

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Video Conference via Zoom Committee	Llinos Madeley
Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel	Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 17 September 2020	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 08.45	SeneddCYPE@senedd.wales

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair has determined that the public are excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health. This meeting will be broadcast live on www.senedd.tv.

Private pre-meeting

(08.45 – 09.15)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.15)

2 Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill – evidence session 4 with representatives from the Inspectorate and Regulator

(09.15 – 10.15)

(Pages 1 – 35)

Philip Blaker, Chief Executive – Qualifications Wales

Emyr George, Director for Policy and Reform – Qualifications Wales

Meilyr Rowlands, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector – Estyn

Claire Morgan, Strategic Director – Estyn

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 1 – Qualifications Wales

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 2 – Estyn



- 3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for item 4**
(10.15)

Break

10.15 – 10.25

- 4 Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill: Consideration of evidence**
(10.25 – 10.45)

- 5 Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill – evidence session 5 with representatives from the early years sector**
(10.45 – 11.45) (Pages 36 – 61)

Dave Goodger, Chief Executive Officer – Early Years Wales

Claire Protheroe, National Manager for Wales – Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years Cymru (PACEY Cymru)

Sarah Coates, Policy and Strategic Partnerships Manager (Wales) – National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru)

Eleri Griffiths, Policy Manager – Mudiad Meithrin

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 3 – Early Years Wales

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 4 – Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 5 – Mudiad Meithrin (Welsh Only)

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper 5 – Mudiad Meithrin (translation: internal use only)

- 6 Papers to note**
(11.45 – 11.50)

- 6.1 Additional information from NUS Cymru following the Committee meeting on 23 June**

(Pages 62 – 63)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 1

6.2 Additional information from UNISON following the Committee meeting on 23 June

(Pages 64 – 67)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 2

6.3 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education regarding the Bill’s provisions as they relate to Religion, Values and Ethics (“RVE”) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (“RSE”)

(Pages 68 – 69)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 3

6.4 Letter from the Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding the Bill’s provisions as they relate to Religion, Values and Ethics (“RVE”) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (“RSE”)

(Pages 70 – 80)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 4

6.5 Letter from the Finance Committee to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22

(Pages 81 – 83)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 5

6.6 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education regarding the Debate of Estyn’s 2018-19 Annual Report

(Page 84)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 6

6.7 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to Healthcare Inspectorate Wales regarding Covid-19: CAMHS in-patient units

(Pages 85 – 86)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 7

- 6.8 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education regarding financial implications for the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill**

(Page 87)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 8

- 6.9 Letter from the Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding financial implications for the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill**

(Page 88)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 9

- 6.10 Letter from the Petitions Committee to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding Petition P-05-972 to provide a minimum of 4 hours a day of live teaching during COVID closures for all school children**

(Pages 89 – 91)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 10

- 6.11 Letter from the Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee updating the Committee on action points following the Committee meeting on 7 July**

(Pages 92 – 93)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 11

- 6.12 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education following the meeting on 7 July regarding the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people, including students in further and higher education**

(Pages 94 – 100)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 12

- 6.13 Letter from Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee following the Committee meeting on 7 July**

regarding the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people, including students in further and higher education

(Pages 101 – 112)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 13

6.14 Letter from the Welsh Government to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee following the meeting on 9 June regarding the provision of services to support the physical and mental health of children and young people given the impacts of COVID-19

(Pages 113 – 124)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 14

6.15 Letter from the Children's Commissioner for Wales to the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding Welsh medium mental health provision for children and young people

(Pages 125 – 126)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 15

6.16 Note from Welsh Government officials regarding the functions of the Governing Body in respect of the curriculum as conferred by the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

(Pages 127 – 130)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 16

6.17 Letter from Children's Commissioner for Wales to the Minister for Education regarding summer examinations

(Pages 131 – 134)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 17

6.18 Letter from the Minister for Education to Suzy Davies MS regarding the role of the RSE Working Group

(Pages 135 – 136)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 18

6.19 Letter from the Maternal Mental Health Alliance to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding the follow up work that

the Committee has been undertaking on its inquiry into perinatal mental health in Wales

(Pages 137 – 139)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 19

6.20 Letter from Universities Wales to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding the Committee's work on COVID 19

(Page 140)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 20

6.21 Report commissioned by the Children, Young People and Education Committee under Senedd Research's COVID–19 Expert Register regarding Remote Teaching and Covid–19 Approaches to School Education, Sofya Lyakhova, Swansea University

(Pages 141 – 170)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 21

6.22 Letter from the Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding reforms to transform the existing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system into the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system

(Pages 171 – 172)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 22

6.23 Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education following the meeting on 18 August regarding the awarding of 2020 examination results

(Pages 173 – 176)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 23

6.24 Letter from the Minister for Education to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee following the meeting on 18 August regarding the awarding of 2020 examination results

(Pages 177 – 188)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)–20–20 – Paper to note 24

7 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting
(11.50)

8 Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill: Consideration of the evidence
(11.50 – 12.00)

Document is Restricted

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Qualifications Wales

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

Qualifications Wales welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the CYPEC's inquiry into the general principles of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill ('the Bill').

We support the case for a new, purpose-led curriculum and the principles for developing legislation to introduce it.

I. Our work to support the new curriculum

Since Qualifications Wales was established in 2015, we have maintained a close interest in Welsh Government's work to develop a new curriculum framework for Wales.

We have taken the proposed new curriculum as a catalyst for looking at how qualifications taken by 14 to 16-year-olds will need to change to support the purposes and aims of the new Curriculum for Wales, and to adapt and respond to future needs.

We want 16-year-olds to take globally respected qualifications that inspire and prepare them for life, learning and work. This means that secondary schools and other publicly funded providers should be able to choose from a range of qualifications that:

- command public confidence, with currency in Wales, the UK and globally;
- secure an equitable, coherent, and bilingual choice for centres and learners;
- make the most of digital technology; and
- can be introduced in a managed and sustainable way

In light of the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic this work offers an important opportunity to:

- Look at alternative assessment methods and approaches;
- Consider the potential impact that qualifications can have on the wellbeing and mental health of learners;
- And to drive innovation and resilience in the qualifications system, for example through more effective and widespread use of digital technology.

We are committed to working collaboratively and transparently so that everyone can have their say on future qualifications and to help schools and others to design and implement their curricula effectively.

In June this year, following a public consultation, we confirmed our high level approach to shaping the future qualifications for 16-year-olds in Wales. We also published advice to the Minister for Education on our proposed approach. Our advice draws on the feedback to our consultation and considers the key challenges, opportunities, dependencies and assumptions we expect to see. For a more detailed discussion of our views on developing qualifications to support the new curriculum we suggest committee members may want to refer to our published advice in full (<https://qualificationswales.org/media/6022/advice-to-the-minister-for-education.pdf>).

A full analysis of responses to the consultation, a summary of findings and a youth-friendly version report on the consultation outcomes are also available on our website (<https://qualificationswales.org/english/qualified-for-the-future/phase-1---shaping-our-approach/>).

We are now preparing for a further round of consultations that will focus on:

- The main qualifications that should form part of the future offer for 16-year-olds.
- What future GCSEs should look like and the subject areas in which they can be offered

- And the qualifications required to support the single continuum for learning Welsh.

II. The new curriculum and qualifications

Given our role as qualifications regulator, we have a specific interest in the provisions of the Bill that relate to curriculum expectations for learners aged 14 to 16. That said, we fully recognise that the new curriculum is based on a concept of a single continuum of progression from 3 – 16. Through our work we will be considering how the overall range of qualifications available can support all learners, whatever progression point they have reached and are aiming for.

The proposed Curriculum for Wales clearly sets out the underpinning knowledge, skills and experiences that learners should gain from following a broad and balanced curriculum from the ages of 3 to 16. These expectations are described through the:

- four purposes
- six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE)
- three cross-curricular skills
- four mandatory curriculum elements (Welsh, English, Religion, Values and Ethics, and relationships and sexuality education)
- four integral skills
- and the twenty-seven statements of what matters.

The Bill does not set expectations for the role that qualifications should play in relationship to the curriculum. We agree with this approach. We have not yet determined which qualifications should be available to the first learners to be educated under the new curriculum framework. Neither have we agreed how future qualifications should be designed and assessed. These are questions we will be exploring in forthcoming consultations.

Within the parameters set by the framework, headteachers are expected to design a broad and balanced local curriculum for their school that provides for appropriate progression for learners of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes. In secondary schools, the curriculum must also offer learners in Year 10 and Year 11 a choice of teaching and learning within each AoLE, while ensuring that they continue to undertake some learning in each AoLE.

The new curriculum framework is about much more than qualifications and covers all the learning and experiences that will help learners to realise the four purposes. However, the range of qualifications available to 16-year olds, the way in which they are assessed (as well as how their outcomes are used to evaluate school performance) will necessarily have an important bearing on the teaching and learning that takes place in secondary schools. Our position is that qualifications should support the curriculum, not the other way around. As far as possible, we want the qualifications available to give secondary schools the flexibility they need to design local curricula that are right for their learners.

Qualifications will need to continue to evolve and adapt to help support schools in doing this. If the Bill were to describe or prescribe the relationship between qualifications and the curriculum, this would likely limit the flexibility that the future range of qualifications could offer schools to develop their own curricula.

III. School evaluation and improvement

The explanatory memorandum to the Bill notes that the Successful Futures review found that

‘The high degree of prescription in the current curriculum has tended to create a culture where creativity has been diminished. There has been a narrowing of teaching and learning, with the professional contribution of the workforce underdeveloped.’

In our experience this narrowing of the curriculum taught in schools is compounded by the dominance of qualification outcomes in school accountability arrangements. We welcome the work already started by Welsh Government to develop new evaluation and improvement arrangements that will support the implementation of the new curriculum framework. We particularly support the intention to develop an approach that requires a wider variety of factors and evidence to be considered when evaluating school performance and setting priorities for improvement.

We also support the proposal in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to be able to specify further curriculum requirements for the 14-16 age range by making provision relating to courses of study’. Historically, school accountability and performance measures have been used to influence schools’ decision about the qualifications they offer; an approach which has often led to unintended consequences. Giving Welsh Ministers the ability to make direct provisions about the courses of study that schools offer seems to us a more transparent

means of setting and implementing policy expectations in relation to the qualifications offered to and taken by learners.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We have worked with Welsh Government officials to help quantify our costs associated with reviewing and reforming qualifications to ensure they support the new curriculum.

In addition to the costs noted in the RIA, there are likely to be further costs incurred by awarding bodies from the work required to develop new qualifications to meet our updated requirements. The costs involved will vary depending on the nature and scale of changes required to ensure that qualifications can support the new curriculum and meet the needs of future learners.

Depending on the scale of changes required, there could be a potential need to make additional grant funding available to awarding bodies to help secure the availability of a sufficiently broad range of bilingual qualifications to meet the needs of all learners.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

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Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Estyn

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

Estyn welcomes the limited nature of the proposed primary legislation that enables freedom and flexibility for professionals to meet the needs of learners. We also welcome the assessment and progression requirements that will support learners to achieve and go beyond the progression steps outlined in each of the areas of learning and experience.

This bill makes clear the required elements of the curriculum, including the areas of learning and experience, the cross-curricular skills, and relationships and sexuality education (RSE). Research indicates that the development of literacy, numeracy and digital competence are essential building blocks to learners' future success and we welcome the importance that this bill places on these skills.

It is helpful that RSE is incorporated within the health and wellbeing area of learning and experience, and also expected to be developed across the curriculum. This will help schools to understand that RSE is an integral component of effective health and wellbeing within a whole-school approach.

The proposal in the bill to make religion, values and ethics (RVE) mandatory is a positive step. As we communicated in the recent Welsh Government consultation, 'Ensuring access

to the full curriculum', we support the fact that this bill will remove the right for parents to withdraw their children from this aspect of education. Developing all learners' knowledge of religion, values and ethics is an important part of learning and is integral to the humanities area of learning and experience. This area of the curriculum will be particularly important in helping pupils to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. If the right to withdraw remained, learners could miss out on an important part of their learning and miss the inter-disciplinary links that can be made across and within areas of learning and experience. In our response to the consultation on the 'Legislative proposal for religion, values and ethics' we explained that we would favour a system that protects the integrity of RVE as being appropriate, pluralistic mandatory education of value to all pupils, irrespective of their parents' religious or philosophical views. Some schools provide denominational religious education, and we would prefer that this is understood as being supplementary to the mandatory RVE provision. In these schools, we suggest that parents should have the right to withdraw their child from this supplementary aspect of RVE, in order that they only receive the mandatory RVE.

We welcome that this bill gives equal weighting to all areas of learning and experience. In addition, we welcome the requirements for schools to ensure their provision enables learners to engage with all areas until the age of 16. This will encourage schools to develop a broad and balanced curriculum and will support learners in their pursuit of the four purposes.

Within the languages, literacy and communication area of learning and experience, we welcome the mandatory elements of English and Welsh. We are positive about the emphasis this bill places on ensuring that the teaching and learning of Welsh is integral to the Curriculum for Wales. This is consistent with Welsh Government's vision and strategy for creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and an increasingly bilingual nation. The proposal that Welsh should remain a compulsory element of the curriculum for 3 to 16 year old learners is important in realising this vision. The bill enables Welsh medium schools and settings to continue to fully immerse children in the Welsh language until the age of 7, which is a vital part of the early development of these language skills, but it is worth reconsidering whether there is a better way to achieve this end in legislation than the proposed opt out from English for Welsh schools for this age range.

We agree with the removal of the Welsh first and second language programmes of study and the aim to replace them with one continuum of learning. The explanatory memorandum recognises that teachers of Welsh in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools will come from different professional backgrounds and will be dealing with different classroom contexts. The memorandum outlines that professional learning will be

essential to the success of the development of Welsh, particularly in English-medium schools. The impact of these requirements should not be underestimated as the teaching and learning of Welsh in English-medium schools needs to improve to encourage pupils to enjoy and value learning Welsh and to improve outcomes. Inspection evidence suggests that there is a weaker understanding in English-medium schools of what constitutes the most effective pedagogy to deliver Welsh and second languages generally.

The requirements of Ministers to develop codes on 'what matters', 'progression' and 'RSE' is important. These codes will give schools, PRUs and settings the key elements to consider when planning, developing and delivering their curriculum. These documents should be helpful in guiding their thinking and be central enablers for curriculum reform.

We welcome the requirements outlined in part two of the bill. The requirements placed on headteachers and governing bodies to design, adopt and review their curriculum will support the planning and implementation of the Curriculum for Wales in schools, settings and PRUs. In addition, the bill requires schools to publish a summary of their curriculum. This will be helpful in enabling parents and the wider community to understand a school's provision and will support schools to feel accountable for providing a broad and balance curriculum for their pupils. The requirements for non-maintained settings and PRUs are also welcomed.

The requirements on Ministers to publish and keep the curriculum under review are essential to ensuring that the Curriculum for Wales remains up-to-date and supports learners in Wales to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to be successful.

We welcome the curriculum requirements outlined in chapter 3 of this bill, in particular the requirement for the curriculum to enable children to develop in the ways described in the four purposes. This is essential to the success of this curriculum.

The power provided for schools to disapply the curriculum where the curriculum does not meet the needs of a pupil is an important one. It is welcome that schools will be able to design a tailored curriculum where required.

We welcome the requirements outlined for PRUs and other EOTAS provision. This section of the bill will support these providers to plan learning for pupils that gives them access to a tailored and purpose-driven curriculum.

We agree with the legislative proposals to enable the new assessment arrangements. We agree with the requirement for schools to ensure their curriculum is supported by assessment arrangements which assess the:

- progress made by learners in relation to the relevant curriculum; and
- helps identify next steps in learners' progression and the learning and teaching needed to make that progress.

Strong assessment arrangements will be an important enabler of curriculum reform. The bill making provision to enable Welsh Ministers to issue directions to schools to take specified steps with a view to promoting and maintaining understanding of progression in the context of a curriculum adopted by the school is an important measure.

Part 6 of the bill outlines general duties of Ministers and local authorities. We agree with the requirements to ensure performance functions of schools, PRUs and settings. In addition, the requirements of schools, settings and PRUs to pay due regard to additional guidance will be an important element of securing the success of this curriculum. It will be important that all additional guidance is clear and that it supports the key principles of the Curriculum for Wales. In addition, Ministers may wish to take steps to ensure that this additional guidance does not become too prescriptive so that schools, PRUs and settings still have the flexibility required to enact this curriculum.

The powers that enable children to be educated in more than one setting are welcomed as this may enable schools, PRUs and settings to plan a more bespoke curriculum for their pupils when individual needs require it.

We understand the need for Ministers to have powers to make additional provision to this curriculum. Any future changes should ensure that the curriculum does not become overcrowded, over-prescriptive or make changes to the underlying principles of the Curriculum for Wales.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We believe there is a need for legislation to deliver what the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill is aiming to achieve. This legislation will be an important enabler to curriculum reform. The curriculum must:

- enable learners to develop in the way described in the four purposes;
- be broad and balanced;
- be suitable for learners of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes;
- provide for appropriate progression for pupils and includes a range of provision to ensure this in accordance with the progression code;
- encompass each of the six areas of learning and experience;
- encompass the key concepts of what matters in learning set out in the what matters code;
- include the mandatory curriculum elements (English, Welsh, RSE and RVE); and
- include the mandatory cross curricular skills (Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence).

We agree that bill should place duties on schools, PRUs and settings to achieve this. Without legislation, the key principles of the curriculum would not be statutory and this could potentially limit the curriculum available to pupils and undermine the core aims of the Curriculum for Wales.

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

There are some potential barriers that Ministers have already considered and should continue to consider as this curriculum is developed and implemented.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning will provide the most important contribution to the successful development of the Curriculum for Wales. Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching and learning remains too variable, particularly in secondary schools.

Therefore, it will be important that professional development and school improvement efforts focus on supporting schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Professional learning

As suggested above, this is a key driver to the successful roll out of Curriculum for Wales. The explanatory memorandum document recognises this and places an expectation on regional consortia and local authorities to support professional learning. Careful evaluation of the quality and impact of this professional learning will be essential as the system moves towards the implementation date.

The quality of leadership

The quality of leadership in schools, PRUs and settings is another important enabler for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Where leaders understand the curriculum and places a strong emphasis on its principles and purposes, it is more likely to succeed. Where leaders think through and introduce new systems sensitively and in a considered manner, curriculum reform is progressing well. In these providers, leaders are planning for reform carefully, staff understand it, and it aligns well with the school's improvement priorities.

Where leaders do not fully consider the underpinning aims of the new curriculum, they do not plan strategically enough when developing a vision for the curriculum, or for learning and teaching. A few schools focus too much on developing various approaches to learning without first establishing their vision for the curriculum as a whole, or how they will improve the quality of learning and teaching. In these cases, leaders focus too much on the content they will teach or on inconsequential links between themes or subject areas, rather than on how they will improve and adapt their approaches to teaching and learning.

Thus, effective professional learning for senior leaders on curriculum reform should be a key priority.

Qualifications

The reform of qualifications is progressing and Qualifications Wales is aware of the impact new qualifications will have on the development of the new curriculum. They will need to continue to work with the system to develop qualifications that align with and drive the

key principles of the Curriculum for Wales. This will be crucial to how schools choose to create their curricula, especially for Years 10 and 11.

Evaluation and improvement arrangements

Evaluation and improvement arrangements will be an important to the development of the Curriculum for Wales. It has been evident with the current curriculum that accountability arrangements, particularly performance measures, have driven behaviours and, at times, led to unintended consequences. As the evaluation and improvement arrangements are finalised, it will be important that Welsh Government ensures they align with the principles of the new curriculum.

We also recognise that in terms of our own work and that of others, that low-stakes inspection and evaluation arrangements can help the development of system-wide approaches and be an important driver for the successful realisation of the Curriculum for Wales.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

It is still early to appreciate fully the impact of COVID-19 on schools. However, it is clear that at least in the short term school leaders and staff will be focusing on the wellbeing of their pupils and their preparedness to learn. Much school planning and activity over the past months has been focused on the logistics of running a school and providing continuity of learning in light of the pandemic. While the re-thinking that the lockdown imposed on schools, combined with deeper engagement with families and support services, has arguably put schools in a better place to realise the new curriculum, we also recognise that schools have had less time to prepare for curriculum reform.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The explanatory memorandum identifies many of the above potential barriers and considers ways in which government will work with the system to overcome them. Where possible, the bill takes into account these potential barriers. It is difficult to legislate for all of these aspects, although the bill does provide local authorities and Ministers with the powers to intervene when required. In order to overcome and address these barriers, Ministers and Welsh Government should continue to work closely with 'middle tier'

organisations to monitor and support progress with the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

There are a number of potential unintended consequences that should be considered. The associated risks can be planned for and mitigated against, so these are not reasons to prevent the legislation from being enacted.

Ministers' ability to add / remove AoLEs and cross curricular skills

We welcome the work already carried out to future-proof the new curriculum in developing the areas of learning and experience. We recognise that the new curriculum will need to evolve and adapt over time to maintain its relevance in light of future societal change. Where Ministers in future may wish to make changes, it will be important to ensure the principles of the Curriculum for Wales are considered and upheld. In particular, where additions to the areas of learning and experience are made or changes to cross-curricular skills, there will be a need to consider how to protect the curriculum from becoming overloaded or too prescriptive. Regard should be given to how the principle of subsidiarity can be maintained when Ministers exercise this function. This could include consultation with relevant stakeholders, including learners, parents and education professionals.

Lack of subscription and provision of subsidiarity to the system

We are positive about this change within the bill. The system requires subsidiarity so that schools, PRUs and settings can plan learning that best caters for pupils' needs and supports their progress. Ministers may wish to note that, where teaching and leadership is weak, the rate of progress may initially be limited. The explanatory memorandum takes this into account and the plans for professional learning to build capacity in leadership and teaching will contribute to mitigating this. Estyn inspection arrangements will continue to evaluate the quality of provision and leadership and we will align our inspection framework to support the evaluation of the new curriculum.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We welcome the detailed financial considerations made within the explanatory memorandum. We have contributed to the regulatory impact assessment and have worked with officials to guide and support this work.

The need to plan for financial support for professional learning is a central consideration and this has been taken into account. In addition, the financial planning considers risks such as the development of qualifications, assessment arrangements and evaluation and improvement processes.

This section of the explanatory memorandum is detailed and reflects the current financial climate of the education sector in Wales. The detailed analysis will support government to understand the benefits and risks and to plan mitigation.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We agree with and understand the reasons behind the powers being provided to Ministers highlighted in section 5. These powers are necessary to allow for the curriculum to remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.

We recognise that the new curriculum may need to evolve and adapt over time to reflect and maintain its relevance in light of future societal change. However, as noted in question 3, if Ministers in future wish to make changes, it will be important to ensure the principles of the Curriculum for Wales are considered. Where they may add to the areas of

learning and experience, they may wish to consider how they would protect the new curriculum from becoming overloaded or too prescriptive. Regard could be given to how the principle of subsidiarity can be maintained when Ministers exercise this function. This could include consultation with relevant stakeholders including learners, parents and education professionals.

6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

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Agenda Item 5

CAW19 Early Years Wales

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Early Years Wales

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

Early Years Wales are encouraged that the curriculum developments and therefore, the purposes of the Bill seeks to create a curriculum that is progressive and has the child's journey from early years through to their latter years in school considered as a whole. Furthermore, since the acceptance of the recommendations of Successful Futures, it is clear that Welsh Government has continued to create a curriculum that strives to support all children. We are pleased to see the good practice established through the Foundation Phase underpins the curriculum and within this, that children in Early Years will continue to be taught through experiential learning and with the emphasis on play still enabled.

