, 2024

Dear Sarah,

Please find a response from Parentkind in relation to my appearance before the Committee on 24 January 2023.

The principle of an opt-out is well established as the Residential Outdoor Education Bill states that the guidance "must provide that residential outdoor education is not compulsory for pupils to attend". Section 42 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 and related sections also confirm that schools can make exceptions and exemptions on an individual basis to typically compulsory elements of the curriculum where appropriate.

Neither the Bill or the explanatory memorandum specify how those opt-outs work in practice. However, it may not be necessary for a particular approach to implementing this to be specified in legislation. We would expect the overwhelming majority of schools to already have clear processes in place to accommodate seeking parental permission and opt-outs for school trips and similar activities, and it would be reasonable to anticipate that these will be used and adapted as necessary for residential outdoor education provided under the Bill, provided that it is clearly communicated to schools and parents that attendance is not compulsory.

Specifying a particular approach in legislation may not be desirable as it could cause additional work for schools in ensuring they are compliant with a specified approach rather than being able to use existing processes which are compliant with existing legislation and working effectively.

We would strongly encourage individual schools to adopt Parentkind's *Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools* - an evidence-based foundation for school leaders and staff. The Blueprint parental participation framework offers methods to embed good parental involvement and engagement and sets out how schools can effectively maximise and build upon parents' contributions, to create positive partnerships with parents for the benefit of all children.

Good quality communication can help reduce the possibility that children entitled to FSM or other potentially disadvantaged groups do not miss out on educational opportunities offered by residential outdoor education.

**Frank Young**  
Director of Policy and Research