Within the non-maintained sector, we do believe that the creation of a curriculum framework will be a positive addition for the sector. The structure and organisation of the core purposes, Areas of Learning Experience and cross-curricular skills is logical. We do have a concern that, as yet, the level of support and training for the non-maintained sector does not match that provided for in the maintained sector. It will be important for Welsh Government to consider how the practitioners in the non-maintained sector are supported through training to implement the change in practice. In this context, it is noteworthy that there are a number of time-pressures from some practitioners, particularly the pack-up and go settings or settings working from shared facilities that make changing practice and

approaches an additional burden. This might mean that the time to reflect on and adapt a curriculum offer to the context is challenging. This is why support for the non-maintained sector will continue to be an important feature in ensuring that the children are getting the type of curriculum experience that Welsh Government aspires to achieve in the Bill. One final consideration for Welsh Government to explore will be the information available to childcare settings that do not offer curriculum teaching but do provide childcare for the children beyond the statutory education time each day in consideration of 7.10 of the NMS (see footnote) . For the continuity of experience from a child's perspective, it would be better if these practitioners also receive updates in the principles and practice for children in the new curriculum. Whilst this might extend beyond the remit and finance attached to this Bill and require cross-department working, to ignore this would be a missed opportunity to create a coherent Early Years' experience for all children.

We are in agreement that the Religion, values and ethics mandatory curriculum is required in Wales to support the aspiration to have ethically informed learners. We believe there will be a role to play for all stakeholders in explaining to parents what this means at different stages of education to reassure parents. The Bill sets out some expectations for learner progression that are welcomed. As ever, the key to maximising learning across phases is well-organised transitions. The ownership of these transition points is always important and supporting practitioners to value the children's prior experiences is key to ensuring that children are not 're-assessed' when moving to a new context. Any support, training and resource applied to ensuring effective transition will help avoid situations where learner's regress following a transition point

7.10 the principles of the Foundation Phase for 3- to7-year-olds and its seven areas of learning are understood and applied in a way appropriate to the age, abilities and stage of development of children in their care and the nature of the provision.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The need for the legislation to deliver the Bill seems reasonable. This will ensure that Welsh Government are able to monitor and change elements within the education curriculum to ensure that there is a consistent high-quality offer across Wales.

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

One potential barrier that complicates the opportunity to deliver a consistent curriculum offer in non-maintained settings is the variation between funding rates for delivery in the foundation phase across Wales. This contrasts with the consistent (and higher rate of funding) for the Childcare Offer. It is important to note that some setting managers/ proprietors run settings in a number of local authority areas and are therefore aware that the discrepancies exist from their first-hand experience. Making the foundation phase funding consistent would ensure that, regardless of postcode, each child's education has the same fiscal support from Welsh Government. This would also ensure that settings across Wales have the same opportunity to finance and resource their curriculum offer. It would also encourage settings to offer funded education if the rate of funding was closely matched to the Childcare Offer, which in turn, could increase parental choice.

As noted previously, training and support for the practitioners in non-maintained settings will need to be provided. Welsh Government has made a significant commitment to funding the support for training and development for teachers in the maintained sector. Ensuring that the training provision is available for practitioners working in non-maintained settings is imperative to avoid a two-tier system where there is an increased skills gap and the childcare sector feels devalued.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

At present, we cannot be sure that the Bill takes account of the variation within funding rates for non-maintained foundation phase providers across Wales, although this might be beyond the scope of this initial curriculum Bill.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Some of the barriers could provide an unintended consequence such as, the funding discrepancy and the training consideration. It is important to consider how to avoid creating a two-tier system where there is a skills and training deficiency within the non-maintained sector

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We welcome Welsh Government's commitment to funding the training and development of staff, where this is indicated. We believe that training, support and guidance should be invested in. It has been a long journey to get to this point where the curriculum in Wales is ready to be overhauled in such a systematic and radical manner. A key to achieving the aspirations is taking practitioners on this journey with policy makers. The new curriculum and the curriculum framework for the non-maintained sectors are only as effective as the weakest link therefore investment in teachers and practitioners over the coming months and years will be important. Furthermore, as this is investment in people, skills and training, Welsh Government should be reassured that this value and support towards the workforce is a worthwhile and lasting investment into the workforce in Wales.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

We are aware that there is a difference in approach between local authorities around Wales to providing early education. There are a small number of local authorities that mandate that early education takes place in maintained settings only. This is an aspect that is contentious as it removes an aspect of parental choice within these areas that is offered to families in other regions of Wales. Again, this might be beyond the scope of the Bill itself but considering this at a timely point in the development of the new curriculum would be welcomed. Welsh Government might consider that these are decisions that reside with local authorities beyond this Bill and into the delivery of the new curriculum, but it is worthy of note that parental choice in these areas is more limited than in neighbouring local authority areas.

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY Cymru)

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

PACEY Cymru support the principles of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill which will bring the curriculum up to date, including the technology and digital skills that are essential in the current times. PACEY Cymru are pleased to see the emphasis on the child being central to the principles of the curriculum and the ethos of the Foundation Phase being used across the full curriculum.

PACEY Cymru believes that the fact that there is a focus on life, self-confidence, basic and work skills is forward thinking and future proofing the curriculum. By teaching and learning in a fun and interesting manner as stated in the Successful Futures summary, this will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the child, staff and workforce.

It is heartening to see that the Foundation Phase (FP) pedagogy will underpin education as a whole in Wales. As we know from Professor Donaldson's research, the FP pedagogy works well and has proven to be successful in terms of child development and achievement. Putting the child at the centre and ensuing individual progression for each child, suitable for their age, ability and aptitude as a basis for all learning is welcomed by PACEY Cymru. As an organisation that supports the childcare and early year's sector we know that this way of working will not be new to the sector and that the continuation of

this approach in the new curriculum will support the transition of moving over to the new curriculum.

PACEY Cymru believes that by providing a broad and balanced teaching and learning environment, and encompassing this with the health and wellbeing of the child, will provide a better learning experience and progression opportunities, encouraging a more engaged child or young person.

Another positive of the proposed new Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill is that assessment will be an ongoing process and driven by the individual. Having a consistent assessment process could be the challenge and is very much going to depend on the level of information shared with professionals including teachers and staff of the non-maintained sector. However a continuum of learning is again forward thinking and will encourage more self-reflection from the child's perspective as well as the practitioner.

PACEY Cymru has noticed that the Impact Assessment shows that there has been consideration for the positive impact on children's rights with the curriculum being child focussed, however this doesn't appear as strongly within the Bill. PACEY Cymru would therefore suggest that these are embedded throughout the curriculum guidance and training.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Yes, we feel this is needed to ensure a clear direction that will lead to a consistent approach. By having legislation in place it will ensure that children's entitlement to access the new curriculum is clearly stipulated, including those with Additional Learning Needs, and look to ensure access to a high-quality broad and balanced education. Access to supporting funding for work linked to the implementation of the new curriculum at both a national and local level may also be easier to attain if there is official legislation linked to entitlement and requirements.

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

PACEY Cymru welcome the recognition for the development of the curriculum for the non-maintained sector by Welsh Government within the Bill, however we would like further clarity and details around the expectations relating to the settings on the following points:

- Section 15b of the Bill states that the non-maintained settings will have responsibility for publishing the summary of the curriculum
- Section 16 of the Bill states that it is the responsibility of the settings to review and revise the curriculum.

PACEY Cymru believes that the publication of the non-maintained curriculum needs to be timely, to ensure that there is sufficient time to support the sector to plan, prepare and trial the new curriculum in advance of implementation.

The design and building of a curriculum that is going to be fit for purpose for the non – maintained sector is key to the success and needs to be consistent and aligned with the wider curriculum to support a continuum of learning. We also need to ensure that the progression steps start at a younger age, for example there has been a strong emphasis on the Foundation Phase Profile (FPP) as a tool to support the sector in taking a consistent approach to the assessment of a child's development in recent years. PACEY Cymru feel that that has been an extremely important step to support consistency across settings and schools in the assessment of children's developmental progress. It is important that this consistency is not lost in the new curriculum and an appropriate resource similar to the FPP is developed to support assessments in line with the new curriculum. PACEY Cymru feel strongly that a consistent assessment tool that aligns with the curriculum is used across settings and schools, this will help to value the professionalism of all practitioners that are involved in supporting the learning and development of children, whether they are a maintained or non-maintained setting.

Sufficient training which is accessible to all settings will need to be planned and coordinated well with consistent messages being shared. PACEY Cymru feel that access to information, training and resources will be important for all practitioners in order to be prepared for delivery of the new curriculum. PACEY Cymru also believes that awareness

level training and information for the childcare sector as a whole, in keeping with the ECEC agenda will support children's transition into early education, and support settings to meet requirements within the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare. It is suggested that pre-recorded training is made available for those unable to attend day time training. PACEY Cymru would encourage Welsh Government to see the non-maintained sector as equal to the maintained sector and that this is also shown in the Professional Development section of the HWB.

PACEY Cymru understand that the transition period of implementing the curriculum into practice in both schools and non-maintained settings will need careful planning and could differ from one setting/school to another. PACEY Cymru suggests that the non-maintained sector are involved and consulted on the development of the curriculum for the non-maintained sector including any trials in order to feedback in advance of the full role out. We would welcome the opportunity to be involved.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

PACEY Cymru believes that the Bill does clarify the role of Welsh Government to support the non-maintained sector with curriculum development. However, as indicated earlier clarification needs to be given on the expectation of the sector in relation to publishing a summary, as well as on reviewing and revising the curriculum.

As indicated earlier PACEY Cymru feels strongly that it is important to involve the non-maintained sector in the development process and trial period in order to relay any anticipated problem areas.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

PACEY Cymru believe that there is a positive move to embed the Welsh language throughout the curriculum however this could lead to an increase demand for Welsh

speaking practitioners and teachers. A long term commitment from Welsh Government around funding to support the recruitment, training and retention of these professionals is needed. For childcare and early years this is an ongoing work stream within our Cwlwm work plans in partnership with the Welsh Government and the National Centre for Learning Welsh (NCLW). This would support Welsh Government's 2050 vision of achieving a million Welsh speakers.

PACEY Cymru are aware that the curriculum has been developed in its original state through the medium of English, and although we are not experts in the field we are aware that information and documents can be misinterpreted during the translation process, and for this reason would suggest careful management of the Welsh resources, ensuring they too are fit for purpose.

The emphasis on health and well-being is welcomed, however we are aware that there may be additional support and training needed to upskill the whole sector to ensure that we have a consistent approach to support the children and young people.

As indicated earlier, the time frame for the development of the curriculum for the non-maintained sector is critical to the success and transitions into maintained education.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum appears to focus primarily on schools without considering the wider cost implications for childcare settings and those working to support them in the implementation of the new curriculum. This is likely to come at a significant investment in time and resources at a time when childcare settings are struggling financially and in decline. PACEY Cymru believes that the financial impact (in time more so than direct costs) needs to be clearly understood and acknowledged as this is often more hidden and harder to calculate. Added to this is the ongoing issues around local discrepancies around how Foundation Phase Nursery (FPN) provision is currently funded and commissioned with the amount received by settings varying widely across Wales. We firmly believe that the implementation of the new curriculum is a vehicle that could be used to alleviate these issues. We believe that clearer, national prescription for funding

and access to FPN provision is needed in Wales in line with funding for the Childcare Offer and Flying Start to ensure a balanced and proportionate approach. We know that non-maintained settings have been underfunded to provide the FPN and that it can often be a barrier for settings.

The funding provided to non-maintained settings to deliver education provision needs to reflect the work and level of responsibility involved. We would ask that the non-maintained settings are sustained in order to support flexibility for families and parental choice, support children's well-being and sustainability for the childcare sector.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

No

6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

No

Ymgynghoriad ar y Bil Cwricwlwm ac Asesu (Cymru)

Tystiolaeth i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer Craffu Cyfnod 1 Bil Cwricwlwm ac Asesu (Cymru).

Amdanoch Chi

Sefydliad: Mudiad Meithrin

1. Egwyddorion cyffredinol y Bil

1.1 A ydych yn cefnogi egwyddorion y [Bil Cwricwlwm ac Asesu\(Cymru\)](#)?

Yn rhannol

1.2 Amlinellwch eich rhesymau dros eich ateb i gwestiwn 1.1

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 1,500 o eiriau)

Mae Mudiad Meithrin yn cytuno bod yr amser wedi dod i fabwysiadu Cwricwlwm newydd i Gymru ac rydym yn cydfynd yn (oni bai am un mater penodol fel a nodir isod) gyda phrif egwyddorion y Bil hwn. Croesawn yr amlinelliad yn y memorandwm esboniadol am ddiben y ddeddfwriaeth a'r effaith y bwriedir iddi gael. Croesawn yn arbennig yr ymrwymiad clir yn y memorandwm esboniadol i Strategaeth Cymraeg 2050.

Er fod yr ymrwymiad hwn yn ymddangos yn y memorandwm, nid yw geiriad a gwedd y Bil yn gydnaws a'r egwyddor hon. Nid oes unrhyw fanylion wedi ei gynnwys a fydd yn gwireddu y nod honedig o greu poblogaeth plant a phobl ifanc rhugl yn y Gymraeg erbyn eu bod yn 16 oed. Yn wir, mae un cymal penodol sydd yn mynd yn groes i'r egwyddor hwnnw trwy awgrymu fod y Gymraeg yn eilradd i'r Saesneg.

Felly rhaid casglu fod yr egwyddorion yn arwynebol ac heb dreiddio yn llwyr i'r Bil hwn mewn modd effeithiol.

Mae'r pedwar diben a'r meysydd dysgu fel sylfaen egwyddorol y cwricwlwm yn gadarnhaol a chlr.

Maes arall a drafodir fel egwyddor yn y memorandwm esboniadol ble nad oes tystiolaeth o'r bwriad i'w weithredu yn ymddangos yn y Bil ei hun yw Dysgu Proffesiynol.

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 1,500 o eiriau)

Bu cryn drafod wrth ddatblygu'r Cwricwlwm i Gymru a'r Bil hwn am gynnwys dwy iaith swyddogol Cymru fel elfennau gorfodol yn ein darpariaeth addysg. Lleisiwyd cryn bryder y byddai hyn yn tanseilio ymdrech Mudiad Meithrin ag ysgolion cyfrwng Gymraeg i hyrwyddo a hwyluso addysg a gofal sy'n defnyddio dulliau trochi yn y Gymraeg.

Gwelwn fod y Bil nawr yn cynnig datrysiaid technegol i'r sefyllfa hon i ganiatâi i leoliadau osgoi defnyddio Saesneg hyd at 7 oed trwy ddatgan

"O ran Saesneg, bydd gan benaethiaid a darparwyr addysg feithrin a ariennir nas cynhelir hawl i ddewis a ydyn nhw'n cyflwyno Saesneg i ddysgwyr hyd at 7 oed, ac i ba raddau y mae'n nhw'n gwneud hynny. Mae hyn er mwyn cynorthwyo dysgwyr i fod yn rhugl yn y Gymraeg"

Er fod y cymal olaf yn cyfeirio at gyd-destun "cynorthwyo dysgwyr i fod yn rhugl yn y Gymraeg" mae'r frawddeg flaenorol yn hynod broblematic. Gallasai'r geiriad ar ei ffurf bresennol roi'r argraff camarweiniol ac arwain at ganlyniadau anfwriadol sef:

- mai Saesneg yw iaith normadol cyfundrefn gofal ac addysg Cymru
- mai gwyro oddi wrth y drefn gywir yw addysgu a gofalu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg (niche)
- y dylid bod yn cyflwyno Saesneg o fewn y ddarpariaeth (oherwydd mae 'graddau' yw'r gair a ddefnyddir sy'n awgrymu eto mai dyna'r peth rhesymol i wneud)
- fod grym di-gynsail gan benaethiaid a darparwyr meithrin i wyrdroi iaith darpariaeth a all arwain at anghysondebau di-ri
- fod dim statws i'r broses CSGA gan gofio nad yw disgrisiwn yn sail cadarn i gynllunio ohoni mewn materion cynllunio ieithyddol

Effaith y geiriad yw i gadw'r Gymraeg fel rhywbeth y mae'n rhaid addasu o'i chwmpas er mwyn ei "chaniatâu" yn hytrach na datgan fod addysg cyfrwng a throchi yn rhannu cwbl normadol, arferol a delfrydol yn y gyfundrefn addysg a gofal.

1.3 A ydych yn credu bod angen deddfwriaeth i gyflawni'r hyn y mae'r Bil hwn yn ceisio'i gyflawni?

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau)

Er mwyn sicrhau cysondeb ar draws Cymru a bod y cwricwlwm yn cael ei fabwysiadu gan bawb mae deddfu o blaid ei weithredu yn hanfodol. Nid ydym o'r farn bod angen cynnwys cymalau yn y Bil sydd yn gosod gorfodaeth deddfwriaethol i sicrhau bod disgyblion yn rhugl yn Saesneg. Mewn gwirionedd, mae Saesneg yn rhwym o gael ei dysgu yn ein hysgolion, ac mae sicrwydd am hynny yn y Maes Dysgu a Phrofiad Ieithoedd, Llythrennedd a Chyfathrebu heb fod angen cynnig deddfwriaethol penodol. Nid oes perygl na fydd plant yn dod yn rhugl yn y Saesneg o ystyried statws fwyafrifol llethol yr iaith yn lleol ac yn rhyngwladol. Cynigir mai un datrysiad i'r uchod fyddai esbonio mai yn Nghyfnod Allweddol 2 h.y. pan fo plentyn yn 7 oed y bydd pob plentyn yn dechrau dysgu Saesneg fel pwnc (h.y. ar gyfer plant sydd yn mynychu lleoliad gofal/addysg gynnar neu ysgol cyfrwng Cymraeg

2. Gweithredu'r Bil

2.1 A oes gennych unrhyw sylwadau am unrhyw rwystrau posibl rhag gweithredu'r Bil? Os na, ewch i gwestiwn 3.1

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau)

Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi derbyn bod creu cwricwlwm pwrpasol i leoliadau ariennir nas cynhelir yn bwysig a cheir ymrwymiad i hyn yn y Bil. Yn anffodus trwy gydol datblygiad y Cwricwlwm i Gymru ni fu ariannu teg ar gael i sicrhau fod lleoliadau ariennir nas cynhelir yn gallu bod yn rhan o'r gwaith datblygu. Cafwyd camau arwyddocaol trwy gefnogaeth yr adran Cyfnod Sylfaen i geisio gwneud iawn a gwella hyn wrth i'r broses ddatblygu fynd rhagddi. Teg yw dweud serch hynny bod y sector wedi cael eu hanwybyddu i rannau helaeth.

Mae Mudiad Meithrin yn falch i weld bod canllaw cwricwlwm pwrpasol i leoliadau ariennir nas cynhelir nawr ar y gweill a rydym yn ddiolchgar am y cyfle i ddylanwadu ar y cynnwys. Rydym yn rhagweld mai'r rhwystr mwyaf i'w weithredu a'i fabwysiadu maes o law fydd gwendidau yn yr isadeiledd sydd yn cefnogi dysgu proffesiynol i'r sector

2.2 A ydych yn credu bod y Bil yn ystyried y rhwystrau posibl hyn?

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau)

Ceir gwybodaeth yn y memorandwm am yr egwyddorion sydd yn cefnogi y Dysgu Proffesiynol sy'n gefn i'r cwricwlwm newydd. Mae yma eglurhad trylwyr o'r Dull Cenedlaethol ar gyfer Dysgu Proffesiynol er mwyn sicrhau caiff ymarferwyr eu cefnogi, a disgrifiad o'r Cyllid Ychwanegol fydd yn ei le i gefnogi'r model Ysgolion fel Sefydliadau sy'n Dysgu. Gofidiwn nad oes yma unrhyw fwiad i gynnwys y sector ariennir nas cynhelir, nac i ddatblygu fframwaith hyfforddi a chefnogi gyffelyb sydd yn addas i'r sector. Mae angen mynd ati ar frys i gysoni'r mynediad sydd gan ymarferwyr yn y sector i hyfforddiant a chyllid i gefnogi eu datblygiad proffesiynol.

3. Canlyniadau anfwriadol

3.1 A ydych yn credu bod unrhyw ganlyniadau anfwriadol yn deillio o'r Bil? Os na, ewch i gwestiwn 4.1

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau)

Rydym o'r farn y gallai diffygion y Bil arwain at:

1. Danseilio statws a gwaith cynllunio y CSGA
2. Osod addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg mewn 'niche' lleiafrifol yn hytrach na chyflawni'r weledigaeth fel a nodir gan danseilio strategaeth 'Cymraeg 2050'
3. Ddiffyg hyder ag arbenigedd ymysg ymarferwyr yn y sector ariennir nas cynhelir oherwydd diffygion yn yr isadeiledd cefnogi ag hyfforddi trwy'r awdurdodau lleol
4. Golli athrawon ymgynghorol arbenigol i'r sector nas cynhelir oherwydd diffyg cyllid penodol wedi ei neilltuo i'r pwrpas o ddysgu proffesiynol yn y sector ariennir nas cynhelir
5. Cefnogaeth addysgiadol broffesiynol yn digwydd trwy gyfrwng y Saesneg mewn lleoliadau ariennir nas cynhelir Cyfrwng Cymraeg (os ydyw yn digwydd o gwbl yn y dyfodol)

4. Goblygiadau ariannol

4.1 A oes gennych farn am oblygiadau ariannol y Bil (fel y'u nodir yn Rhan 2 o'r [Memorandwm Esboniadol](#))? Os nad oes, ewch i gwestiwn 5.1

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau)

Sylwn fod y disgrifiad o dan y pennawd Costau Cydymffurfio yn nodi:

“Disgwylir i ysgolion fynd i gostau uniongyrchol a chostau cyfle o ran dysgu proffesiynol wrth iddynt gynllunio a gweithredu eu cwricwlwm newydd. Cyfrifwyd yr amcangyfrif gorau o'r costau hyn drwy arolwg o Ysgolion Arloesi ledled Cymru. Yr amcangyfrif canolog o'r gost i ysgolion yw £292m. Costau uniongyrchol yw £29m o hwnnw a chost cyfle yw'r £263m arall, sy'n adlewyrchu gwerth amser staff. Disgwylir i'r gost hyn daro rhwng 2021-2022 a 2025-26.”

Ni gynhaliwyd arolwg o gostau datblygu a gweithredu'r cwricwlwm newydd i leoliadau ariennir ond nas cynhelir felly ymddengys bod Llywodraeth Cymru wedi methu yn llwyr a chynllunio ar gyfer y sector gofal ag addysg gynnar. (Onibai fod yn gostau wedi eu cynnwys ond heb eu datgelu) Os mai dyma'r achos dylid egluro beth yw'r gost ddisgwyliedig a sut pennwyd y swm hwnnw.

O dan y disgrifiad Costau ac anfanteision nad ydynt wedi'u cyfrif mae gwybodaeth am y costau ychwanegol disgwyliedig yn ôl profiad yr Ysgolion Arloesi mewn perthynas a pharatoi staff i gyflwyno elfennau o'r chwe Maes Dysgu a Phrofiad. Ceir cyfeiriad at yr Asesiad Effaith Rheoleiddiol ble nodir “Bydd trefniadau ar wahân yn cael eu sefydlu ar gyfer y sector nas cynhelir a bydd y cynigion hyn yn cael eu cyhoeddi yn y dyfodol. Mae hyn yn cydnabod y bydd angen cymorth ychwanegol a phenodol ar leoliadau nas cynhelir”

Croesawn fod yma gydnabyddiaeth o'r angen am gymorth yn y dyfodol, ond gresynwn nad wnaed ymgais i gynllunio yn fanwl y gost o greu'r Cwricwlwm a chefnogi'r gwaith cyflwyno a datblygu i leoliadau ariennir nas cynhelir.

5. Pwerau I wneud is-ddeddfwriaeth

5.1 A oes gennych unrhyw sylwadau am addasrwydd y pwerau yn y Bil i Weinidogion Cymru i wneud is-ddeddfwriaeth (fel y'i nodir ym Mhennod 5 o Ran 1 o'r [Memorandwm Esboniadol](#))? Os nad oes, ewch i gwestiwn 6.1.

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 500 o eiriau.)

-

6. Ystyriaethau eraill

6.1 A oes gennych unrhyw bwyntiau eraill yr hoffech eu gwneud am y Bil hwn?

(byddem yn ddiolchgar pe gallech gadw eich ateb o dan oddeutu 1,000 o eiriau)

-

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

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 6.1

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 1

Additional information from NUS Cymru following the meeting on 23 June

There were a few questions that we unasked due to time constraints, grateful if you could send us a written response to the following:

1. Exploring in more depth the impact on further education learners

- a.** What has been the experience of FE learners during the emergency? What concerns or issues are being fed back to you – likewise what has been working well?
 - b.** Are there any concerns about the experience FE learners will have when they start or return in September and how teaching will be delivered – particularly for those studying practical courses?
-
- a. What has been the experience of FE learners during the emergency? What concerns or issues are being fed back to you – likewise what has been working well?**

Feedback from NUS members in FE suggests students in the sector have been struggling with remote working more than their HE peers. There is less of a tradition of remote / independent working in FE than HE, so adapting to remote working has been more difficult for FE students. A survey of Cardiff and Vale College students found that two thirds were experiencing difficulties working from home.

Remote working has exposed disparities in students' access to appropriate study space at home. While we are satisfied that colleges have provided learners with laptops to continue working from home – assisted by Welsh Government funding for this purpose – there are still issues that students from poorer households are more likely to have cramped, uncomfortable study spaces, and a poor / non-existent internet connection. FE students living in rural areas are also more likely to face connectivity problems. Of course, these are issues outside of colleges' control, but mean that it is more likely that learners from disadvantaged will be further behind in their studies and more in need of interventions to get them up to speed. Without these interventions the crisis has the potential to erode progress made in closing attainment gaps and widening access to FE and HE.

Transport has been raised as an issue among FE members as well. Many learners at our FE colleges commute to college but because of heavily reduced public transport services they fear they will face issues getting to college in the first place.

b. Are there any concerns about the experience FE learners will have when they start or return in September and how teaching will be delivered - particularly for those studying practical courses?

According to our survey, 71% of students with a vocational element to their course told us they thought Covid-19 would have a negative impact on their course. Inevitably while social distancing remains in place colleges' capacity to deliver the vocational / practical element of any course will be, to a degree, compromised. A lot depends on how social distancing rules change in the coming weeks and months, but we are certainly concerned by the prospect of a second wave and the impact that will have on students - especially those with practical elements to their studies.

Supplementary information: Housing

Also for the committee's interest on housing:

- Up to 70% of students moved home for lockdown. NUS coronavirus and students survey found just 9% of students given chance to break their contract. Most student tenancies are fixed term and end 30 June, meaning many students have been paying rent on vacant properties since March.
- All universities let students who were living in university-owned accommodation out of their contracts early. Mixed picture for purpose-built student accommodation providers (PBSAs) operated by commercial landlords and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) which are often leased by individual landlords.
- Returning students face a dilemma of either signing for a contract now or waiting until September to see what learning will look like. Many students will already have signed contracts for 2020/21 - some as early as November/December before the virus had emerged.
- The Scottish Government legislated through its Coronavirus No 2 Act to give students currently in a contract a 7-day notice period and those who have signed up for a contract for 2020/21 a 28-day notice period. We'd back a similar course of action to protect students who have already committed to a contract in Wales.

Agenda Item 6.2

CYPE(5)-20-20 – Paper to note 2

Additional information from UNISON following the meeting on 23 June

There were a few questions that we unasked due to time constraints, grateful if you could send us a written response to the following:

1. Exploring in more depth the impact on further education learners

- a.** What has been the experience of FE learners during the emergency? What concerns or issues are being fed back to you – likewise what has been working well?
- b.** Are there any concerns about the experience FE learners will have when they start or return in September and how teaching will be delivered – particularly for those studying practical courses?

Question 1a

I have had some feedback from my learners which is quite mixed and I only get feedback from the ones that have engaged with on-line learning, several have not taken part much or at all since March 20.

Comments include "quite good", "more relaxed", "hard to stay motivated", "unable to take part due to no internet at home", sharing 1 PC with 4 brothers", "struggling due to harder to get help face to face with teachers". A few have reported IT problems, several have had to borrow lap tops from College.

Some learners may have used the lack of face to face teaching as an excuse to take time off from education.

Some have got full time jobs due to pressure to earn money to support their household.

Some learners have responded extremely well, stayed in touch with staff and completed excellent work via remote learning activities.

We have missed practical assessments and activities which would normally be the most enjoyable parts of courses, therefore, some students have commented that they have been disappointed in this.

The main points I would like to raise are that the more motivated and better - resourced learners have been doing fine, less motivated, less well off students have been falling behind - this will widen the gap between the top and bottom by lowering at the bottom.

There needs to be a comprehensive and quick study to find out what resources learners have available for home working and a very quick plan for supporting those learners who do not have adequate broadband/IT equipment/work space to allow them to engage next year. Many learners will need financial support to allow them to continue effectively with their courses.

What has worked well are staff being very innovative in putting together new types of teaching resources so that students are able to continue to learn and complete courses.

What did not work well was announcing that all grades for (most) vocational subjects would be calculated if not complete by March 20th. This meant that a lot of students decided not to bother completing work in April and May that would have ensured they kept learning and just relied on the fact that staff would have to give them a grade irrespective of whether they had handed anything in or not during this period.

Question 1b

I have lots of concerns about September - despite planning a lot of safe systems, Colleges will be reliant on behaviour of 16-19 year olds to follow social distancing and hygiene guidance. I am not at all confident that this will work given that there has been a noticeable decline in adherence to social distancing rules amongst many young people (and older people) in the last month and I think that by September, our learners will have become used to close social contact amongst their friends and it will be very difficult to enforce rules around a College environment. This puts staff and other learners at risk. Being in a classroom or workshop with a number of students for a prolonged period (even with 2m distancing) is a perfect arena for spreading the virus. I think we need another layer of protection; regular routine testing for staff and students + possibly temperature checks at the door. This would reduce the risk level when we are re-opening in September.

Also, I am not confident that the Government and educational establishments can move quickly enough to ensure that all learners have equal access to home learning by September - this will lead to a widening of the gap and likely increase in drop out rate among students who have unsuitable home working resources/spaces/support etc.

Workloads for staff are likely to be increased if current hours of teaching are maintained. This is not going to be sustainable without some adaptation to contracts. We cannot pretend that a contract and workload agreement based on face to face teaching can be directly transferred to teaching where the majority of work is on-line. In the short term, this will lead to a lot of preparation and conversion of teaching resources as well as time needed for training and practise in using on-line teaching technology. In the medium term, more hours will be required for remote delivery, particularly when it comes to feed back to students which tends to become a lot more 1:1 rather than in a face to face setting, 1:20 feedback can be used to give messages to the class as a whole.

Working on-line in a home office is also not a particularly healthy way of working as virtually 100% of work time involves being at a computer work station whereas, working normally in a college usually involves a lot more time standing and walking and not looking at a screen.

Delivery of practical sessions will be tricky in many areas and would generally reduce the number of learners one lecturer can teach at a time. This creates problems if there is no increase in the hours allocated for teaching that unit or course.

Some practical sessions require transport to off-site venues - this seems very difficult/impossible if 2m distancing remains in place. (e.g. 2-3 students max. in a minibus).

It is the practical elements that most students enjoy so if this part of the course is cut out or reduced, I would expect an increase in drop out rate.

1.a

The learners have missed the personal classroom contact and find motivation is much more difficult from home.

1.b

It will be very hard if the learners are missing out on frequent practicals (delivering on animal and equine courses) due to more online delivery and limited numbers on campus. In addition with some theory lessons we at times implement practical aspects which will be very difficult to do. It would be a concern with H&S if asking learners to complete any practical aspects from home. As it are vocational qualifications a lot of the learners primarily enjoy the practical aspects. Several assessments are based on the learners undertaking practical activities and they need to be able to have enough experience to allow them to achieve the best grades possible. In addition if the majority of learning is undertaking online, engagement may be an concern especially for lower level learners.

WE have had good feedback from our learners they have engaged well up until Whitsun then some started to fall of the radar.
the quality of work produced was of a high standard, in some cases better than they do in class.
they have engaged with west and skills test well many going up levels.
we have been in touch with them every day setting tasks most days 3 tasks.

they generally miss each other and the social interaction
they miss the practical sessions and being with the horses.
access to IT has been problematic
learners have made use of the study zone and mentor team.
Learners have been open in discussing the impact on their mental health and anxiety.
Generally they have pulled together and supported each other.

we have made good use of google meet and hangout

For September I have had no negative thoughts they all very much want to get back and be on the stable yard doing practicals.
They feel disadvantaged by not completing the year.

One learner has thought deeply about her career path and wants to follow a health care pathway now.

Yep, well Bangor Uni are not starting many of their courses until January 2021, which seems sensible. If we could start in October perhaps that would be helpful as getting ready for distance learning is a very time consuming process. Students will be really disadvantaged (on the other hand) by the long absence from academia and so it will take more to get the new cohorts up to speed, a mad dichotomy. I think 2020 will be the year of the lost generation as far as academia is concerned.

1. Experiences of learners has been mixed. Tutors have had to learn new e-skills to teach/assess learners. Learners self-directed learning and motivation is lower for the trades. Lack of IT hardware, software, skills and infrastructure has been an obstacle for some. some learners are apprentices working longer hours with less time for college engagement. Engagement and productivity has been lower, but is better than expected.
2. Overtime may be expected which invariably makes me unwell. Learners completing practical work may not receive all contact hours, with course content diluted. Two year courses may be further behind this time next year. Learners may need to conduct theory remotely with similar issues as IT, in above question.

Agenda Item 6.3

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: 21 July 2020

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

Dear Kirsty,

Thank you for attending Committee on 14 July to give evidence as the Member in charge of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

Due to time constraints, Members were unable to ask all the questions we wished to pose to you about the Bill's provisions as they relate to Religion, Values and Ethics ("RVE") and Relationships and Sexuality Education ("RSE").

The Committee would be grateful to receive a written response to the questions below, to inform our scrutiny of the Bill's general principles.

- The Bill makes no provision for parents to be able to withdraw their children from RVE or RSE. Are you satisfied that this is compatible with parents' rights to respect for their religious and philosophical convictions under Article 2 Protocol 1 (right to education) and their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights?
- What safeguards exist within the Bill (or more widely) to seek to ensure that both the RVE and RSE curricula are designed and delivered in a way that is objective, critical and pluralistic?
- Why does the Bill not place a requirement on all schools to design and teach RVE having regard to the agreed syllabus?
- Will schools with a religious character be required to design two syllabi, one denominational and the other having regard to the agreed syllabus? If so, how will schools be able to deliver this in practice where they are required to teach both?
- Is there a risk, given that the Bill requires a pupil to be provided with non-denominational RVE in a voluntary aided school where their parent requests it, certain schools with a religious



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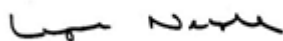
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character could end up in breach of their trust deeds where a majority of parents make such a request?

- Can you confirm whether the Welsh Government intends to undertake a further consultation on the statutory guidance to local authorities regarding agreed syllabi for RVE and that the current consultation (ending 28 July 2020) is a preliminary step to this? When do you anticipate undertaking any additional consultation on RVE?

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

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



Agenda Item 6.4

Y 15, 2020 - Paper to note 4

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee

12/08/2020

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 July 2020 with some further questions on Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

My response to the questions raised are as follows:

Q1. The Bill makes no provision for parents to be able to withdraw their children from RVE or RSE. Are you satisfied that this is compatible with parents' rights to respect for their religious and philosophical convictions under Article 2 Protocol 1 (right to education) and their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights?

This is a complex area in the Bill and so I have set out below a summary of what each category of school is obliged to do in the new Bill in respect of RVE.

Community schools, and foundation and voluntary schools without a religious character

- There is no right to withdraw from RVE
- RVE must be designed and taught having regard to the agreed syllabus
- RVE must be designed and taught having regard to Welsh Ministers statutory guidance

Foundation and voluntary controlled schools that have a religious character:

- There is no right to withdraw from RVE
- The curriculum must provide for:
 - RVE which has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus

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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.

- RVE to be taught in accordance with the trust deeds of the school or the tenets of the faith of the school (“Denominational RVE”);
- RVE must be designed and taught having regard to Welsh Ministers’ statutory guidance
- The default position is for learners to receive RVE which has been designed having regard to the agreed syllabus (so, even though the curriculum makes provision for both Denominational RVE and RVE in accordance with the agreed syllabus, the default position is that only RVE in accordance with agreed syllabus is taught)
- If parents request it, Denominational RVE can be provided. This is not a right to withdraw from RVE.

Voluntary aided schools that have a religious character:

- There is no right to withdraw from RVE
- RVE must be designed and taught having regard to Welsh Ministers’ statutory guidance
- The curriculum must provide for:
 - RVE in accordance with the trust deeds of the school or the tenets of the faith of the school
 - RVE which has been designed in accordance with the agreed syllabus
- The default position is for learners to receive Denominational RVE. The curriculum makes provision for both RVE in accordance with the agreed syllabus and Denominational RVE, but the default is that only Denominational RVE is taught unless a parent requests RVE in accordance with the agreed syllabus
- If a parent requests it, RVE must be provided for their child or children, that accords with the agreed syllabus only.

The Bill provisions ensure that RVE is mandatory and that all children in all schools have access to pluralistic RVE.

The Bill then ensures that all children have the right of access to a pluralistic RVE if that is wanted. By pluralistic we mean it does not seek to indoctrinate. In doing that the Bill recognises the role of schools with a religious character in the provision of state education.

The Welsh Government recognises that historically the state has embraced various faiths into the provision of education. In drafting the Bill Welsh Government have endeavoured to respect this, and to balance parents’ existing right in the Welsh and indeed UK school system to choose a religious education for their child with a recognition that it will not be appropriate for all pupils who attend such schools.

In respect of voluntary aided schools with a religious character their default under Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is that they teach the Denominational RVE i.e. according to their trusts or tenets of their religion. It is possible that those schools are required by their trust deed to provide education in a particular way which may not be pluralistic. In respect of foundation and Voluntary Controlled faith schools Schedule 19 to the 1998 Act provides that they must teach the agreed syllabus unless a parent requests the denominational RVE be provided. The Welsh Government does not see those trust deeds and so we cannot be certain on that point. In light of that the Bill provides that if a parent does not want that denominational RVE they can require the school to provide the agreed syllabus RVE. These provisions would apply to all voluntary aided schools with a religious character irrespective of what the faith of that school was. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 allows for new schools of other faiths to be established.

As noted above the Bill requires that all pupils receive RVE. The Bill also ensures that all pupils will be able to have the agreed syllabus/es RVE. In doing that the Bill recognises the role of schools with a religious character in the provision of state education.

The Bill seeks to preserve the current position described above and set out in Schedule 19 to the 1998 Act. However, in order to secure that each learner has access to pluralistic RVE in Voluntary Aided faith schools parents of learners can request agreed syllabus RVE. Likewise we recognise that parents who send their children to a foundation or Voluntary Controlled faith school may wish to have their child receive denominational RVE. In that way every learner has access to the agreed syllabus RVE which will be pluralistic in nature.

Therefore, we are satisfied that the Bill provisions are compatible with the rights protected by the Human Rights Act 1998, including A2P1 and Article 9.

Q2 .What safeguards exist within the Bill (or more widely) to seek to ensure that both the RVE and RSE curricula are designed and delivered in a way that is objective, critical and pluralistic?

The Welsh Government agrees that it is important to ensure that the approach and teaching is pluralistic, and particularly so where it is mandatory. The Bill contains a number of provisions that designed to ensure pluralistic RVE and RSE and these are summarised below:

RVE

The Bill makes provision in a number of respects which is designed to secure the pluralistic content and teaching of RVE. These are as follows:

Re-naming of religious education to Religion, Ethics and Values (RVE):

The purpose of the change in name is to reflect the expanded scope of religious education (RVE) and to ensure that it was clear from the legislation itself that the new subject should include non-religious views. That was done by linking the Bill provision to the term “philosophical convictions” in A2P1 (see section 62 of the Bill). In other words the RVE provided pursuant to the Bill must be compatible with A2P1 in that it must include teaching on non-religious philosophical convictions. The term philosophical convictions has within the meaning of A2P1. We consider that religious philosophical convictions would amount in any event to a religion. The Bill also amends the Education Act 1996 (see Schedule 2 of the Bill) to insert references where appropriate to philosophical convictions into the provisions dealing with religious education in the Education Act 1996. Please see the following:

- inserts a new section 375A of the 1996 Act (provision about the agreed syllabus) which requires that the agreed syllabus must reflect a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Great Britain. As with section 62 of the Bill the term is defined in reference to A2P1;
- amends section 390 of the 1996 Act (constitution of Agreed Syllabus Conferences) including reference to philosophical convictions as defined above;
- amends section 392 of the 1996 Act (supplementary provision on the constitution of Agreed Syllabus Conferences) including reference to philosophical convictions as defined above.
- amends Schedule 31 of the 1996 Act (provision in respect of the type of RVE that must be provided at each category of school) including reference to philosophical convictions as defined above.

You will also note section 62(5) of the Bill which specifically requires that governing bodies must exercise their functions with a view to ensuring that RVE is provided in accordance with section 62 of the Bill.

Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs):

Whilst the Government has chosen to retain ASCs, the Bill amends the constitution of ASCs so as to require a local authority to include in its ASC, a group of persons to represent such non-religious philosophical convictions as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represent. This reflects current guidance issued by Welsh Ministers to local authorities and ASCs. That guidance was revised following a legal challenge to the Vale of Glamorgan Council in 2017. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was challenged by way of judicial review in respect of its refusal to appoint a person with non-religious beliefs to Group A of its SACRE. It was a challenge to the Council's decision to refuse 'full' membership (i.e. membership with a right to take part in a group vote) of the SACRE to a Humanist representative on the basis that Humanism is not a religion. Subsequently the Council decided to retake its decision and the case did not proceed to a full hearing. The Minister for Education wrote to each local authority stating the following:

- a. "to ensure compatibility with the Human Rights Act 1998 the provisions relating to the constitution of SACRES and ASCs in the 1996 Act are to be interpreted as permitting the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs in the same way as they permit the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs; (section 390(4)(a) of, and paragraph 4(2)(1) of Schedule 31 to, the 1996 Act). However, we consider the non-religious beliefs adhered to by the person to be appointed must be analogous to a religious belief, such as humanism. To be "analogous" we consider the non-religious beliefs must in accordance with case law under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 attain the necessary level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance to attract protection under the Convention Rights;
- b. an appointment is dependent on the relevant local authority's opinion as to whether such a representative would help ensure that the relevant traditions in the local authority's area are appropriately reflected in Group A. The final decision of an appointment rests with the local authority, and they are best placed to assess whether a SACRE has the necessary expertise and experience to properly discharge its function.
- c. The same principle applies in relation to appointments to Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs)."

An ASC may not recommend to its local authority the adoption of an agreed syllabus unless it meets the requirements of the Bill including that in section 62 that the agreed syllabus must reflect a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Great Britain. As with section 62 of the Bill the term is defined in reference to A2P1. Therefore unless the agreed syllabus included philosophical convictions as defined by A2P1 it could not adopt the recommended agreed syllabus.

A copy of this correspondence is attached for your information and ease of reference.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

In terms of RSE the Bill also makes provision in a number of respects which is designed to secure the pluralistic content and teaching of RVE. These are as follows.

Change of name:

The Bill provides for a change in the current name in legislation from sex education to RSE. This indicates the breadth of the subject and concepts that should be included.

Statutory Code on RSE:

The Bill requires the Welsh Ministers to publish a code setting out the core learning to be undertaken in RSE. This means areas that must be covered by schools and funded non-maintained settings in the teaching and learning for this specific mandatory element. This will be to set out matters that must be covered and how that should be covered. A statutory code on RSE is an exceptional approach to reflect the important cultural, moral and ethical issues inherent in the teaching of RSE, within a curriculum which largely seeks to be non-prescriptive. Case law, and the European convention on Human rights, requires that pluralistic RSE must be available for all learners¹.

Developmentally appropriate:

The Bill will also include express provision that the RSE provided will be developmentally appropriate

Q3. Why does the Bill not place a requirement on all schools to design and teach RVE having regard to the agreed syllabus?

Welsh Government recognises the role of the Catholic Education Service and the Church in Wales as providers of education in Wales.

Case law, and the European convention on Human rights, requires that pluralistic RVE must be available for all learners².

We could ensure the provisions of pluralistic RVE by one of two ways. Both would ensure the proposed legislative framework and guidance would be compatible with the rights protected by the Human Rights Act 1998. The first way would be to impose a new obligation on all schools to teach RE in a pluralistic manner. This approach would remove all other restrictions and would force all schools to change the way they teach (assuming any change was necessary). It would also have primacy over any provision set out in their trust deeds. This would have an impact on the ability of voluntary aided schools with a religious character to teach RVE in accordance with their trust deeds or in accordance with their denomination. The scale of that impact would vary depending on the specific provision contained in the school's trust deed and the approach currently adopted in the school.

The Bill does not pursue this requirement because it would have significant implications for schools of religious character.

The other approach is that contained in the Bill itself which we consider is an appropriate response to the issues and compatible with Convention rights.

¹ As relevant case law see Dojan and Others v Germany Application no. 319/08.

² As to the relevant case law please (Folgerø v Norway ; Lautsi v Italy (2008) 46 EHRR 47, paragraph 54); (Lautsi v Italy (2012) 54 EHRR 3, paragraph 59) and the Fox case [2015] EWHC 3404 (Admin).

Q4. Will schools with a religious character be required to design two syllabi, one denominational and the other having regard to the agreed syllabus? If so, how will schools be able to deliver this in practice where they are required to teach both?

Schools with a religious character will have to design two syllabi. As there is no right to withdraw a child from RVE (or indeed RSE) the Bill needs to ensure that those children attending a faith school have access to a pluralistic RVE if that is wanted by the parent. That is what the current law requires – access to pluralistic RVE if there is no right to withdraw. It is possible that some children attending a voluntary aided faith school will do so because it is the nearest suitable school and not necessarily because of the provision of denominational RVE. In that case they may want access to pluralistic RVE. That is achieved by allowing parents to request the agreed syllabus RVE for their children. If that is requested it must be provided by the school. That ensures all children have access to pluralistic agreed syllabus RVE if that is wanted. Welsh Government will work with schools of a religious character to understand the numbers of learners who request this as the requirements of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill begin implementation, and will ensure the likely expectation is considered within the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Bill. We consider that is compatible with the Convention Rights and safeguards these for all learners. As to how they can deliver that in practice, we anticipate that the numbers of pupils not following the denominational syllabus will be very small. The school would need to consider how they could best deliver on that. For example, they could be provided with additional supplementary or separate classes. My officials are working with the Catholic Education Service and the Church in Wales to consider how to assess and address the impact of implementing this requirement.

Q5. Is there a risk, given that the Bill requires a pupil to be provided with non-denominational RVE in a voluntary aided school where their parent requests it, certain schools with a religious character could end up in breach of their trust deeds where a majority of parents make such a request?

No. There are a number of ways the school could comply with that requirement. The school can provide this type of RVE by providing additional supplementary classes for those pupils at the school. If the school did not think that was appropriate, then options could include making arrangements for additional learning to be provided at another setting or making arrangements for external providers to provide the learning on the school premises. The school would need to make that clear including what would be provided

We have listened carefully to the concerns raised by partners and stakeholders but do not anticipate that there will be a large number of pupils opting out of denominational RVE. We consider that it is likely that where parents have exercised the right to withdraw from religious education under the current legislation they will also opt out of the denominational RVE. Our understanding that current exercise of the right to withdraw in schools with a religious character is extremely low.

Q6. Can you confirm whether the Welsh Government intends to undertake a further consultation on the statutory guidance to local authorities regarding agreed syllabi for RVE and that the current consultation (ending 28 July 2020) is a preliminary step to this? When do you anticipate undertaking any additional consultation on RVE

A Supporting Framework for RVE which will be statutory guidance and has been co-constructed with practitioners and RVE experts over the past 12 months. It is designed to support ASCs and Schools in respectively developing and implementing their agreed syllabus

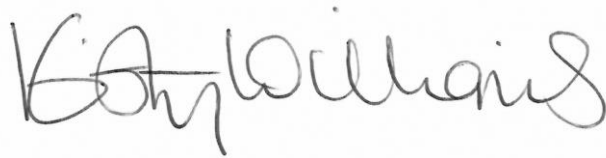
I can confirm there will be a formal consultation on the statutory framework for RVE late in the year. Where we will welcome consideration of the Framework from all faiths and backgrounds.

Further guidance is also planned to support the curriculum design in schools with a religious character. Welsh Government officials have been in discussion with both the Catholic Education Service and the Church in Wales to take forward development of guidance collaboratively and I look forward to working in partnership with both bodies to develop these.

The Catholic Education Service, in partnership with the three Catholic Dioceses of Wales and Welsh Government will co-construct 'Curriculum Guidance' (CG) documentation for Catholic schools in Wales that will:

- make links between Catholic denominational RE and the Humanities, supporting Catholic schools in Wales to have due regard to the AoLE;
- make wider links between the Catholic denominational syllabi and the content of the other Areas of Learning and Experience;
- reference other cross-cutting elements of the curriculum, such as: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams MS
Minister for Education



Local Authority Directors of Education

3 May 2018

Dear Colleagues

I am writing to update you in relation to the governance and membership on Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (“SACREs”) and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (“ASCs”).

As you may be aware, the extant guidance relating to SACRE membership is laid out in Circular 10/94 (published by the former Welsh Office in 1994). The circular is non-statutory and is neither binding nor authoritative but there have been a number of queries recently on the issue of membership to Group A of a SACRE. Specifically, on whether persons who hold non-religious beliefs (such as Humanists) should be permitted full membership on Group A in light of the Human Rights Act 1998. For information, details on how membership to a SACRE is constituted is included at Annex A.

The circular states at paragraph 103:

“The inclusion of representatives of belief systems such as humanism, which do not amount to a religion or religious denomination, on Committee A of an agreed syllabus conference or Group A of a SACRE would be contrary to the legal provisions referred to at paragraph 102”.

The appointment of persons to a SACRE is a matter for local authorities and the SACREs. However, taking legal advice into consideration, I am of the opinion that representatives from non-religious belief systems may be appointed to Group A of a SACRE or ASCs, to ensure that SACREs/ASCs fully reflect the beliefs of the communities that they are representing and to comply with current legislation.

It is the view of the Welsh Government that:

- to ensure compatibility with the Human Rights Act 1998 the provisions relating to the constitution of SACRES and ASCs in the 1996 Act are to be interpreted as

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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.

permitting the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious beliefs in the same way as they permit the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs; (section 390(4)(a) of, and paragraph 4(2)(1) of Schedule 31 to, the 1996 Act). However, we consider the non-religious beliefs adhered to by the person to be appointed must be analogous to a religious belief, such as humanism. To be “analogous” we consider the non-religious beliefs must in accordance with case law under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 attain the necessary level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance to attract protection under the Convention Rights.

- an appointment is dependent on the relevant local authority’s opinion as to whether such a representative would help ensure that the relevant traditions in the local authority’s area are appropriately reflected in Group A. The final decision of an appointment rests with the local authority, and they are best placed to assess whether a SACRE has the necessary expertise and experience to properly discharge its function.

The same principle applies in relation to appointments to Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs).

For the avoidance of doubt, the guidance set out in this letter supersedes paragraph 103 of Circular 10/94.

With regards to an updating Circular 10/94, I am aware that there are other areas of contention within the document that need to be addressed. As there are some complex issues, consideration of those matters is still on-going and therefore a review of the guidance will be considered once all information on this matter has been received.

I hope this provides clarification on these matters.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg

Cabinet Secretary for Education

Annex A

1. The functions of a SACRE are set out in section 375 of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) and broadly those are to advise a local authority in respect of matters relating to religious education and collective worship. Section 390 of the 1996 Act set out how a SACRE is to be constituted as follows:
 - a) a group of persons to represent Christian denominations and other religions and denominations as in the opinion of the authority appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. The number of persons appointed should reflect broadly the proportionate strength of the particular denomination or religion in the area (“Group A”);
 - b) a group of persons representing associations that represent teachers; and
 - c) a group of persons to represent the authority.
2. In addition a SACRE may include co-opted members onto it. Such members are to be appointed on the terms as may be determined by those co-opting that person i.e. the SACRE itself (section 392(5) of the 1996 Act). Co-opted members cannot take part in a group vote.

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Cyllid

—
Welsh Parliament
Finance Committee

Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
Chair, External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

22 July 2020

Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22

Dear Committee Chairs

Further to the Finance Committee debate on the Welsh Government's spending priorities for 2021-22 on 15 July 2020, I am my writing to all Chairs of subject committees to share our thinking, and to encourage your committees to consider how you can contribute to delivering the most coherent and effective scrutiny of the Welsh Government's spending plans.

Budget focus

The Finance Committee has agreed to continue the approach followed in previous years, whereby budget scrutiny is centred on the four principles of financial scrutiny: affordability, prioritisation, value for money and process. The principles are:

- **Affordability** - to look at the big picture of total revenue and expenditure, and whether these are appropriately balanced;
- **Prioritisation** - whether the division of allocations between different sectors/programmes is justifiable and coherent;
- **Value for money** - essentially, are public bodies spending their allocations well – economy, efficiency and effectiveness (i.e.) outcomes; and
- **Budget processes** - are they effective and accessible and whether there is integration between corporate and service planning and performance and financial management.



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I wrote to you on [1 June 2020](#), to notify you that given the current social restrictions we would not be holding our annual stakeholder event. Instead we undertook online engagement using Twitter polls and questions asking the public to suggest areas that should be prioritised. [A summary of responses is available](#). Whilst the engagement exercise was limited in scope this year, as the sample was self-selecting and not based on a representative sample of the population, it did provide an interesting snap shot of views and these were highlighted during the Priorities Spending debate on [15 July 2020](#). I am pleased to confirm that the Business Committee and Minister for Finance and Trefydd have agreed that this type of debate should be held annually and I am grateful to the Members that contributed to the debate.

The 2021-22 Draft Budget will undoubtedly be impacted by the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the end of the Brexit transition period. In addition, from our engagement work and the contributions made during the priorities debate, we have identified a number of areas which we would like to see the focus of the scrutiny, these are:

- *How resources should be targeted to support economic recovery and what sectors in particular need to be prioritised;*
- *To what extent alleviating climate change should be prioritised in supporting economic recovery;*
- *Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty and gender inequality;*
- *Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early);*
- *Sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation;*
- *How evidence is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations;*
- *How the Welsh Government should use taxation powers and borrowing;*
- *Support for businesses, economic growth and agriculture after EU transition ends;*
- *What are the key opportunities for Government investment to support 'building back better' (i.e. supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act).*

We would encourage you to use some of these areas as the focus for your budget scrutiny.



Timetable

The Welsh Government's draft budget is usually published in October. However, this year it will be delayed as the Welsh Government does not have an indication of the total funding available until the UK Government publish a Budget or Comprehensive Spending Review. The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd has written to the Business Committee and in order to comply with Standing Order 20, has indicated that the Welsh Government will publish the outline and detailed draft Budgets together on 8 December 2020, and the final Budget on 2 March 2021. However, the Minister has said she will provide a firm timetable as soon as possible after the UK Government has made an announcement regarding its Budget

Draft budget consultation

Based on the timetable proposed by the Minister, the Finance Committee intends to consult slightly later this year in September/October. As has been the previous practice, we will be consulting on behalf of all Committees and the responses will be shared with you in the autumn in order to assist your scrutiny of the draft budget. As always, we would appreciate your assistance in promoting our consultation via your own communication tools to encourage and engage with a wider audience.

As you will be aware the provisions in relation to the reporting by policy committees changed in 2017, and you are now able to report in your own right (if you so wish), and your reports can be used as a supporting document to the draft budget debate.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the draft budget process, please feel free to contact me or the Clerk to the Finance Committee, Bethan Davies, 0300 200 6372, seneddfinance@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely





Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair of the Finance Committee

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



Agenda Item 6.6

CYPE 15-20-20 Paper to note 6

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 July 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Debate of Estyn's 2018-19 Annual Report**

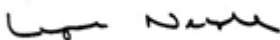
Dear Kirsty,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 July 2020 regarding the debate of Estyn's 2018-19 Annual Report.

The Committee agrees with you that, in light of the delay between the publication of the 2018-19 Annual Report and a potential date in the autumn term to debate it in Plenary, it would be more appropriate to lay it before the Senedd to note.

We note your indication that Estyn's 2019-20 Annual Report is due to be published on 9 December and that you will lead a debate on that report early in 2021. We would welcome an opportunity in that debate to refer to points arising in our scrutiny of Estyn's 2018-19 report, if relevant at that stage.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

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



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CYPE(5)-20-20 - Paper to note 7

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

—

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Alun Jones, Interim Chief Executive, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Dyddiad | Date: 22 July 2020

Pwnc | Subject: Covid-19: CAMHS in-patient units

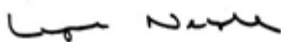
Dear Alun,

Thank you for your letter dated 15 July 2020 updating the Committee on the arrangements that are now in place for HIW to visit and inspect in-patient facilities, and HIW's plans to respond to any future easing or tightening of lockdown requirements.

We discussed your response at our meeting on 20 July. We welcome your update and would very much like to receive regular updates on the new ways of working that you are developing, including the outcome of the evaluation on the approach to ensure the new ways are appropriate and meeting their aims and objectives.

I would like to take you up on the offer of a meeting to discuss the follow-up work on the recommendations of the youth thematic review. Please could you contact the clerking team to arrange a suitable time following publication of your findings.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

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



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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 July 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill – financial information**

Dear Kirsty,

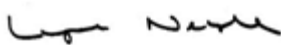
On **20 July 2020** we took evidence from the WLGA, ADEW and the Regional Education Consortia to inform our Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

During the session with the WLGA and ADEW, local government representatives told us that they would be submitting updated financial information to you to inform the Bill's Regulatory Impact Assessment. They explained that this information would be submitted by early September 2020, and would include—among other things—an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on costs associated with the Bill, as well as approximations of costs for the next two financial years.

We are aware that, as a matter of course, a revised version(s) of the Explanatory Memorandum will be published during the course of the Bill's passage through the Senedd. However, given the current and changing context, we would welcome regular updates on the financial information available to you, and your understanding of the financial implications of the Bill.

I have copied the Chair of the Finance Committee for awareness, given its forthcoming work on the financial implications of the Bill.

Yours sincerely,





Lynne Neagle MS
Chair

Cc Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair, Finance Committee



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



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Agenda Item 6.9

CYPE(5) 20 20 - Paper to note 9

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Lynne Neagle MS
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

4 August 2020

Dear Lynne,

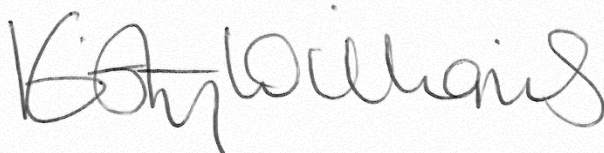
Thank you for your letter dated 22 July 2020 seeking further financial information following my recent attendance at the Children, Young People and Education Committee in relation to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

To confirm the WLGA, ADEW and the Regional Consortia have been invited to provide additional financial information on the impact of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill to update the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). This resumes the activity that commenced earlier in the year, and which needed to be paused in some cases as stakeholders responded to the urgent impact of Covid-19. However, it is worth noting the Bill SRO and Bill Manager did meet with the Regional Consortia and the RIA reflects their views at that time. This further invitation to contribute to the RIA will provide the Regional Consortia with an opportunity to reflect on that information in light of the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the further guidance that has been published to support curriculum reform.

The RIA will be updated at the end of Stage 2 to reflect the additional information received. Ahead of this, I will update the CYPE Committee and the Finance Committee as we meet in the autumn.

In the meantime if you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

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Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

—
Welsh Parliament
Petitions Committee

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Ty Hywel
CF99 1SN

24 July 2020

Dear Lynne

Petition P-05-972 To provide a minimum of 4 hours a day of live teaching during COVID closures for all school children

The Petitions Committee has received the above petition, which we considered for the first time at our meeting on 7 July, alongside a response from the Minister for Education and further comments from the petitioner.

In light of the ongoing consideration that is being given to the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on children and young people in Wales, including in relation to education, we agreed to write to you to share this petition with your Committee. In particular, we wished to draw your attention to the additional points made by the petitioner in relation to the handling of any further school closures or blended learning which may be required in the future.

Further information about the petition, including related correspondence, is available on our website at:

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=28719>.

If you have any queries, please contact the Committee clerking team at the e-mail address below.

Yours sincerely



Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair



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Encl: Correspondence from the petitioner to the Petitions Committee dated
23.06.20



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P-05-972 To provide a minimum of 4 hours a day of live teaching during COVID closures for all school children – Petitioner to Committee, 23.06.20

Please see my responses in red with regards to the letter from the Minister of Education -

We are aware that some schools have the capability to deliver live streamed lessons safely to their learners and as such we have worked with stakeholders across the Education sector to agree guidance to reflect this, subject to certain conditions. This is available at <https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/developing-approaches-to-support-distancelearning/> - The lack of consistency across all schools in Wales to provide an equal delivery of continued lessons is against equality policy. "some schools" is not all schools and creates a picture of a post code lottery of educational provision both in terms of equality and the right to education as outlined in the human rights act.

The safeguarding of children remains our priority but schools have the option to use live streaming of lessons if it is considered appropriate. In doing so schools should closely adhere to their safeguarding policies and refer to the Welsh Government's 'Live-streaming safeguarding principles and practice for education practitioners' guidance document' at <https://hwb.gov.wales/zones/online-safety/live-streaming-safeguarding-principles-andpractice-for-education-practitioners/> and any relevant local authority guidance. There is inconsistent messaging and adoption of this guidance from LA's. Private schools are harnessing and have harnessed live lessons since the early pandemic and will do so should the need for "blended learning" continue into the new academic year. We see the lack of this decree being centrally agreed a matter for equality (please send the Welsh government report into equality in education for my information, again creating a "post code" lottery for those unable to access private schooling and is also a contravention of human rights for the children of Wales. WG simply cannot "pass the buck" to the LA's in a matter of such great importance especially when most LA@s are struggling financially with budget deficits.

Welsh Government do not prescribe the amount of live streaming of lessons that will be delivered as individual schools have the responsibility for the use of live streaming of lessons according to their capability to do so and local arrangements for interaction with their learners. Any arrangements for the use of live streaming of lessons will remain the responsibility of individual schools in conjunction with their Local Authorities and as such they will need to confirm the agreed position with their Local Authority. This answer from the minister is wholly unacceptable and to push the provision of live lessons out to the LA is a case for lack of equality of education provision for Welsh school children. Welsh government need to decide policy which ensures an equal provision of standard of education for children who are in state provision in line with private. To not do so is both a human rights issue and abuse of equal rights for children.

It is unacceptable for WG to push this matter onto the already struggling LA's to create a post code lottery of pot luck of what our children's education looks like as we move through 2020.

I await your response

Agenda Item 6.11

CYPE(5)-20-26 - Paper to note 11

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

30 July 2020

Dear Lynne,

I refer to my attendance at the Children, Young People and Education Committee meeting on 7th July for the Covid-19 Evidence session.

During my attendance my officials and I agreed to share with the Committee:

- a review of blended learning carried out by the regional education consortia and details of actions taken as a result of it; and
- a paper published jointly with Estyn and the regional education consortia giving more detail on advice to schools on blended learning.

The Blended Learning Guidance (published June 2020) and the Models of Blended Learning (published July 2020) were produced jointly between the consortia and Estyn, this was part of a work stream of the Welsh Government's Continuity of Learning project. The development of this guidance has been supported by a review that was undertaken by the Regional Consortia 'National Distance Learning Summary'. This review is a Regional Consortia document and as such is not in the public domain.

At the time the initial guidance was produced, schools were operating distance learning models. The guidance was produced based on a review of international publications about blended learning approaches, many of which are listed in the guidance. The guidance was designed to support the return to school from 29th June, when schools started to deliver blended learning. The models of blended learning gave further detail and exemplification of how the guidance might be applied with different age groups. This was partly informed by the discussions that inspectors and challenge advisors had with headteachers about their plans for the partial re-opening of schools. However, it was mostly informed by evidence of what had worked elsewhere, since this work was in its very early stages of being tried in Wales.

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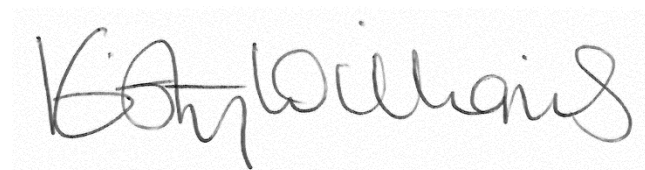
Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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Back Page 92

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'W'.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Agenda Item 6.12

CYPE(5) 20 20 - Paper to note 12

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: 03 August 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Impact of Covid-19 on children and young people, including students in further and higher education**


Dear Kirsty,

Thank you for attending committee on 7 July to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on education, and for responding to our Plenary debate on 15 July on the pandemic's impact on children and young people.

In accordance with the Committee's agreed approach to its scrutiny of COVID-19, Annex A to this letter highlights points on which we request further detail and/or reassurance at this stage in the pandemic. It is not an exhaustive list of the issues we consider important; rather, our intention is to provide feedback to the Welsh Government, at pace, on the areas we believe require more attention, and to provide effective and timely oversight of the issues that are emerging. Annex B includes questions that, due to time constraints, were unasked during the session on 7 July.

Over the summer recess and into the autumn term, we request regular updates on any developments in the Welsh Government's response to the public health emergency as they relate to children and young people. As a Committee, we are committed to keeping a very close eye on progress and decisions in this area. Where necessary—and alongside our ongoing scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill—we will seek further evidence from the public, stakeholders, public bodies and the Welsh Government about the continued impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people.

Kind regards,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

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



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ANNEX A – Issues arising from the session on 7 July

A children's rights approach

We believe that children's rights should be at the forefront of the Welsh Government's thinking when making decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The First Minister's recently committed to giving consideration to how best to present assessments of "the potential impacts of maintaining or easing restrictions on equalities and the rights of children and meeting other statutory duties". We intend to monitor this closely.

A child's right to education and right to play under the UNCRC should be at the centre of all decisions relating to schools and wider education provision during this public health emergency. We recognise that this needs to be balanced alongside consideration of public health needs, the education sector's capacity, and the physical and emotional health, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

We believe that, when developing its response to the pandemic, more evidence of the systemic consideration of children's rights within government would have been beneficial. **For future decisions relating to the management of COVID-19 – particularly those relating to the provision of statutory education and children's services – we request a more public and transparent outline of the way in which children's rights have been explicitly and rigorously considered and applied.**

Schools in Wales

Following our session on 7 July you announced your intention, based on scientific advice and subject to a continued decline in community rates of infection, to allow all children to return to school in September. During our Plenary debate on 15 July, the Committee welcomed this decision.

Further to your announcement, we would welcome **further detail on the factors you anticipate taking into account if you have to decide whether schools should reduce operations or close again in future, due to any increases in the virus's presence in the community. We would be particularly grateful if you could:**

- confirm whether the five principles you set out in April, and the decision framework you published in May, would still apply;
- outline how these documents have changed, if at all, in light of **learning about the virus** to date (e.g. to what extent is the conclusion that there is little transmission by children of the virus¹ reflected?)

¹ TAC report, paras 3-5

- provide details of the **contingency plans** you are putting in place should the COVID-19 situation deteriorate and schools need to reduce operations or close again —if there is a continued need for blended learning, what lessons have been learned from the past four months and how will you ensure that blended learning will be delivered effectively and consistently, addressing the unequal impacts on different learners which we have highlighted in earlier correspondence?

In relation to the curriculum, we would also be grateful if you could confirm:

- whether the temporary disapplication of the curriculum requirements will be lifted as schools resume in September; and
- if the disapplication is not being lifted in September, what the rationale for retaining it is and how long you foresee it being necessary.

EOTAS

During our session on 7 July we asked what is being done to ensure that pupils educated other than at school understand what is happening now and how their needs will be met, and how is this being communicated to children and their parents. You responded:

“[...] we will have to have an equitable return to schools in September, regardless of the setting in which education is delivered, including our mainstream schools, our special schools, and those students that receive education in education other than at school. And we will look to be able to provide specific guidance to those providers, and to communicate that with both parents and children.”²

We would be grateful if you could provide:

- assurances that the interests of EOTAS pupils will be fully taken into account in the way that local authorities and schools operationalise decisions about September;
- further detail about when the specific guidance you referred to in our session on 7 July will be available and how it will address the interests of EOTAS pupils.

Test, Trace, Protect

Both you and the Committee have emphasised the importance of the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) strategy to the resumption of school activity.

We would welcome further details of:

- the discussions you are having with the Minister for Health and Social Services about the critical role of the TTP strategy;

² CYPE Committee, Record of Proceedings [para 45], 7 July 2020

- any assurances you have received from the Minister and his officials that the aim³ of tracing an estimated 80% of contacts, at least 35% of which are to be traced within 24 hours, will be met within a school environment.

Higher and further education

During our session on 7 July and our Plenary debate on 15 July, we highlighted the concerns raised with us by the higher and further education sectors about the impact of COVID-19 on their work and students.

On **22 July** you announced over £50 million additional funding for universities and colleges, with £27 million provided to higher education institutions, and £23 million to support students in FE colleges and sixth forms.

We welcome this announcement, and would be grateful to receive further information about the following:

- the extent to which the funding granted to HE and FE respectively as part of this announcement meets in full (or otherwise) the bids you have made within the Welsh Government for additional funding for the sectors;
- the consideration you have given to the issue of student hardship, particularly over this summer break, and an indication of why there does not appear to be any ring-fenced or hypothecated funding for this purpose;
- the measures on which you expect to see the £15 million⁴ allocated to further education colleges and sixth forms spent;
- the criteria that would need to be met to trigger potential further funding support in the autumn⁵; and
- whether you have any further funding bids (HE/FE or otherwise) submitted to the Welsh Government's COVID-19 funding process, and/or whether you expect to make more.

³ Technical Advisory Group, [Advice on return to school - Proposed by Children and Education subgroup](#), 7 July 2020, page 2.

⁴ The Minister's [statement](#) of 22 July outlines that, of the £23 million allocated to further education, "15 million will be provided for learners beginning their A level or vocational course at an FE college or sixth form, to increase teaching support following their time away from their education setting earlier this year and to help with their transition to post-16 learning. The funding will be provided for all full-time learners between 16 and 19 years and represents a 5 per cent increase to funding-per-student",

⁵ The Minister's [statement](#) of 22 July outlines that "[The Welsh Government] will consider the situation and needs again in the autumn, to continue our support for the economic and social recovery from COVID-19".

ANNEX B – Unasked questions from the session on 7 July, for written response

Questions submitted directly from children and young people

- Would the Minister be able to ensure that support will be made available above and beyond the current support specifically targeted at BAME young people following GCSE and A-Level results day to minimise the risk of them becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and avoid them further falling behind?
- Can you tell us what help there is for managing my mental health and not just stats on number of deaths?

Support for vulnerable children and other priority groups of pupils

- Could you summarise how teaching and learning for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is continuing under the current 'blended learning' model? To what extent is there a very real risk that these pupils could be particularly adversely affected and what is the relative position of special schools?

Awarding of qualifications

- Are you fully confident that the standardisation model being developed by Qualifications Wales and the WJEC will not disadvantage particular groups of learners, for example those in schools with previous lower attainment rates due to the model's use of centres' previous results?
- Is it satisfactory that candidates will not be able to appeal against the grades submitted by their school or college and will also not be able to appeal themselves against the way WJEC uses this data? Could this infringe their human rights given they have been denied an opportunity to demonstrate themselves under full exam conditions, in contrast with previous cohorts?

Post-16 education and training

- Has the decision to postpone the Tertiary Education and Research Bill been the most significant loss to your department's programme arising as a consequence of the need to respond to the pandemic? To what extent was this decision driven by objections from within the sector rather than by the Welsh Government?
- Have you explored lowering the maximum fee universities can charge, or have you considered other options for how to compensate students or adjust the costs to them to reflect the likelihood of having a very different learning and teaching experience during the next academic year?

- Are there any other options that Welsh Universities should be considering in this regard?
- To what extent are you satisfied that Competition and Markets Authority guidance, and consumer law requirements, are being met by providers?
- What discussions have you had with your UK counterparts about the student number control on England domiciled students? What have you assessed the impact of this to be in Wales?
- How satisfied are you that the FE sector is responding to the needs of vulnerable and hard to reach students? How do you respond to concerns from some stakeholders that FE students have not received the same support as schools and their pupils in this regard?
- Are you satisfied with the arrangements in place to award post 16 vocational qualifications? Has there been a lack of urgency to resolve those issues compared to the announcements about academic qualifications?

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA/KW/2542/20
Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament

24 August 2020

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 3 August requesting additional information on issues within my portfolio following my appearance at your Committee last month. Due to the range of issues listed, I have provided my responses under the following relevant headings for ease of reference.

Children's rights

We have undertaken a number of activities to ensure the Rights of Children and Young People as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) continue to be at the heart of decision making within the Welsh Government and throughout this Covid-19 crisis.

We have been aware of difficulties in engaging with children and young people on decisions which have affected them throughout the pandemic. To address this we were the first government in the UK to ask children and young people about their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Children and young people told us what they thought about a range of issues including:

- their mental health and wellbeing;
- their education and learning;
- the impact lockdown has had on social aspects of their lives; their play during lockdown and the benefits of lockdown.

23,700 children and young people responded to the '[Coronavirus and me](#)' survey, which was delivered on our behalf by the Children's Commissioner for Wales in a partnership project with Children in Wales and the Youth Parliament / Senedd Ieuenctid. The survey was also co-produced with children and young people themselves.

The survey has already provided rich data on what is important to children and young people and continues to be a valuable source of information for specific policy teams within

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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.

Welsh Government. The Welsh Government are using the survey results to ensure children's rights and opinions are reflected upon during ongoing decision making. Each survey question was related to specific Articles within the UNCRC. Initial findings were released on 8 June 2020. The Children's Commissioners office will be providing further themed briefings in September.

We have been mindful of how we communicate directly during the pandemic. I have continued my engagement with children and young people by holding question and answer sessions through #AskKirsty on social media as well as a tailored press conference on the 24 June. The First Minister has also engaged with the Youth Parliament as well as the regular messages provided by the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services.

During the pandemic we have given the Children's Commissioner for Wales increased opportunities to speak to Ministers and officials. The Commissioner has been meeting with the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services on a weekly basis as well as meeting regularly with senior officials across the Welsh Government.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has also offered the assistance of her team to give advice on IIAs and CRIAs. This offer of help was shared across the organisation, and her office have been taken up on that offer for a number of IIAs and CRIAs throughout the pandemic.

Schools in Wales

As part of our Operational Guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term we set out the factors that have changed since lockdown began, and the increasing need to ensure that children and young people can access education. We know that generally prevalence of Covid-19 is lower, our NHS Test, Trace, Protect system is up and running, and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools. We also know that the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. On 9 July I announced that all learners would return to school in the autumn term; this decision was informed by the Welsh Technical Advisory Group (TAG) who recommended that schools "plan to open in September with 100% of pupils physically present on school sites, subject to a continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community."

Section 8 of our Operational Guidance sets out advice on managing confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the school community. This includes a link to an Operational Public Health Advice Note prepared by Public Health Wales for Welsh Government on the investigation and management of clusters and incidents of COVID-19 in educational and childcare settings. PHW are keeping this advice under review; it was last updated on 30 July and is next due for review on 26 August. We have also made clear in our Operational Guidance that every school will need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education within a broader framework of local restrictions.

As we go into September, we will clearly state our expectation that schools do all they can to ensure continuity of learning under future conditions of disruption. They will be expected to set out in their plans learners' entitlement to contact and support, the frequency and duration of teaching and learning sessions, and the amount of time pupils are expected to spend in independent study. Alongside this they will also be expected to set out the curriculum that will be available to learners involved in the *Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards* programme and the general curriculum available to all learners in the case of disruption to normal operation.

In May you will recall we published a Decision Framework to support the increased operations of education and childcare settings. That framework set out our tests and the matters we were taking into account. I have asked my officials to develop something similar for what happens in the event of needing to decrease operations; again this will make clear that schools and settings would need to have their own plans in place to enable them to respond in the event of an outbreak or a lockdown (be that local or national). This Framework also will make clear the importance of keeping schools and settings open and will recognise that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to lockdowns. Reflecting on the medical and scientific advice and balancing this with the need to consider the harm to our children and young people of not being in school I am strongly of the view that any lockdown restrictions placed on education settings should be a last resort.

This work will build on and link with the Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales published on 18 August which set out the existing systems designed to prevent the spread of the virus, as well as the new systems we have put in place to respond swiftly to new cases at a local level.

Curriculum

In July I published [guidance](#) on learning in schools and settings from the autumn term to give schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19. This guidance outlined plans for a final decision to be published before the end of the summer Recess period, and as such supplementary guidance will be issued to schools and settings ahead of the start of the autumn term to provide further clarity on what considerations need to be given and what actions taken.

EOTAS

EOTAS is an integrated part of the continuum of education provision offered in Wales. I remain committed to creating a truly inclusive education system in Wales and to ensuring all learners are supported to access an excellent education. I am proud we are able to offer alternative educational provision that can be tailored to best suit the needs of our learners, to nurture and encourage self-belief and to ensure that these learners are provided with every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

I recognise the significant difficulties faced by local authorities, schools and settings in delivering services and meeting their statutory duties for EOTAS learners during the lockdown period.

The nature of EOTAS provision is diverse and includes both academic and vocational education. For those EOTAS learners engaged in vocational education, continuity of learning during the lockdown period may have been limited. Consequently, some EOTAS learners are likely to have experienced a more significant interruption to their education than their peers.

In September, when settings return to full operation, I expect local authorities to work with providers to prioritise ensuring plans are put in place for all EOTAS learners to resume their education.

On 17 August, [Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners](#) was published. This guidance supplements the Operational Guidance for Schools and Settings from the Autumn Term and the Guidance on Learning in Schools and Settings from the Autumn Term and

provides specific advice for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, including EOTAS learners.

The guidance deals with a range of scenarios and sets out expectations for local authorities, schools and settings. As well as expectations around the planning for re-engaging vulnerable and disadvantaged learners in their education from September, the guidance is clear that contingency plans should be made to prepare for potential further disruption to education in the event of future waves of the virus. This will be particularly important for EOTAS learners who are engaged in vocational learning, which may not be easily adapted to distance or blended learning models.

The guidance is clear that planning and support should be based on the needs of individual learners, taking into account the impact the closure of schools and settings has had on the well-being and wider learning of learners. It also provides information on increased anxiety, mental health issues and challenging behaviour, which may be particularly relevant in the context of supporting EOTAS learners to re-integrate and re-engage with their learning.

Test, Trace, Protect (TTP)

Throughout the pandemic I have had regular discussions with the Minister for Health and Social Services about a range of issues linked to the operation of schools and the measures that need to be in place to reduce the risk of transmission. This has included the need for an effective TTP system to help enable schools to return as safely as possible. We are confident that the TTP system is working at an effective level. Our officials are in regular contact to ensure it continues to play a critical role in our system of controls to help prevent transmission both in the wider community and within schools.

Data on the performance of contact tracing is published each week. The latest data shows that between 9 August and 15 August, of the 100 positive cases that were eligible for follow-up, 93 (93%) were reached and asked to provide details of their recent contacts. Of the 292 close contacts that were eligible for follow-up, 258 (88%) were successfully contacted and advised accordingly, or had their case otherwise resolved. Since 21 June of the 1,101 positive cases that were eligible for follow-up, 993 (90%) were reached and asked to provide details of their recent contacts. Of the 3,176 close contacts that were eligible for follow-up, 2,868 (90%) were successfully contacted and advised accordingly, or had their case otherwise resolved.

We will soon be providing more detailed information on the time taken to trace contacts. Data on contact tracing performance can be accessed here <https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-contact-tracing-coronavirus-covid-19-8-august-2020>

In July Welsh Government and Public Health Wales issued guidance to Local Health Boards and Directors of Education on how positive Covid-19 cases should be dealt with in relation to schools including through the deployment as needed of rapid testing to ensure that there is a rapid and effective response to tackle any potential clusters or incidents. Copies of this guidance are attached at **Annex 1 and 2**.

Higher Education

I recognise that any projections about the financial situation of universities in the next academic year have so far been subject to massive uncertainty. The additional funding announced for higher education reflects the judgement of ministers taking into account the Welsh Government's budgetary limitations and the immediate needs of the sector prior to the conclusion of the student recruitment cycle. As we have previously stated, we will consider the situation and needs again in the autumn, to continue our support for the economic and social recovery from COVID-19.

To assist with the issue of student hardship, HEFCW will be consulting the sector to determine how to allocate the additional funding across higher education institutions, taking account of the support that individual institutions already provide. This will ensure that the funding is distributed where it is needed most.

All universities in Wales have hardship funds in place for students in financial difficulty and information about student support, including for part-time students, international students, carers, estranged students, care experienced students, for example, will be provided on their websites and promoted through a range of channels. Hardship funds for full-time undergraduate and PGCE students are established using tuition fee income.

Each year all universities forecast in Fee and Access Plans how much of the tuition fee income they will invest in hardship funds. Hardship funds are only one element of student financial support, including financial information and advice, which institutions provide for students. Universities publish their total Fee and Access plan investment in student support. Fee and Access plans relate only to full-time fee income and full-time students. Regulated institutions may also administer additional student support through other means.

In terms of considering further funding support in the autumn, we will look at the needs of the higher education sector alongside the many other competing pressures on the Welsh Government's budget. We will take a flexible approach rather than setting hard criteria for consideration of further funding, and will do so following close collaboration with HEFCW and sector leaders to understand the financial position facing the sector as it develops.

To assist higher and further education institutions during the pandemic, in addition to the £27m Investment and Recovery Fund, a further £4.5m has been provided to HEFCW to support employability and skills development: £3m to support the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and £1.5m to provide additional support for Go Wales, focussing on students who have graduated during the pandemic.

Further Education

I recently announced a number of measures that Welsh Government will be taking to ensure that post-16 learners receive the best possible continuation of their learning journey following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This additional funding is available to ensure the immediate pressures faced by further education institutions are addressed and includes:

- Over £15 million 'catch up funding' being provided for learners beginning or continuing their A-level or vocational course at an FE college or sixth form.
- Up to £5m to support vocational learners to return to college to help them achieve their licence-to-practice qualifications, without needing to re-sit the full year.
- An extra £3.2m to provide digital equipment such as laptops for Post-16 learners. At least £2.15 million of this funding has been earmarked for FE.

- An additional £466k to support students who have been undertaking Independent Living Skills programmes, to enable them to complete their transition from college into employment and independence.
- An additional £480k to allow for an additional £40k per college, from September 2020 to March 2021, to expand the employment bureau capacity.
- An additional £3.5m for Personal Learning Account provision
- Additional funding of up to £1.7m provided to offer Free School Meal alternatives to FE learners.
- Additional £3.5m to contribute to the increased costs of cleaning.

My officials are aware of additional costs associated with the re-configuration of campuses after adopting Welsh Government guidance, the higher than normal student recruitment in September, as well as costs associated with digital and blended learning. Once the detail is known, a further bid for funding will follow. These bids will be firstly for the cost of the re-configuring of campuses and a then a later bid for other known costs.

BAME pupils

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) aims to reduce the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). The YEPF provides a systematic mechanism for local authorities to identify those in need of support, establish what support may be available and track the progress of young people as they make the transition from school into continuing education, work based training or employment.

The YEPF is aimed at **all** young people at risk of disengaging from education, employment of training, it is not aimed at a specific cohort. The [Careers Wales Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales 2019](#), which shows the destinations of school leavers for years 11, 12 and 13, shows the proportion of young people who were NEET was higher for those from white backgrounds compared to individuals from an ethnic minority background¹.

Identifying young people who have barriers to engagement, allows the appropriate support to be put in place at an early stage; early identification is one of the key components of the YEPF. As part of this process, local authority engagement and progression co-ordinators (EPCs) conduct pre-16 multi-agency meetings in schools to identify those pupils most of risk of disengaging. They therefore have a good idea which young people need support before the end of year 11. EPCs are then able to identify the specific support needs of young people, to broker appropriate support.

Each year there remain some school leavers in Year 11 who have unknown status i.e. they are not known to Careers Wales so it's not known if they have plans for education, employment or training, or if they are at risk of being NEET. Careers Wales pass on the

¹ Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales 2019 - Known not be in Education, Training or Employment

School year	White background	Ethnic minority background
11	1.8% or 442 individuals	1.2% or 24 individuals
12	0.8% or 89 individuals	0.5% or 6 individuals
13	2.6% or 249 individuals	2% or 17 individuals

details of the 'unknown' young people to EPCs in July. The EPCs, working with the youth service, then try to contact those people to find out their plans. This may involve carrying out home visits to speak to young people.

Once the 'unknown' young people have been contacted and their status confirmed (whether they are in Further Education, Employment or Training or NEET) they can be allocated against the Careers Wales five tier model of engagement, which identifies what individual support they need to achieve a positive destination.

For those most at risk of disengaging, lead workers are appointed to ensure young people aren't bounced between services or lost in the system, helping them to identify and overcome any barriers to progressing that they identify. Lead workers will have a direct relationship with the young person, being a consistent point of contact and support as they move forward and helping them to build and develop the long term resilience they need to succeed in education, training and employment. For young people with significant or multiple barriers requiring intensive personal support, the lead worker is generally drawn from the youth service.

The [Youth Work Strategy](#) (2019) sets out its high level ambitions to ensure that all young people across Wales are thriving and that youth work is accessible and inclusive to all young people. In doing so it also recognises that we must remove the barriers to engagement and participation particularly to those young people who may have experience of isolation, marginalisation, exploitation or discrimination including those of a protected characteristic. The Interim Youth Work Board has sought the views of young people from across Wales and from a wide variety of backgrounds, and including those with a BAME background through discussions with the [Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales \(EYST\)](#). Moreover, EYST recently [guest edited an issue of the Youth Work Bulletin](#), which highlighted specific concerns, including issues around Black Lives Matter at the time of a global pandemic.

I recognise the pandemic has introduced new challenges into preventing young people from becoming NEET. For example, there are practical difficulties around carrying out home visits to offer support to young people who are disengaged, there are concerns about the impact of lockdown on young people's mental health and motivation and the economic impact of the pandemic, specifically on young people's employment opportunities. The Government has been liaising extensively with local authority engagement and progression co-ordinators, who co-ordinate and broker support under the YEPF, to discuss concerns and share good practice.

I am also planning to update the YEPF to bring new focus to reducing the number of young people who become NEET. The refresh of the YEPF will be informed by developments arising from the response to Covid 19. These developments are at a policy level (the [Resilience plan for the Post-16 sector: coronavirus](#), the increased operation of schools, the development of the employability and skills recovery plan, the mental health offer) and on the ground (changes to working practices arising from the response to the pandemic).

Young People's Mental Health

I was pleased that the Government was able to publish our [Embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being consultation](#) on 8 July, which will close 31 September 2020. This guidance seeks to support our COVID-19 response by ensuring schools recognise and take account of the importance of not just learner well-being, but also the well-being of the wider school community. To give young people the opportunity to

help shape the guidance a young person's version of the consultation document and questions was also published.

This work forms part of the whole school approach to supporting the emotional health wellbeing of children and young people and £5 million has been allocated in the Welsh Government's budget for 2020-21 to take it forward. It includes £1.25 million for local authorities to extend and improve school counselling with a focus on targeting current waiting lists, increasing capacity and developing new ways of working to meet COVID-19 demand. Also included is £1.5 million to support local authorities in developing plans to support training teachers and other school staff on their own and learner wellbeing; delivering universal and targeted interventions to learners and implementing age appropriate interventions for younger children (below Yr6) in primary schools.

It is, of course, essential that teachers' mental health is also supported during these difficult times and that is why we have allocated £450,000 in the current year to support their wellbeing, recognising that effective learning can only occur in an environment where all are engaged. More detail on this package of funding will be available shortly.

We have been working with higher education institutions to develop a range of professional learning resources for teachers to support implementation of our whole school approach guidance - £85,000 was provided in 2019-20 for this work, which includes training modules on child development, mental health and neurodiversity. They were due to be finalised earlier this year, though have been delayed as a result of COVID-19 and we are now aiming to have them available from September/October.

In the autumn term, schools and settings will play a pivotal role in supporting the well-being of our children and young people. Learners will require time, support and understanding to develop new behaviours; appropriate opportunities to play, socialise and nurture relationships can support this. In recognition of these challenges, the Welsh Government has been working closely with partners to develop a range of resources to support schools and settings in putting the well-being of both learners and staff at the heart of everything they do as they teach within the context of COVID-19's ongoing impacts. The first couple of resources in this [series](#) have now been published:

- [Teaching COVID-19-safe behaviours: Strategies for building new routines](#)
- [The role of the teaching assistant: supporting learner well-being in response to COVID-19](#)

More will be available over the coming months, each focussed on different aspects of fostering a friendly and inclusive whole-school approach to mental health and emotional well-being within the context of COVID-19.

Our CAMHS in-reach pilot projects, which provide schools with consultation, liaison, advice and training from CAMHS staff, have been extended until July 2021, recognising the longer-term impact of COVID-19 on emotional and mental health and coinciding with the final evaluation of the pilots.

In June, the updated [School and community based counselling operating toolkit](#) together with an [FAQ factsheet](#) containing the latest advice for counsellors on delivering face to face and on-line counselling services during the COVID-19 pandemic was issued. These provide a valuable resource on the best practice in delivering the service and promote consistency of provision and equity of access for young people.

Hosted on the Hwb platform, I have also recently produced [The young person's mental health toolkit](#) which links young people, aged 11 to 25, to websites, apps, helplines, and more to build resilience and support them through the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

ALN Support

With schools and settings returning to full operations from September, I expect that the learning and wider support for ALN learners will reflect pre-lockdown arrangements. The Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners provides detailed information, advice and expectations on supporting learners with SEN during the next academic year. As outlined above, the guidance deals with a range of scenarios from full operation to a further national or local lockdown.

For planning arrangements from September, the guidance covers a wide range of both operational and learning matters that will be relevant to the effective support of learners with SEN. These include, for example, engagement with parents/carers and learners, transition, social distancing, use of PPE and arrangements relating to peripatetic staff. In line with the [Guidance on Learning in Schools and Settings from the Autumn Term](#), the guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners is clear that well-being is a pre-requisite for learning. It goes on to include a detailed section on specific considerations for SEN learners.

As well as providing comprehensive advice and expectations on arrangements from September, the guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners is also very clear on the importance of contingency planning for potential further national or local lockdowns. With a view to ensuring that the disruption to the education of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners is minimised as far as possible were there to be further school and setting closures in response to the pandemic. The guidance includes a section on ensuring continuity of learning and highlights a range of literature and resources to support local authorities, schools and settings to do this.

Qualifications

I made a statement on 17 August that A level, AS, GCSE, Skills Challenge Certificate and Welsh Baccalaureate grades in Wales would be awarded on the basis of Centre Assessment, as such the standardisation model was not used.

Working with Qualifications Wales and WJEC we sought an approach which provided fairness and balanced out differences in the standards applied to judgments in schools. But given decisions elsewhere, the balance of fairness changed to lay with awarding Centre Assessment grades to students, despite the strengths of the system in Wales.

All awards in Wales were made on the basis of teacher assessment. For those young people, for whom our system produced higher grades than those predicted by teachers, the higher grades will stand. The policy approach I announced regarding an AS level floor will also stand and no learner will receive an A level grade this year lower than their AS grade.

Maintaining standards is not new for 2020, it is a feature of awarding qualifications every year in Wales, and across the UK. However, it is clear that maintaining confidence in our qualifications whilst being fair to students required this difficult decision. These have been exceptional circumstances, and in due course I will be making a further statement on an independent review of events following the cancellation of this year's exams.

Tertiary Education and Research Bill

The challenges the sector is facing as a result of the pandemic means that the First Minister and I had no option but to prioritise other legislation within the programme. To reflect the importance of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, we have [published it in draft](#) allowing stakeholders and the public to consider.

The draft bill is currently subject to consultation until 4 December. This gives us further opportunities to continue our stakeholders' engagement relating to provisions within the bill, and importantly the impact and challenges ahead for the sector as a result of the pandemic.

The challenges created for our economy and education sector as a result of Covid-19 mean that it is more important than ever to take a more strategic, coherent, and efficient approach to overseeing tertiary education, under the auspices of a single Commission with a clear remit to build a system that works for the people of Wales and the Welsh economy.

Tuition Fees

I am in no doubt that the higher education experience will be very different for many students during the coming academic year. Nonetheless, we have worked closely with the sector to develop guidance which we hope will enable them to provide an excellent university experience that is also healthy and safe. We cannot realistically expect universities to lower their fees when the costs of this provision will remain unchanged, and in some cases increased, and doing so would in any case only benefit higher earning graduates long after they leave university due to the nature of student loan repayments.

Student Numbers

I [wrote to the Minister of State for Universities](#) on the 29 May expressing my deep concern about the UK Government's intention to introduce temporary student number controls in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. My key concerns were that the proposals would not be in the best interests of the UK as a whole; that they would place controls on Welsh institutions rather than working with the Welsh Government to achieve a solution compatible with devolution and that they would cut across HEFCW's proposals for admissions constraint being developed in partnership with the Welsh higher education sector.

On 1 June, the UK Government announced student number control arrangements for English universities and English domiciled students. This policy represents a move away from a UK-wide approach to higher education admissions constraint. I expressed my disappointment about this outcome to the Minister of State for Universities. I also discussed my concerns about the UK Government's approach with the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

On 17 August the Secretary of State for Education announced that the UK Government intends to remove their temporary student number controls which had been introduced for the coming academic year.

FE Student Support

I am extremely satisfied that providers made every effort during this time to respond to the needs of vulnerable and hard to reach students. Some of the specific things providers have done which were identified for us by Estyn include:

- Restricting the number and duration of scheduled online delivery sessions to prevent 'digital exhaustion' for learners and staff;

- Lecturers filming and uploading demonstrations to show learners how to do specific things (e.g. preparing certain meals or shearing sheep);
- Colleges have lent out equipment, including tablets, Chromebooks and laptops, and provided other financial support to fund or provide broadband, mobile data or Wi-Fi dongles to those learners most in need of support to alleviate digital poverty;
- Staff have offered a wide range of support interventions to learners including telephone calls, text or email; and in a few cases, staff have visited learners at home where colleges have not been able to contact through other means;
- Examples of specific initiatives to support vulnerable learners include food deliveries or vouchers, period poverty payments, provision of IT equipment or support to help access Wi-Fi or mobile data.

I have announced funding of £3.2m to help with the purchase of ICT equipment and connectivity for digitally excluded learners in 2020-21.

Providers have also been very aware of the impact of this on their staff as well as their learners and have ensured that they have provided or signposted staff to appropriate support and allowed staff to work flexibly as required.

Colleges are continuing to monitoring and maintain regular contact with vulnerable learners, especially those identified on support registers as being high priority. I do not believe there has been any less support provided for vulnerable learners in post-16 than has been offered to the equivalent in schools.

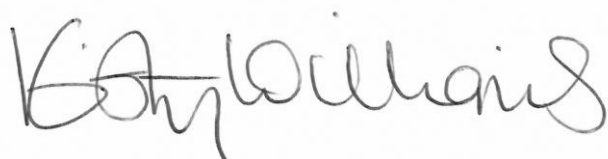
Post 16 Vocational Qualification

My officials continue to work closely with Qualifications Wales regarding vocational qualifications.

OfQual has advised Awarding Organisations to follow the principle of using Centre Assessed Grades where in year assessments have not provided sufficient evidence to apply a grade. It is estimated that this impacts on less than 1% of students. Any student unsure on how their final grade has been awarded need to be advised to appeal.

I hope you find this information helpful. Should you require any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

21 August 2020

Thank you for your letter of 3rd July 2020 requesting information about the provision of services to support the physical and mental health of children and young people given the impacts of COVID-19.

Now more than ever the importance of supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of our children and young people can be seen. The pandemic and subsequent lockdown has affected us all, but particularly our children and young people who have had to endure months without seeing friends and close family members; have seen the way in which they are educated change way beyond recognition; and, for some, have had to cope with the bereavement of loved ones.

Throughout this challenging time we have continued to prioritise the physical and mental health of children and young people. Informed by engagement from children and young people themselves, alongside a wide range of stakeholders, we have looked to provide support and guidance during the lockdown and as we ease out of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We aim to meet the physical and mental health needs of children and young people in a timely and effective manner, in line with our whole school approach, though we recognise there is always scope for improving experiences and outcomes further.

In Annex 1 we have provided a response to each of the points raised in your letter. We look forward to working with service users, stakeholders, and the Committee to deliver further improvements to support children and young people in Wales.

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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.

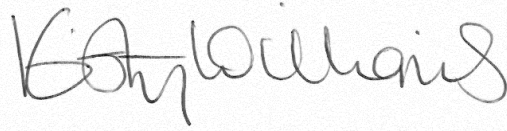
Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol

Minister for Health and Social Services



Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

1. School closures

(i) Children’s well-being must be at the centre of decisions relating to schools, and we urge the Welsh Government and the sector to work together to be adaptable, bold and innovative in the face of this global pandemic.

We have published learning guidance¹ for the autumn to set out clear expectations for schools about the priorities of learning. The purpose of this guidance is to give schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19. Schools will need to prepare for a range of scenarios and this guidance sets out what learning priorities should remain constant throughout those – a single approach which is flexible enough to respond to changing conditions.

In summary, when considering their approach to autumn term learning, schools and settings should consider:

- health and well-being: learning should support learners’ mental, emotional, physical and social well-being, as well as recognise the importance of outdoor learning and play
- purpose: all learning should have a clear purpose in mind, focused around what is important for learners now and in the longer term
- literacy, numeracy and digital competence: learners should have opportunities to develop and apply these skills across the curriculum
- broad and balanced learning experiences: learners should have learning experiences that span a broad curriculum and that include opportunities to develop a breadth of understanding and a range of knowledge and skills
- progression and assessment: learners should make meaningful progress throughout this period. Learning should be designed to support increasing depth and sophistication of learning over time. We encourage the use of assessments to help learners move to the next steps in their learning
- partnership with parents, carers and learners: schools should develop a common understanding and language with parents, carers and learners; this can help underpin learning and support learning experiences.

(ii) From September, children across Wales must have consistently high quality contact with their teachers, and that opportunities to progress their education must be maximised for all children in Wales. This will also enable schools to play their vital part in the whole-system approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The learning guidance sets out that schools and settings will need to think carefully about how time in the school or setting should be used. Contact time will be valuable and precious. Practitioners should think about the balance and relationship between learning time in school and learning elsewhere, using contact time carefully and effectively and identifying how time at home or elsewhere can support making connections and consolidating learning. They should consider a wide range of pedagogical approaches that effectively use school and out-of-school learning to empower learners.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/guidance-learning-schools-settings-from-autumn-term.pdf>

On 17 August we published Keep Education Safe: Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners from September 2020². It supplements guidance found in the operational and learning guidance providing specific advice for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

During the crisis, it became clear that many learners suffered negative impacts in terms of their progress in learning, some heavily so. Evidence from a range of reliable sources, including those focusing on Wales, suggest that most, or all, learners have been affected, and that the most vulnerable have been affected the most.

Our response to this situation is to dedicate financial resources to the creation of new capacity in the system. The investment amounts to almost £29 million between September 2020 and August 2021, and will be enough to grow capacity in the system by around 600 teachers and 300 teaching assistants. Alongside this, we will use our current investment in Professional Learning, digital infrastructure, connectivity, devices and content to enrich the experiences schools and settings make available to learners.

Curriculum reform remains our central priority for education in Wales. It is essential that all our work with the education system in the context of COVID-19 aligns with international best practice, which is also the basis of our curriculum reform proposals. Our focus for the coming year will be:

- literacy, numeracy and digital skills within a broad and balanced curriculum;
- development of independent learning skills; and
- supporting and engagement through coaching.

This focus will be particularly relevant for priority cohorts. We will work closely with Qualifications Wales to ensure our approach to curriculum and learning is consistent with and promotes the credibility and validity of the 2021 exam series.

(iii) We believe that this guidance [whole school approach framework] should be published for consultation as a matter of priority, to ensure that support for our children's emotional and mental health can be a central feature of their education.

The Committee will be aware that it had been our intention to commence formal consultation in March, and extensive pre-consultation with stakeholders had already occurred to support this. The onset of the pandemic coincided with our plans and it was logical that this was put on hold whilst schools prioritised supporting learners during lockdown. However, we also recognise that our whole school approach is an important part of supporting the wellbeing of both learners and staff affected by the current pandemic and its long-term effects, which are likely to outlast the initial physical impact of Covid19. As a result the Committee will be aware that we commenced consultation on 8 July³. Consultation will last until 30 September.

2. Recognising diversity of well-being and mental health issues

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/guidance-supporting-vulnerable-disadvantaged-learners.pdf>

³ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-07/draft-framework-guidance-on-embedding-a-whole-school-approach.pdf>

(i) It is clear from the evidence we have received that an important balance needs to be struck between recognising and supporting mental health problems and not medicalising natural responses to a frightening pandemic..... In our view, this demonstrates further the importance of our Mind over Matter recommendations relating to provision of emotional resilience and early intervention support, and addressing the gaps in service for those children and young people who find themselves ineligible for CAMHS services but unable to find suitable therapeutic or “lower level” support – the so-called “missing middle”. The Welsh Government must continue to prioritise implementation of our Mind over Matter recommendations.

We agree, that is why we are continuing to prioritise the work of the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group on a Whole School Approach to Wellbeing and are now consulting on our proposals. As noted above, this will not only address the recommendations in Mind Over Matter, but also play an important role in tackling the short, medium and long-term impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

We are also backing our proposals with £5 million, jointly from the Education and Health Budgets, in the current year to take forward activity to develop consistent whole-school approaches across Wales. Meeting the needs not only of learners, but the wider school community, recognising the link between teacher and student wellbeing. This includes:

- £1,250,000 of additional funding for school and community-based counselling services, including supporting the delivery of services to clients during lockdown.
- £465,000 to extend age appropriate well-being support to children below Year 6.
- £450,000 to deliver staff training on mental health and well-being.
- £600,000 to deliver school based universal and targeted mental health and well-being interventions.
- £450,000 to deliver well-being support for the school workforce.
- Almost £1m to continue the work of our CAMHS school in-reach pilots.

We have also created a toolkit on Hwb which promotes a variety of digital tools designed specifically to support young people with their own mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Young Persons’ Mental Health Toolkit⁴ links young people, aged 11 to 25, to a wide range of online resources that can support them through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. In each of the six sections there are up to ten self-help websites, apps, helplines, and more which support mental health and wellbeing.

In the autumn term, learners will require time, support and understanding to develop new behaviours; appropriate opportunities to play, socialise and nurture relationships can support this. In recognition of these challenges, we have been working closely with higher education institutions to develop a range of professional learning resources to support schools and settings in putting the well-being of both learners and staff at the heart of everything they do as they teach within the context of COVID-19’s ongoing impacts. The first in the suite of resources have now been published⁵.

⁴ <https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/discovery/resource/e53adf44-76cb-4635-b6c2-62116bb63a9a/en>
⁵ <https://hwb.gov.wales/playlists/view/5e4722f8-5980-4970-bdf0-43d7990796e9/en/1?options=CNIQ39k7rbEp4zsz8OdGxip83XDxyAM%252BxyuNqUgoOrvEtxGXwma9Q0UtNK7LrNnQ6bYw53adgkcTL6FXxVsVHOOFICANNqBCqXUn8j4rA%252FHKuyCg49jGbtVn9p1V1ZR%252FzAiXP%252BmKsqDVlpl%252BEPnrW8KuqPebc7M59OWX6qL3KISkAdV7JfwDYbeF2XRTs%252F1sWNcTaW7rkUKf5PeHlp2kWq%253D%253D> and <https://hwb.gov.wales/playlists/view/7fa16952-91be-4679-a2e9-aaebc5834695/en/1?options=CNIQ39k7rbEp4zsz8OdGxip83XDxyAM%252BxyuNqUgoOrvEtxGXwma9Q0UtNK7LrNnQ6bYw53adgkcTL6FXxVsVHOOFICANNqBCqXUn8j4rA%252FHKuyCg49jGbtVn9p1V1ZR%252Fllf%252BVW7zinYaVlxZIE1yQu4sm0bldNr60YAeXlsEpfqKJ1ZjQPkbO4ppUW8qqhUFvH5RvJ%252BWXPw6om6zo3YBEq%253D%253D>

We are also actively pursuing strategies with partners inside and outside education settings to provide for young people in need of lower level support.

Throughout the covid-19 pandemic, mental health services remained open and able to support children and young people, including those whose needs are at tiers 0 and 1. All health boards have given assurances to Welsh Government that this has been the case. Welsh Government has also stepped in to fund support services under pressure due to Covid-19 for example the Beat Eating Disorders Helpline, which provides information and advice for people living with eating disorders and their families.

The Early Help and Enhanced Support Together for Children and Young People Workstream builds on the work of the Whole School Approach through the development of a framework which supports children, young people and their families, and will deliver proposals for best practice and service development. Work on this area has continued during the pandemic.

3. Data

(i) We are concerned to ensure that a clear and transparent picture of the number of children and young people accessing services to support both their physical and mental health is available publicly. The Welsh Government must make this data available in a timely and accessible way, to ensure that the impact of the pandemic and measures to manage it can be scrutinised fully.

Data on children accessing primary care exists on GP IT systems and likewise information exists within secondary care on numbers of children presenting at Emergency Departments. Officials will work with the RCPCH to identify a useful outcome indicator for children accessing health services.

Welsh Government intends to resume the publishing of routine performance data before the end of 2020. This will include Local Primary Mental Health Support Services data split to show under-18s for the first time.

4. Digital infrastructure

(i) We are unclear, about the steps the Welsh Government is taking to monitor how many children are currently without access to the digital infrastructure necessary to access their education, health and support services. We would welcome further detail on these monitoring arrangements, and the steps being taken to measure how many children are benefitting from the investment made.

Generally, we know there is a large proportion of people across Wales who are not digitally confident – they either do not personally use the internet or lack the basic digital skills to access vital services and information. We must ensure they are not left behind in society especially as we emerge from and consider future policy following this pandemic. Our future policy will be built on the recognised need to support everyone to gain the motivation, confidence and skills in order to make informed decisions and choose how they participate in, and make the most of, our increasingly digital world. Digital inclusion will be at the heart of all we deliver.

Our leading online learning platform Hwb continues to play a crucial role in supporting the delivery of education during this challenging period, with an average of 2.5 million logins per month over the last three months - a 131% increase on the previous year. There has also been an average of over 9.1 million page views per month over the same period - a 152% increase on the previous year. Over 99% of schools are actively engaged in using the platform.

To support digitally excluded learners in maintained schools, the Minister for Education has committed up to £3 million. Based on the demand identified by schools and local authorities, there have been 10,848 MiFi devices and 9,717 software licences funded by the Welsh Government and deployed across Wales. Based on local authority feedback, through their own arrangements or via our nationally provided support, we understand that provision for digitally excluded learners is now in place. If a parent / carer hasn't accessed this provision, they need to contact their local school for provision to be made.

More broadly, our Superfast Cymru programme, which provided superfast broadband access to over 733,000 properties, has proved to be a vital investment in supporting Wales through the pandemic and beyond as we focus on recovery. The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport recently announced that under our current agreement with Openreach the number of properties that will benefit from access to full-fibre broadband will increase from 26,000 to 39,000.

The Welsh Government's Access Broadband Cymru (ABC) scheme provides grants to fund the installation costs of new broadband connections for homes and businesses in Wales (it does not include monthly rental costs). In anticipation of an increase in applications to the scheme, we have streamlined the application process to ensure swift access to improved connectivity.

Support may also be available to connect to gigabit capable broadband through the UK Government Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme. We have recently announced a Welsh top-up to the scheme which doubles the amounts available to homes and businesses to £3,000 and £7,000 respectively. We are also investing in new and innovative ways of connecting whole communities, working with local government and social enterprises through our £10 million Local Broadband Fund.

(ii) In many circumstances, particularly in relation to mental health, face to face interaction remains a vital component of support. Service design must have children and young people at the centre, and must recognise that individuals' needs and preferences vary – one size does not fit all. We request reassurance that plans are in place for a safe return to face to face services where they are the most appropriate option, and that clear principles are in place to assess where a continuation of remote, digital support may be beneficial.

For learners, we recognise the possibility of future disruption to schooling at a local level from the impact of the pandemic. We are clear that schools and Local Authorities need to ensure plans are in place for responding to disruption based on local scenarios, and that these should include impact on individuals and groups, the closure of a school for a period, or the closure of a group of schools such as a local cluster, or all the secondary schools serving a community

As we go into September, we will clearly state our expectation that schools do all they can to ensure continuity of learning under future conditions of disruption. Schools will be expected to set out in their plans pupils' entitlement to contact and support, the frequency

and duration of teaching and learning sessions, and the amount of time pupils are expected to spend in independent study

Schools will also be expected to set out the curriculum that will be available to learners involved in the *Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards* programme and the general curriculum available to all learners in the case of disruption to normal operation.

Schools' plans will be scrutinised by their regional consortia and Local Authorities, and monitored as part of the work Estyn do in the coming year

We are aware that the regional consortia have undertaken considerable work to make guidance and Professional Learning available to schools in support of their approach to blended and remote learning, and that the Hwb now contains significant resources for use by schools in developing their plans.

In relation to learner wellbeing, at the start of the pandemic we moved quickly to announce additional resources of £1.25m for our school counselling service, with a focus on maintaining provision for existing and new service users during lockdown. This meant counsellors developing new skills in delivering services online and investment in the infrastructure (software licences, etc) to enable them to work effectively. We also recognised that once children return to school there would likely be a short-term spike in demand and also longer-term implications on their psychological wellbeing. From the information provided by local authorities, our investment has enabled us to provide an additional 14,550 counselling sessions up to the end of March, with an estimated 3,120 additional children and young people being able to access the vital support this service provides.

5. The capacity of health professionals to support children and young people

(i) We are concerned, however, that while the physical health needs of the population were necessarily a priority in the early stages of this pandemic, services to support children's mental health and well-being were exposed to the risk of de-prioritisation.

Ensuring children and young people with emotional health and wellbeing problems (both existing and as a result of the current Covid19 pandemic) receive access to support and treatment in a timely and appropriate manner has remained a key priority for the Welsh Government and is a fundamental requirement of the UNCRC.

Welsh Government positioned all age mental health services as 'essential' services during the pandemic. In practice, whilst services are affected and service models have had to adapt, we have continued to expect a safe and sustainable response for children and young people who needed the support of mental health services.

To ensure children and young people received the support they need throughout the pandemic, services have accelerated the use of non-traditional methods. This can be across the NHS (e.g. Attend Anywhere videoconferencing), local innovation (e.g. Gwent Community Psychology and Gwent Attachment Service resources), and Welsh Government led (e.g. Young People's Mental Health Toolkit).

(ii) Recognising the very real possibility of a second wave of coronavirus, the Welsh Government needs to set out the clear steps it will take to ensure that children's mental health services are protected to avoid the long-term consequences that would follow from a lack of specialist support.

In the event of a second wave, the mechanisms put in place during the pandemic so far can be quickly re-engaged. Building on the learning from the first few months of Covid-19 and the sharing of good practice, we will tailor our response to match the challenges of any potential second wave so that care continues in the safest possible fashion. This will include modified reporting so that priority data is collected without impacting on clinical time, alternatives to face-to-face contact, and weekly meetings between CAMHS Medical Directors and Welsh Government.

Our existing mechanisms provide a strong core of proven strategies backed up by clinical expertise which can be supplemented with additional measures as the situation demands. Services will have the advantage of familiarity with a renewed approach as well as flexibility continuing to provide high quality support in challenging circumstances.

(iii) We were particularly interested to learn of steps taken in some areas to enable parents to refer to single point of access facilities for CAMHS. We would welcome further details from the Welsh Government about where these models are in place, and believe they should be evaluated and considered for use all health board areas.

All of the Welsh Health Boards have been operating single points of access during Covid-19 to aid in the delivery of services and ensure that young people can access the support they need.

All specialist CAMHS services are also actively working towards implementing CAPA (the Choice And Partnership Approach) as a single point of access, although each Health Board is at a different stage of implementation as local considerations are taken into account during rollout. Welsh Government is continuing to work with health boards to ensure single points of access are considered and deployed as a key strategy for service improvement as CAMHS moves towards recovery planning following Covid-19

(iv) We request further details from the Welsh Government about:

- **the steps it has taken to monitor the crisis care support that has been available for children and young people during the period since lockdown;**
- **the arrangements it has in place to ensure that crisis care support for children and young people is available to all those children and young people who need it as the pandemic unfolds.**

Welsh Government convened the Mental Health Incident Group at the onset of the pandemic and co-ordinated the prioritisation and continuation of crisis care. The CAMHS Clinical leads from each health board also met weekly, sharing best practice, information, and reporting potential problems as they developed. Both groups focused on the continuation of key services including crisis, as well as developing mechanisms for service adaptation to the evolving landscape of care.

Welsh Government has provided £2 million to date, for additional mental health inpatient capacity to support health boards on a needs basis.

The Committee has also been made aware of the additional work carried out by the NHS Delivery Unit to investigate young suicide and probable suicide during the pandemic.

All health boards reported that they maintained capacity to respond to the mental health needs of children and young people and we are confident that high-quality, effective crisis care will continue to be available

6. Impact on specific groups of children and young people

(i) We recognise that coronavirus has affected all children and young people, however we are particularly concerned about its impact on specific groups, including black and ethnic minority, shielding and disadvantaged children. Our previous letters have also referred to the impact of the pandemic on children with additional learning needs, and those in education otherwise than at school. We would welcome further assurances from the Welsh Government about how these particular groups – and any others considered particularly vulnerable as a consequence of measures to manage the pandemic – are being specifically identified and supported in terms of their physical and mental health.

Local authorities, schools and settings, as well as practitioners and partner agencies, have shown resilience and agility in adapting the services they provide for children and young people and their families who face barriers to their learning in these unprecedented times. Likewise, many parents/carers and families across Wales have had to quickly adapt and balance new ways of working whilst providing care, support and education for their children.

We recognise COVID-19 is likely to have affected vulnerable and disadvantaged children more than their peers. Since the outbreak the needs of vulnerable and disadvantages learners have been a cross-cutting theme to our work, including in the Continuity of Learning Plan, which was implemented during the lockdown. The purpose of identifying the vulnerable and disadvantaged as a distinct area of work is to ensure the education provision and support for these learners is inclusive and equitable with their peers.

As referenced earlier in this document we have published specific guidance for those more vulnerable learners, Keep Education Safe: Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners from September 2020, which supplements the learning and operational guidance previously published. The guidance recognises the following groups of learners may have been more affected than their peers and promotes the importance of meeting their emotional and mental wellbeing:

- learners with special education needs (SEN)
- learners from minority ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language
- care experienced children, including looked after children (LAC)
- learners educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS)
- children of refugee and asylum seekers

(ii) We would also welcome a response to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's view that there is no reason for a child who is not under the care of a hospital consultant to be shielded.

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has been conscious throughout the period he advised people to shield that shielding itself had associated harms. For this reason his advice was kept under constant review and changes made as soon as it was safe to do so. This is why, even before the end of the initial shielding period, he changed his advice to encourage exercise outdoors and permit the meeting outdoors with one other household. Whilst this was then confirmed in a follow up letter shortly afterwards, it was considered so important to

allow this to occur as soon as it was considered safe to do so, it was implemented immediately.

We continue to monitor and change the advice to shield by balancing the objectives of the advice to shield and its relative harms. This includes incorporating advice for those who are shielding as part of the provision to allow for extended households.

Matters in relation to shielding are considered by the four UK CMOs and then advice provided to Ministers as a result of those discussions. Once the UK CMOs had agreed to adopt the RCPCH guidance in relation to shielding and children we notified members of the intention to review the children currently on the Shielding Patients List (SPL) via a written statement, issued on the 16th July⁶. This activity will take place over the summer and with the advice to shield being paused from 16th August, all children can return to school for the autumn term. As part of this announcement the Chief Medical Officer for Wales recorded a video specifically for children to explain this change and this was shared via the education social media channels.

7. Funding

(i) The Mental Health Services Improvement Fund is a vital component of the financial support available for child and adolescent mental health services..... While we recognise the need for some activity and funding to be repurposed during the pandemic, children and young people must not lose out as a consequence of adjustments to budgets. We request evidence from the Welsh Government that sufficient funding is available to prioritise the service transformation required in children's mental health in Wales alongside the response to this pandemic.

To confirm the £7m Mental Health Service Improvement fund was re-purposed as part of our early response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Early on we positioned mental health services as 'essential services' and to support this, we immediately issued £3.5m of the mental health service improvement funding for local health boards to enable them flexibility to respond to the pressures associated with the current situation in mental health. This included access to crisis / out of hour provision and increased access to psychological interventions.

We have recently written to health boards to request proposals for the remaining £3.5m service improvement funding for 2020/21 and provisionally for the £7m from 2021/22 onwards. The funding will support the priority areas in our new three year Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan, including CAMHS / support for children and young people and increasing access to psychological therapies. We expect to receive proposals by 7 September.

⁶ <https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-shielding-and-adopting-guidance-royal-college-paediatrics-and-child-health>

To: Vaughan Gething MS

Minister for Health and
Social Services

Via email only

26 August 2020

Dear Vaughan,

Re: Welsh medium mental health provision for children and young people

I am writing in relation specifically to progress made against recommendation 26 of the Children, Young People and Education Committee's *Mind Over Matter* report, published in 2018:

That the Welsh Government ensure the T4CYP Programme undertake a comprehensive piece of work on the current and future availability of Welsh language emotional and mental health support services.

As I reflected in my response to the committee's follow up consultation to *Mind over Matter*, I have not seen evidence that this comprehensive piece of work has been or is being undertaken.

I am also unclear as to where responsibility for this work now lies, following the changes to T4CYP's responsibilities.

I am pleased that the need for this work is recognised in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan as a priority, however I am concerned that there is little data published on availability of services or how often young people are actively offered a Welsh medium service.

I would be grateful for an update on the progress of Welsh Government against this recommendation.

Yours sincerely,



Sally



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Page 125

Croeso i gyswrtio yn y Gymraeg yn ogystal â'r Saesneg ac mewn amryw o fformatau
We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh and English as well as alternative formats

Sally Holland
Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales

cc. Jo Jordan, National Programme Director for Mental Health, NHS Wales

Jo Maddaford, Head of Children's Mental Health & Vulnerable Groups,
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle, Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Aled Roberts, Welsh Language Commissioner



Curriculum and Assessment Bill – functions of the Governing Body in respect of the curriculum as conferred by the Bill

Curriculum adoption (section 11)

The head teacher must (under section 10) design the curriculum which is to be adopted.

The governing body and head teacher must (under section 11) adopt the curriculum designed for the school's pupils, and publish a summary of the adopted curriculum.

Curriculum review and revision (section 12)

The governing body and head teacher of a school must keep the adopted curriculum under review, and ensure that it continues to comply with requirements.

In doing so the governing body and head teacher must have regard to information derived from any assessment arrangements.

The governing body and head teacher must revise the adopted curriculum if they consider it necessary to do so to ensure that it continues to comply with requirements.

All of the above functions are exercisable jointly.

The governing body and head teacher may also revise the adopted curriculum if they consider it appropriate to do so at any time, and if they do so must publish a summary of the revised curriculum.

Disapplication of English as a mandatory element: maintained schools and maintained nursery schools (section 26)

The governing body and head teacher of a maintained school or maintained nursery school may make a determination in relation to the mandatory element of English.

The governing body and head teacher of a maintained school or maintained nursery school may also revoke their determination.

These functions are exercisable jointly.

Duty to ensure implementation of adopted curriculum (section 29)

The governing body of a school must exercise its functions with a view to ensuring that the adopted curriculum is implemented for the school's pupils in accordance with the Bill.

Reviews and appeals relating to pupil choice (section 35)

Where a head teacher has made a determination under section 33 (disapplication of pupil choice), the pupil concerned, or the pupil's parent, may require the head teacher to review the determination. If dissatisfied with the decision made on review, the pupil (or the pupil's parent) may appeal to the governing body of the school against that decision.

On an appeal, the governing body—

- (a) may confirm the head teacher's decision on the review or direct the head teacher to take the action that it considers appropriate, and
- (b) must give written notice of its decision to—
 - (i) the pupil,
 - (ii) the pupil's parent, and
 - (iii) the head teacher.

The head teacher must comply with a direction given by the governing body.

The governing body and head teacher must publish information setting out a procedure for reviews and appeals. This is a joint function

Development work and experiments (section 40)

The Welsh Ministers may give a direction under this section to the head teacher and governing body of a school in order to enable development work or experiments to be carried out. The direction can require the head teacher and governing body to report on specified matters.

Development work and experiments: conditions (section 41)

This section sets out the conditions that must be met before a head teacher can give a direction under section 40. Those conditions include a requirement that the governing body must either make the application or agree to it being made. In a community school, community special school or maintained nursery school where the governing body is the applicant the application must be made with the local authority's agreement.

The result of these provision is that the Welsh Ministers will not be able to give a direction under section 40 without the governing body's agreement (or unless the governing body has applied for it).

Development work and experiments: conditions (section 42)

The head teacher and governing body of the school must publish a summary of the curriculum that will be implemented as a result of a direction made by Welsh Ministers to enable development work and experiments.

Provision of information about temporary exceptions (section 46)

A head teacher who makes, varies or revokes a determination under regulations made under section 44 (temporary exceptions for individual pupils) must give the information described in this section to the governing body.

Appeals about temporary exceptions for individual pupils (section 47)

Where the head teacher of a school makes, varies or revokes a determination under section 44 relating to a pupil, or fails to make a determination on being requested to do so, the pupil (or the pupil's parent) may appeal to the governing body.

If an appeal is made, the governing body may—

- (a) direct the head teacher, in writing, to take the action that it considers appropriate in respect of the determination, or

(b) inform the head teacher, in writing, that no such direction will be given.

The governing body must give written notice of its decision to—

- (a) the pupil, and
- (b) the pupil's parent.

The head teacher must comply with a direction given by the governing body under this section.

Assessment and progression (section 58)

This section enables regulations to make provision about assessment arrangements. The regulations may impose duties on a governing body.

General curriculum requirement (section 61)

The head teacher and governing body of a maintained school must ensure that the curriculum for the school's pupils is a balanced and broadly based curriculum that—

- (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of the pupils and of society, and
- (b) prepares the pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

This is a joint duty.

Curriculum requirement: Religion, Values and Ethics (section 62)

The head teacher of a maintained school must ensure that teaching and learning in Religion, Values and Ethics is provided in accordance with this section. The governing body of a maintained school must exercise its functions with a view to ensuring that teaching and learning in Religion, Values and Ethics is provided in accordance with this section.

Duty to have regard to guidance (section 66)

In exercising their functions, the governing body must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers.

Power to make provision for children receiving education in more than one setting etc. (section 67)

This section allows the Welsh Ministers to make regulations for or in connection with teaching and learning to be secured of compulsory school age children. Regulations may in particular confer functions on any person listed in sub-section (8), including the governing body.

Background on the role of the governing body and head teacher in existing legislation

Governing bodies have a range of duties and powers in legislation. The governing body is primarily responsible for the conduct of the school. The head teacher is

responsible for the day to day management of the school and in most cases will be a member of the governing body.

At a maintained school with a delegated budget, the governing body's duties include amongst other things:

- conducting the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement and behaviour;
- taking general responsibility for the conduct of the school - in practice this means policy making and how, in broad strategic terms, the school should be run;
- managing the school's budget.

The governing body also has responsibilities in respect of the curriculum. It must (under section 100 of the Education Act 2002) exercise its functions with a view to ensuring that the curriculum for the school is balanced and broadly based. The head teacher of the school, and the local authority, are under an equivalent duty. The governing bodies and head teachers must (under section 109 of the Education Act 2002) exercise its functions with a view to ensuring that the National Curriculum is implemented for the school. An equivalent duty is placed on the local authority.

The head teacher is required to ensure that the National Curriculum is implemented for the school). The head teacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing body.

In addition the head teacher shall advise the governing body on the establishment and review of the strategic framework, and in particular shall formulate the following (which may be adopted (with or without modifications) or rejected by the governing body):

- aims and objectives for the school;
- policies for the school for achieving the aims and objectives set by the governing body; and
- targets for the achievement of those aims and objectives.

To: Kirsty Williams
Minister for Education
Via email only

18 August 2020

Dear Minister,

I welcome yesterday's decision to award the summer examinations on the basis of centre assessment grades. I thank you for taking the right decision; for me it is evidence that young people are active citizens in Wales whose voices and experiences as individuals are important.

As you are aware, my office raised several concerns about the awarding and appeals process with yourself, your officials and with Qualifications Wales. The details of my initial concerns are laid out in my letter of the 22nd May, sent jointly with the EHRC, and explained more fully in my response to Qualifications Wales' 13th May consultation.

Whilst I have been in regular contact in the period since May both with Government and Qualifications Wales around my ongoing concerns, I deliberately did not publish any criticism of the awarding process prior to the 13th August, so to avoid any implication that undermined the achievements of young people receiving results.

However, on results day it became clear that the standardisation model was not working. Far too many young people were receiving unjust results. As I called for in [my statement on the morning of the 17th August](#), using centre assessment rapidly became the only fair step to take.

Throughout this process I have accepted that decisions are being taken quickly, in response to unanticipated challenges. However, I must do all I can to ensure that these decisions prioritise the best interests and human rights of children and young people. With this in mind, I would like to highlight the following key steps and actions that must now be taken to ensure this in the immediate, medium and long-term future.

Immediate actions in relation to summer 2020 awards:

- that Qualifications Wales review an equalities analysis of the centre assessed grades and publish this to enable transparency of any bias in centre assessment;
- that evidence of any bias in centre assessment that is shown by this analysis can be used by candidates as part of the basis of an appeal of their grade;



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Page 131

Croesaw'n ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg yn ogystal â'r Saesneg ac mewn amryw o fformatau
We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh and English as well as alternative formats

- that young people have accessible, clear information about how to appeal a centre assessed grade and that centres and Governing Bodies have clear information about their role in this appeal;
- that Welsh Government work with the other UK administrations to ensure flexibility of university admissions as called for in my [joint statement with the other UK Commissioners](#);
- that any candidate wishing to re-take qualifications should be informed that they are able to do so without any personal financial cost;

Medium term actions in relation to 2021 examination series:

- there must be a contingency plan in place for examinations being called off this academic year and this should involve building teacher assessment milestones into this academic year;
- in the event of examinations being cancelled, there needs to be a requirement for a clear process of any centre level assessment that is submitted. This must involve internal moderation of centre assessment within centres supported by clear guidance and there must also be external moderation of this process conducted by the awarding body in a manner equivalent to the usual process of coursework assessment;
- an Equalities Impact Assessment and a wellbeing assessment must be completed to inform the planning for 2021 and this should be taken into account when determining the structure and content of assessment for qualifications. I also strongly recommend that Government complete a Children's Right's Impact Assessment of the advice given by Qualifications Wales about how to proceed next year. I am pleased to see announcements that Qualifications Wales is requiring the WJEC to adapt some examinations and this consideration must extend across all courses. Young people that have already missed out on significant teaching should not face undue pressure to complete full courses and there should instead be a focus on quality of learning. My office has already made an offer to review impact assessments to Qualifications Wales and I reiterate this offer here;
- Qualifications Wales must provide their own guidance and training specific for Wales around how to avoid conscious and unconscious bias in assessment. Again my office is willing to offer advice or review materials, and other bodies in Wales such as the EHRC would also offer invaluable support;
- as for this year, young people have faced considerable disruption to their education and any candidate wishing to re-take qualifications should be able to do so at the soonest available opportunity without any personal financial cost.

Longer term implications:

We must recognise that the awarding of qualifications is imperfect this summer, but that actually the usual system of examination is also imperfect. As is well documented, school accountability and performance measures have not historically prioritised the best interests of individual children and young people. [My 2019 nationwide consultation](#) also showed that examinations and assessment are a key wellbeing concern for young people, and can undermine the efforts of schools and colleges to safeguard young people's wellbeing and mental health.

It is also the case that a significant proportion of young people in Wales, as in other UK nations, are awarded GCSE grades that neither support their self-esteem and confidence, nor enable them to progress in education.¹ In fact, the standardisation of the exam system in effect requires a percentage of young people to fail every year, and with the age of compulsory schooling ending at sixteen, some of these young people do not receive any further opportunities to develop their learning.

This exceptional summer should be used for us to re-think some of the elements that were assumed as given before this period. The proposals laid out in response to the [phase 1 Qualified for the Future consultation](#) should be re-visited in light of the challenges to the system this year, and the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill should also be scrutinised as an opportunity for Wales to put in place a legislative framework that requires external assessment to operate in the best interests of children and young people. A due regard duty to the UNCRC would be one way to achieve this.

I will also send this letter to CYPE Committee to inform ongoing discussion on these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Sally

Sally Holland
Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales

¹ https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Campaigns/The-Forgotten-Third_full-report.pdf

cc. Philip Blaker, Chief Executive, Qualifications Wales

Ian Morgan, Chief Executive, WJEC



Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Suzy Davies MS
Member of the Senedd for South Wales West

Suzy.Davies@senedd.wales

20 July 2020

Dear Suzy,

The role of the RSE Working Group is to inform and assist with the design of the new RSE guidance, working closely with practitioners on its re-drafting following the public consultation in 2019.

We have a broad range of stakeholders on the group, including a representative from the Office of the Children's Commissioner, who provide independent advice and challenge in relation to the development of the RSE statutory guidance.

We recognise that the provision of RSE to children and young people is a sensitive matter and our consultation on ensuring access to the full curriculum reflected strong and deeply held views. We understand the need to work with communities and other interested parties in co-constructing the learning and teaching for RSE, and in developing a shared understanding of the issues and the sensitivities. This is why in addition to the RSE Working Group we recently established a BAME/Faith Communities Involvement Group to help co-construct the new RSE guidance.

One of the key roles of the Involvement Group is to consider how to best engage with children and young people. Part of this is to ensure that as we co-construct the guidance the voice of children will be heard, which will be done through a range of focus groups across our communities.

As with the development of the wider Curriculum for Wales we are mindful that participation is a key principle of the UNCRC. In developing their curricula we expect schools to involve learners, parents, carers, partner agencies and the local community. This is an important means of ensuring the curriculum meets learners' needs and is authentic to their context within the national framework. Schools and practitioners also play a critical role in ensuring learners, parents, carers and communities understand the vision and ethos underpinning the curriculum.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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.

The 'Designing your curriculum' section of the Curriculum for Wales specifically refers to schools 'Working with parents, carers and stakeholders' as well as with learners themselves to develop their curriculum within the Curriculum for Wales framework. Subject to enactment of the Bill, the framework will comprise of statutory codes, statutory guidance and non-statutory guidance.

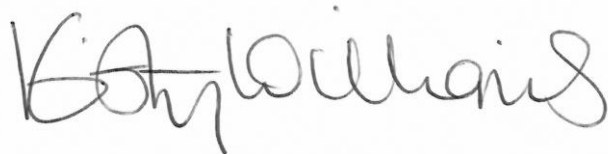
You may also be interested in the following links:

Education is changing website aimed at parents - <https://gov.wales/education-changing>. This helped inform parents meaning that they could respond to the consultation on the draft curriculum in April 2019.

A guide for children, young people and families is also available to help involve them in this process: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/a-new-curriculum-in-wales-a-guide-for-children-young-people-and-families/>

We are satisfied that the Welsh Ministers have had due regard to the rights of the child protected by Article 12 of the UNCRC. We will continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

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

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

CYPE(5)-20-20 - Paper to note 19

Lynne Neagle, MS
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes
Wales Coordinator
Everyone's Business Campaign
Maternal Mental Health Alliance

28th August 2020

Dear Lynne Neagle, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) is writing in response to the follow up work that the Children, Young People and Education Committee has been undertaking on its inquiry into perinatal mental health in Wales.

The MMHA is an independent charity and coalition of 90+ UK organisations, working across the UK. We bring the sector together to speak with one voice, campaigning for change and supporting local systems to improve perinatal mental health care. Our [Everyone's Business campaign](#) aims to improve the lives of all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems.

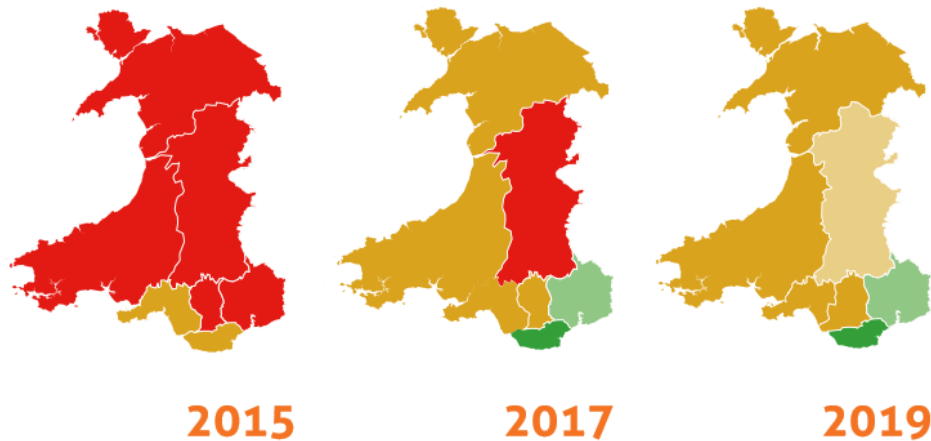
A key tool in our campaigning are our maps which visually chart each UK nation's progress towards meeting the CCQI perinatal quality network standards. The MMHA has been campaigning to 'turn the map green', as a crucial first step to ensuring all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems receive the care they and their families need, wherever and whenever they need it.

We would like to draw the Committee's attention to the [latest MMHA maps](#), launched last week, which show that there has been a small improvement in services available to women and their families in [Wales](#) since 2017. The MMHA welcomes encouraging signs of progress, including increased investment in specialist perinatal mental health services since 2015, plans to open an interim Mother and Baby Unit, and Welsh Government's commitment to improving access and quality of perinatal mental health services as indicated in the [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan](#). We also recognise the work of The Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Wales Perinatal Mental Health Network, which has been instrumental in driving improvements forward.

However, we are disappointed that this progress has not translated into significant developments in perinatal mental services for women and their families. New data shows that only two out of the seven (29%) health boards in Wales meet CCQI perinatal quality network standards, and women in Wales still face a postcode lottery when it comes to perinatal mental health care. Service development has not been equal across all health

boards, meaning the area in which a new or expectant mum lives continues to determine the support she and her family can access.

The story so far



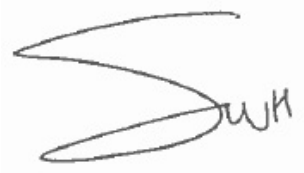
Specialist perinatal mental health services save lives, they provide expert treatment and are a crucial foundation for supporting and driving improvements across the wider perinatal mental health pathway. When an area has fully resourced, high-quality specialist services, with a team of trained staff, it can make all the difference to early identification of perinatal mental health problems, mother's quality of care, recovery time and support for her, her partner and their relationship with the baby.

In the wake of COVID-19, where we know that families are facing higher levels of anxiety, and perinatal mental health experts predict an increase in referrals to specialist services, we feel there is greater need for decision makers to [PLAN](#) to address the mental health needs of women and their families during and beyond the pandemic. We are concerned that the current funding for perinatal mental health services may not be sufficient to 'turn the map green' in Wales and ensure all services meet quality standards. We also worry about the impact the current crisis may have on reaching the crucial milestones in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan.

As we begin to move toward recovery from COVID-19, we feel it is important to understand more about the impact of the pandemic on the perinatal mental health work plans, as raised by the Minister for Health and Social Services in his last update to the Committee (ref: MA/VG/1382/20). When it is deemed an appropriate time, we would welcome an update from the Minister on the development of plans to open the interim mother and baby unit. Once normal monitoring arrangements have resumed, we would also welcome an update on progress against perinatal mental health services achieving the All Wales Standards and the CCQI standards.

The MMHA would welcome any opportunities to support the Committee's work to improve perinatal mental health care for women and their families in Wales. We are available to provide further written or oral evidence, should this be useful.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by the initials 'WH'.

Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes
Wales Coordinator
Everyone's Business Campaign, Maternal Mental Health Alliance

Agenda Item 6.20

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

Lynne Neagle MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff
CF99 1SN



27 August 2020

Dear Ms Neagle,

We hope this correspondence finds you well.

On behalf of Universities Wales, I just wanted to take some time to convey our thanks to you as chair and to the members and support staff of the CYPE Committee. The work undertaken by the committee to highlight the challenges facing the Welsh higher education sector as a result of Covid-19 has been invaluable.

The committee has been instrumental in scrutinising the response of the Welsh Government, securing important debate within the Senedd and in producing an insightful report looking at the impacts of Coronavirus on children, young people and the education sector as a whole.

Our engagements with the committee have been both thought-provoking and productive. Whilst there will undoubtedly be further challenges to navigate as we continue to grapple with the virus, universities across Wales are working hard to ensure that when students return to campus in September, they are kept safe and well but also benefit from a truly transformative and high quality experience.

We look forward to our continued work with the committee and to supporting its work in delivering the very best for the children, young people and education sector in Wales.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Wilkinson', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Amanda Wilkinson

Director, Universities Wales

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Un o Gyngorau Cenedlaethol Prifysgolion y DU
Cwmni cyfyngedig trwy warant, a gofrestrwyd yng Nghymru a Lloegr Rhif

Rhif Elusen 100112

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: 14 September 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Remote teaching and COVID-19 – approaches to school education**

Dear Kirsty,

In July 2020, as part of our ongoing work on the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people, we commissioned a rapid review of research and practical guidance on strategies to implement remote teaching and learning at school level, including examples in other countries. This work was undertaken by Professor Sofya Lyakhova from Swansea University, as part of Senedd Research's [Senedd Research COVID-19 Expert Register scheme](#).

This rapid review of research and guidance was commissioned before announcements about the return to school, and with a view to providing a constructive contribution to the ongoing contingency planning that our public services are undertaking in response to the pandemic. I attach a copy for yours and officials' reference, and hope that it will provide a useful source of information as you plan for the period ahead.

While this paper talks about remote learning, I would like to re-iterate our view that schools and colleges remaining open must be a top priority for all public services. The collateral damage caused to children and young people by this public health emergency has been significant. As such, we welcome the steps you took to ensure that our children and young people had an opportunity to attend 'check-in' sessions in schools and colleges before the summer break, and to return full time this autumn term. Whilst there remains a need for contingency planning, it is our view that school and college closures should only occur as a very last resort.

Yours sincerely,

**Lynne Neagle MS****Chair**

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

**Senedd Cymru**

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Remote Teaching and Covid-19 Approaches to School Education

Sofya Lyakhova

August 2020

Mathematics Department, Swansea University.

Email: s.lyakhova@swansea.ac.uk

This paper has been produced under the [Senedd Research COVID-19 Expert Register scheme](#), through which relevant academics assist the Senedd with its work relating to both the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, with a particular focus on Wales. It was commissioned at the request of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to inform its [inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on children and young people in Wales](#).

Sofya Lyakhova is an Associate Professor in Mathematics at Swansea University with a research interest in blended learning, school curriculum development, student choice in mathematics education and transition to STEM degrees at university. Sofya has been leading Welsh Government-funded Further Mathematics Support Programme Wales (FMSPW) in Swansea University since the programme was launched in 2010. The programme developed a blended learning approach to AS and A-level Further Mathematics with students across Wales accessing the courses remotely.

1. Introduction

The paper is a rapid review of research and practical guidance on strategies to implement remote teaching and learning at school level. The sources considered included both Covid-19 related reports and general research literature on remote teaching. Due to time constraints, this report is not a complete review of literature on the full range of remote and blended learning strategies. It should therefore be considered as a starting point from which discussions about remote teaching, whether implemented short or long term, could develop. The report focuses specifically on teaching and learning, although some wider issues around remote teaching implementation emerge.

There is a long-standing tradition of using interchangeable terminology in relation to remote teaching in research and professional literature. Therefore, we clarify the terminology first. Throughout the paper we refer to remote teaching whenever learners are separated from the teacher by distance for some time (perhaps not all the time). Remote teaching is viewed as the opposite of full-time face-to-face (or in-person) traditional classroom teaching and it could be

fully remote if there are no face-to-face activities. Essentially remote teaching means that students are in school for reduced (if any) time while the teaching continues when they are not. Remote teaching does not necessarily mean online as it could be based around print, TV or radio technology instead.

Any learning incorporates interactive and individual activities, such as classwork and homework in full-time face-to-face teaching. This feature is reflected in two attributes of teaching and learning called asynchronous ('in my own time', 'on my own') and synchronous ('at the same time', 'with others') activities. Remote teaching may incorporate synchronous activities (such as online lessons, collaborative chat) as well as asynchronous activities (such as viewing pre-recorded video, completing a computer-based test, reading a book or writing notes). Blended learning is a term traditionally used to highlight that a course is a combination of online and face-to-face learning, but it also emphasises that learning happens through activities that learners pursue on their own (asynchronous) and those that they do together with the teacher and/or other learners (synchronous).

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 briefly introduces remote teaching in historical, theoretical, and educational terms. Evidence on Covid-19 practical approaches is considered in Section 3, including impact on learners, emerging advice on mitigating the impact and available school reopening plans. In Section 4, general approaches to remote teaching are discussed. Section 5 outlines the recommendations. Some selected terminology is printed in bold for easy navigation and should not be viewed as an enforcement of statements.

2. Remote Teaching: historical and educational contexts

Remote teaching (RT) historically originated in adult learning and is valued for the realisation of social justice and widening access in education and, at school level in particular, for efficient use of resources. Learner benefits and challenges of remote learning are well documented, see Table 1, and both relate to two main characteristics of RT (see, e.g., Lyakhova & Joubert and references within, 2019). These are limited opportunities for real-time social interaction and feedback, perhaps compensated by extended opportunities for reflection and individual work, and, related to this, assumed greater learner autonomy.

Table 1. Remote teaching at a glance.

Valued for	Known possible learner challenges (could be avoided)	Known possible learner benefits (not guaranteed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social justice and widening access in education - contributes to resilience in education through access, quality, cost and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student disengagement - low completion rates - increased feeling of isolation - higher workload - limited social interactions - independent learning skills are assumed - access to technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access anywhere and anyhow (my pace/my place) - more inclusive environment - support for students who do not respond well to "traditional learning" (more able, less able, students with disabilities) - stimulates independent learning skills - strong association with learner achievements

This explains why improving student ability to self-direct learning, such as through learner **self-regulation**, is therefore seen important for RT (Kintu *et al.*, 2017). Learner self-regulation occurs when learners self-initiate and apply self-regulation strategies related to planning, evaluating and seeking help (see, e.g., Appendix A) to improve their learning. Self-regulated learners consciously use these to compensate for deficiencies in their learning habits, abilities, or environments. While self-regulation may be necessary for students coping with RT, adjusting to new learning environments may also stimulate growing self-regulation in learners. Social interaction and developing peer support and collaboration in classroom (whether online or traditional) are essential for stimulating self-regulation.

If the first forms of remote learning were mostly **asynchronous** ('in your own time'), such as when exchanging written and text sources by post, with the invention of radio and television **synchronous** ('at the same time') learning became available on large scales. Nowadays a **blended learning** course may incorporate face-to-face, live online and offline computer-based synchronous and asynchronous activities and may be designed for interacting with hundreds of thousands of learners.

Early comparative studies showed that **blended learning** (BL) courses may work better than either entirely face-to-face or entirely online education. This could be explained by the fact "the face-to-face classroom is collaborative before it is reflective", while the strength of online (asynchronous) learning is "the opportunity for reflection and rigour" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008 p.19) and **blended learning** as a combination of interactive (**synchronous**) learning and online (**asynchronous**) learning opportunities integrates the strengths of both. The **asynchronous** component of BL has a strong association with learner achievements and is known to reduce cognitive load but to improve cognition and learning.

The element that creates and sustains learning is the teacher. Research showed that learners experience teacher presence differently in face-to-face and online learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Face-to-face learning experience is more teacher oriented where the teacher is seen as transmitting information, while online learning experience is more cognitively or internally focused. In the eye of learners, the role of the teachers in RT changes to being an instructor or facilitator of learning. Yet, pedagogically it remains the same, as in RT, as much as in any other teaching environment, the teacher's function is to provide structure, facilitation and direction for the progression of learning.

Arguably, planned remote teaching could facilitate social, cognitive and teaching presence and examples of good learner outcomes of remote teaching courses are available. However, the situation may be different in emergency remote teaching. It also may be different with younger learners as evidence on RT implementation at school level is lacking in general.

3. Emergency Remote Teaching and Covid-19 international trends in approaches to school education

Hodges *et al.* (2020) define Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as "a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated". ERT's primary aim is therefore not about recreating a robust

educational system but is about arranging delivery modes, methods and media to respond to rapidly changing needs of educational institutions when access to resources, support and training is restricted for some but nevertheless limited time.

Numerous guidance and reports state that creative problem solving is needed in crisis circumstances (Hodges, 2020; Kanwar & Daniel, 2020; IBO,2020) that often require departure from normal pedagogical practices. For example, while **synchronous** courses may be preferable, **asynchronous** activities may be considered more practical if learners have difficulty in accessing synchronous courses. Furthermore, in certain circumstances ERT may reduce the role of educational institutions from teaching to providing **remote learning opportunities** only, thus shifting responsibility for **teacher instruction and progress monitoring** somewhere else, typically parents or students themselves.

While the terms teaching, instruction and learning may be perceived as interchangeable, caution is needed when interpreting these in the context of education reports on COVID-19. Some reports only appear to refer to remote learning opportunities that is to an offer made by education authorities or institutions to learners and families without references to teachers teaching or students learning. However, the teacher's role involves more than delivering learning tasks and activities to students. Therefore we considered both reports outlining trends in **remote learning opportunities** on offer and reports on how **teacher instruction and progress monitoring** were facilitated. While the reports available do not cover the same regions they nevertheless inform about the variations in teaching practices involved in COVID-19 ERT approaches.

3.1 Variations in remote learning opportunities internationally

According to the report published by the Brookings Institution on 14th April 2020 that uses data collected by the Centre for Global Development combined with the World Bank's classification, countries in the regions of East Asia and Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa vary considerably in their approaches to education during COVID-19 by income, by region, by the type of online education resources and PISA-participation (Vegas, 2020):

- Only 10% of **high-income** but 75% of **low-income** countries do not provide remote learning opportunities. Among those that do provide **remote learning opportunities**, the majority among the low-income countries use TV and radio, while the high-income countries nearly all provide remote learning opportunities online with 20% using a combination of online and TV and/or radio broadcast.
- In all regions across the world, there are rural areas and those without internet connection that rely on **TV and radio** only. However, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean rely almost exclusively on **online** education.
- There are further variations among the countries using **online** educational resources. Among these countries more than 60% use online platforms and about one third distribute educational videos online. About 30% of countries suggest educational resources through social media and ministry of education websites. Only 12% publish modules containing instructional materials usually targeting specific grade levels. A small proportion (around 6%) employ video games.
- 85% of **PISA-participating** countries offer online educational opportunity. About 30% use online in combination with TV and/or radio broadcast education.

- Many countries appear to provide guidance to teachers for communicating with students but fewer countries provide **training on remote teaching**. Europe and Central Asia are the regions with highest proportion of countries providing training.

The data from Centre for Global Development (CGD, 2020) used in the report allows an insight into details of provision in at least some countries. Some common themes include access to technology and associated funding, differentiating between different age groups or households with different capabilities, facilitating multilingual provision and teacher professional development or learning. The data is not uniform and the examples below should not be treated as representative across regions or internationally.

Technology: online, TV, radio and print

New Zealand was one example of a country using various media to support remote teaching. TV lessons in New Zealand aimed at all age groups, including early learning, were broadcast at set times from 9am to 3pm every school day, with separate channels for English and Māori languages. Based on the success of these lessons, the broadcast of early learning and Māori lessons were extended until July 2020.

While New Zealand used a mixture of specialists delivering TV lessons, such as “teachers, presenters and wellbeing and movement professionals”, some countries emphasised that TV or radio lessons were delivered by some of their “best” teachers. In some countries such as Croatia, Czech Republic and Cyprus TV options were available for primary students while online options were used for secondary students. In some other countries radio lessons were used for primary and TV for secondary schooling. Whenever TV or radio was used, it was typically emphasised that it was available daily and at set times. Some countries expected parental supervision for watching or listening to these, noticeably for primary students and a set limit of time for watching TV was mentioned in some instances, such as 3 hours for primary school children.

Yet, there were countries where printed packs of resources rather than other forms of learning were used for primary students. And many more countries appeared to use these for learners of various ages whenever access to technology was difficult or rapid access was prioritised such as to help older students preparing for exams. In some instances, packs of printed materials such as homework booklets, were released at the start of the school closures to some students who could not follow an online learning programme, with the aim of collecting and grading student work in September. A follow up in terms of tuition classes to help students close the gap was mentioned in one instance. In New Zealand (2020a; 2020b), printed learning materials were sent to learners in the Māori-medium education pathway aged 0 to 18. Schools there were also able to order subject specific packs for students working towards a qualification with resources “available across more than 50 subject areas”. In early years packs went to learners most in need “due to disadvantage, or who do not have a computer or internet access”. In some countries printed packs and learner kits were specially issued for the emergency situation by the Ministry of Education, in other countries students continued using printed materials already familiar to them, including, for example in one country textbooks, workbooks, review books and activity books.

But transitioning from printed textbooks to their online equivalents were also seen as facilitating better access to learning. Authorities in several countries made all textbooks available electronically to parents free of charge during the COVID-19 crisis.

Online platform details often are omitted from the data but Google classroom is mentioned more often with some authorities emphasising live streaming facilities for synchronous learning being available. In respect to these, various arguments for using synchronous or asynchronous activities appeared. For example, Portugal argued that asynchronous activities, which “are less demanding in bandwidth and do not require state-of-the-art devices” should be prioritised, while synchronous activities were included in study plans for learners in Sweden. Additionally, there were instances of recreating several aspects of school environment virtually with online access to libraries and a librarian, with online help available from social support staff and psychologists being available.

Curriculum and Timetabling

Some instances of reduced curriculum were mentioned, such as mathematics, modern language, reading and writing, health and environmental education and hygiene subjects prioritised for primary phase and mathematics, modern language, technology, life and earth sciences and information technology prioritised in secondary phase during the school courses in one country. A different approach is taken in Luxemburg where it was announced that distance learning would focus on “essential content, including new contents, whose mastery is essential for the student to progress in his career school. When courses are resumed, the contents treated within the framework of distance education will be consolidated in class, before new learning is started”. While academic curriculum may be of prime concern, authorities in some countries reminded that meaningful education at home may not need to “just focus on academic or cognitive achievement”.

Some little detail on changes in the timetable is available. Luxemburg for example, decided to merge two terms into a single period of reference. In some countries some phases were offered schooling well into the summer holidays while other phases (such as primary schools) finished early.

Access to internet and digital devices

Facilitating Internet access and distributing digital devices was of concern to many countries. Some felt the urge to conduct a survey of technological devices available per household just before closing schools. Latvia for example estimated that 3% of their students were without laptop or smartphone. “In order to solve this problem promptly on the basis of the survey data, the Ministry of Education and Science addressed the telecommunications and communications companies” where the costs were to be covered by Ministry of Education contingency funds. In New Zealand (2020a, 2020b), more than 51,000 instances of internet connections were reported as completed or underway to be completed, more than 23,000 devices (laptops and Chromebooks) were to be supplied by the Ministry of Education and 16,000 devices were to be dispatched from schools’ own stock. For both internet connections and computers, the first priority was students working towards qualifications in order, in Year 12, Year 13, and then Year 11 students. “These priorities reflected the Government’s desire to minimise disruption for learners working towards a qualification, and the effectiveness of online teaching and learning for this age group” (New Zealand, 2020b). Appealing to private sectors and charitable organisations but also to general public for help when supplying devices to households was on the list for several countries. Others attempted to draw on the current funding available. One

province in Canada (Jefford, 2020), the country which was not included in the data analysed above, intended to divert funding for school buses and building maintenance which were reduced during the school courses to buy electronic devices for students. A different example of tackling technological inequality was to create a buddy system where a parent or student with internet and other capabilities would be attached to a student unable to access digital learning platforms. Additionally, the latter solution was seen to create environment for sharing and building community learning.

Learners with additional needs

Not only students with limited access needed differentiation. Luxemburg for example, announced that a systematic procedure was to be implemented at the national level to “clearly identify this target population and support the pupils concerned with a series of measures” including students with disabilities. Pakistan hoped that introducing TV lessons during the COVID-19 crisis may stay once the schools open to facilitate adult learning and improve access to education for students with limited capabilities.

Borrowing and Sharing of Resources

In the use of online resources, some countries relied on the resources developed elsewhere, such as by UNICEF. Estonia, the number one PISA-ranked country in Europe in 2018, announced sharing all of its digital education tools to support other countries’ education systems as part of Nordic countries support initiative during COVID-19 crisis. Resources were typically available in English and other languages. Sharing resources, perhaps in line with the advantages of online education, also happened within educational systems when distance learning was offered as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

Parental involvement

While one may assume schools would bear the overall responsibility for students’ learning even when teaching remotely, some countries emphasised the role of parents. The message varied from encouraging parents to home-school children during crisis to reminding parents about overall responsibility for children’s education to prioritising children’s wellbeing. In some cases, learners were also reminded about their responsibility to learn such as “I am responsible! My class is at home!” campaign launched in one country.

Teacher Training and approaches to ERT school guidance

There are examples of centralised approaches to schools policy and guidance, such as Ministries of Education developing and releasing remote teaching methodologies for secondary schools first and before work started on early phases. In other countries responsibilities for actions were delegated to schools and classrooms. Virtual teacher training on remote teaching was launched in various countries covering technology as well as new methodologies, pedagogies and didactics of distance learning and managing absenteeism. As one example, online literacy training for teachers but also parents was launched in Brazil. Timing of the training and instruction for schools was prioritised at the start of school closures. New Zealand but also other countries while bringing the start of the spring holidays forward for students, intended to utilise this period to “support schools to develop e-learning and other distance learning option for Term 2”. Singapore

was one country that “implemented a one-day-per-week homebased learning plan to help parents prepare for the possibility of extended home-based learning” in advance of school closures.

3.2 Variations in teacher instruction and progress monitoring: an example of the USA

The Brookings Institution report and the associated data considered above does not include North America because USA and Canada’s education systems are highly decentralised resulting in a greater variety of approaches taken. Indeed, a study by Gross and Opalka (2020) of COVID-19 school district policies in a nationally representative sample in the USA concluded that the variations in the expectations of what schools were to do are considerable. This study is of interest to us as it looks at the expectations about **teacher instruction, student engagement tracking and progress monitoring** which did not appear in other studies. Additionally, Gross and Opalka use the classification that may be viewed as exhaustingly describing all possible practices taking place during the COVID-19. The report reveals inconsistencies between the districts but also highlight variations in set expectations between **affluent** (“low free or reduced lunch districts”) and **poor** areas (“high free or reduced lunch districts”) as well as **urban** and **rural** areas.

The key findings of the USA report include:

- Two thirds of districts set low expectations for sustaining **teacher instruction**, see table 2. While 85% of the sample made some form of grade and subject specific curriculum materials, only 33% of districts expect all of their teachers to continue to engage and interact with all of their students around the curriculum content such as through live video lessons, recorded lectures, one-to-one support over phone, or feedback delivered through an online platform. This further diverge from 27% in rural areas to over 50% in in urban areas.
- Only 13.2% of districts expect live online (**synchronous**) lessons delivered to students. However, **affluent districts** (25% of all districts) are twice as likely as **high poverty districts** to expect their schools to provide live **synchronous** instruction (14.5% against 28.3%).

Table 2. School districts’ expectations on providing access to curriculum content and teaching during COVID-19 closures, adapted from Gross & Opalka (2020).

Indicator	Share	Definitions and Examples
Content:		
No curriculum resources provided	1.50%	None: no resources or expectations about curriculum, lessons or activities. General: menu of learning resources (not sequential lessons), such as links to Khan Academy, the local library system, kidsreads.com, etc. Could be a general list or organised by grade-level. Specific: Districts provide or expect schools to provide curated/directive curriculum, placing each student in a specific position in a resource and prescribing their pacing through resources, lessons/activities/units associated with a grade-level and a subject area, daily or weekly physical or downloadable packets that are distinct from the previous day or week's pack. These may be
General learning resources provided	10.10%	
Grade and subject specific resources provided	84.70%	
No closure info found	3.70%	

		created by the district, schools, teachers, or a third party.
Instruction from Teachers:		
ALL teachers are expected to engage with students around content via synchronous or asynchronous means.	33.50%	Yes: there is an expectation communicated that teachers will be providing instruction or instructional resources, not just uploaded assignments or work packets on a learning platform. Students are not expected to rely primarily on themselves or parents to understand content and assignments. This could happen via live instruction, pre-recorded video, online platforms, 1:1 conversations that are tied to content, or other strategies that ensure that students receive structured guidance on concepts.
SOME teachers are expected to engage with students around content via synchronous or asynchronous means.	13.20%	
No expectations	49.50%	
No information found	3.70%	
Synchronous Teaching:		
Synchronous teaching is expected for ALL teachers	7.90%	Synchronous = "real time" instruction to students over video conference. Offering office hours counts as a check-in, see Table 4, but does not count as synchronous teaching.
Synchronous teaching is expected for SOME teachers	13.90%	
No expectations	74.80%	
Info not found	3.70%	

- Only half of the districts set clear expectations on **monitoring student engagement** in learning, see Table 3, such as through attendance tracking or one-on-one check-in by phone or text. However, the largest divide in monitoring student engagement is between **urban and rural areas**: regular check-ins OR attendance taken are expected in 43% of rural areas against 65% in urban districts.
- Nearly 40% of districts do not require teachers to **monitor students' academic progress**, see Table 4. Only 42% of districts expect schools to collect student work, grade it and include the in the final course grade for at least some of their students. A higher proportion of districts (58%) expects their teacher to at least provide feedback (if not grade) for at least some of their students. The report remarks that these typically would be older students. As above, the largest divide in progress monitoring is between **urban and rural areas**: grading is expected in 57.2% of urban districts against 39.8% of rural districts and progress monitoring is expected in 52.6% of rural districts against 79.7% of urban districts.

Table 3. School districts' expectations on monitoring engagement and progress during COVID-19 closures, adapted from Gross & Opalka (2020).

Indicator	Share	Definitions and Examples
Attendance:		
Attendance taken	27.40%	Yes: districts communicates some process for capturing attendance, such as students are asked to log in to a virtual platform, to download

No expectation about attendance	68.90%	instruction or assignment via app, or to submit a response to "a question of the day", teachers may record attendance via phone call homes.
No info found	3.70%	
Teacher Check In:		
Check-ins are expected	36.90%	Yes: districts communicate that teachers will check in with students via phone call, email or virtual platform. Examples include: teachers calling students 1:1 to check in, teachers having office hours if students or families have questions; teachers having morning meetings or weekly wellness meetings.
No expectations about check-ins	59.30%	
No info found	3.70%	
Attendance OR Check In:		
Expected	48.00%	See above.
No expectations set	48.30%	
No info found	3.7%	
Feedback on student work		
Progress monitored for ALL students	48.00%	The lowest affirmative answer is when students are asked to submit some of their work to their teachers.
Progress monitored for SOME students	9.90%	
No progress monitoring expected	38.30%	
No info found	3.70%	
Formal grading		
Grading is done for All students	29.00%	Grading = formal grading, when districts require some student work to be completed during the shutdowns to contribute to their final score.
Grading is done for SOME students	13.10%	
No grading expected	54.40%	
No info found	3.70%	

A study by Lake and Dusseault (2020b) further exemplifies variations in set expectations:

- “all teachers [are required] to communicate learning objectives, activities and assignments to students weekly; interact with students in real time to deliver lessons and facilitate discussion; to archive lessons to access later”,
- teachers given three options to choose from: to support students with districts-developed materials, to engage in “a teacher-led hybrid instruction” or to opt for “fully digital instruction” (DPS, 2020). With the last option, teachers were expected to provide a fully online instruction and to communicate with students using phone or digital platform,
- decision making is delegated to schools without clear expectations.

Interestingly, while delivering instruction and monitoring students’ progress was reported as improved over the first few weeks of school closures, **grading, assessment and attendance** lagged behind (Lake and Dusseault, 2020a). Grading, and assessment pose difficult questions in the context of ERT. These may become an equity issue if not all students have access to technology and assignments. Yet, grading and assessment also provides motivation for learners to get on with work (Kurtz, 2020). Furthermore, although somewhat problematic to gather,

grading and attendance may prove valuable once school buildings reopen. Emerging practice included (Lieberman, 2020; Lake and Dusselaut, 2020b):

- completing Google forms at the start of the day, although this may prove time consuming with multiple children in one household,
- focusing on project completing dates rather than instructional time and using multiple parameters such as completed assignments, login in times and replies by email,
- giving students a few but not too many days for completing assignments and reaching the family after more than one assignment is missing,
- students earning an extra credit on work returned during the closures but otherwise not being penalised.

If in the previous section **differentiation by age** was noticed in respect to the choice of the media for ERT, differences in instruction by age became apparent from the USA studies (Lake and Dusselaut, 2020a and b; Kurtz, 2020). “Middle and high school students typically get more access to instruction and progress monitoring” (Lake and Dusselaut, 2020a, p.3). One district’s plan, for example, focused on “simplicity and literacy” for elementary students (Achievement First, 2020) where learning relied on students and parents self-direct use of online programme. In contrast, secondary and high school children were expected to have synchronous instruction via Zoom for each class in addition to using Google Classroom for assignments and instruction (Lake and Dusselaut, 2020b). Older students’ progress was monitored and assignments were graded, teachers were expected to check in daily and provide office hours.

Reasons for such differentiation were speculated to include (Lake and Dusselaut, 2020a):

- considerations of age-based learning differences such as limiting screen time for elementary students and needs of older learners such as preparing for exams and tests leading to qualifications being prioritised,
- secondary learners perceived as more prepared for online learning if they are equipped with devices already or experienced some form of remote learning before,
- digital platform being in place for older learners.

3.3 *Findings on Covid-19 ERT approaches impacting on children’s learning*

Many students may be expected to fall behind academically due to missing on instruction, low access to teachers, parents’ inability to support children and low engagement from students as a result of Covid-19 school closures. Yet, some small proportion of students may make additional gains in learning, particularly, in reading (Kuhfeld *et al.*, 2020) if the above factors are reversed or when students know how to self-regulate (to know what to do when they do not know and limited help is available) (Hattie, 2020a and 2020b). Additionally, this may depend on students’ emotional health and wellbeing.

The Brookings report (Vegas, 2020) suggests that the impact on some learners will be related to whether they have an opportunity to access **remote learning opportunities** or not and whether teachers get access to teacher **training on remote teaching**. But in high- and middle-class income countries and in **PISA-participating** countries, the impact is likely to depend on the actual quality of teaching taking place remotely, including **teacher instruction, progress monitoring and assessment**, rather than on the availability of learning opportunities (Vegas, 2020). According to Gross and Opalka (2020) it is worrying that in the challenge to produce a

range of remote learning opportunities or connect students to technology, variabilities in the level of instruction and learner progress monitoring, resulted in too many schools “leaving learning to chance during the coronavirus closures” (p.1). Providing opportunities for learning and providing quality learning experiences are not the same.

The study by Iqbal (2020) models three scenarios of the Covid-19 impact on students’ learning. According to one, the impact may be in average level of learning decreasing across the whole distribution. A different scenario shows that the impact may mostly affect students from lower **socio-economic backgrounds** while students from high-income families would continue to learn. The third scenario demonstrates that an increase in the number of school dropouts from lower economic backgrounds may occur.

Many reports agree with Iqbal *et al.* (2020) that the impact on students’ learning will vary depending on **socio-economic advantage** and **access to technology** (Kanwar & Daniel, 2020; Hattie, 2020b; Kurtz, 2020; Montacute, 2020). This may be because of how schools handle ERT (what they do and what they do not do) or in relation to **parents’ resourcefulness** (including parents’ ability to act as teachers of their children when, for example, parents themselves are well educated). The latter is especially important if one agrees with Hattie, that the experience of many learners during Covid-19 “was less ‘distance learning’ and more ‘home schooling’” (Hattie, 2020a).

Educators are most likely to be concerned with students falling behind in mathematics (Kurtz, 2020; Major & Machin, 2020; Montacute, 2020; Müller & Goldenberg, 2020) although learning English or other language are also mentioned in some studies (see, e.g., Kurtz, 2020). One study that considered previous data on absenteeism, regular summer breaks, school closures due to natural disasters or pandemics, projected that students were likely to return to school in September 2020 with 63-68% of expected scores in reading and 37-59% of expected scores in maths relative to a typical school year (Kuhfeld et al, 2020). According to another large-scale study in the USA, in May 2020 student participation in online math coursework from one online mathematics programme decreased by 69% and progress decreased by 58% compared to January 2020 (Track the Recovery, 2020). Another reason to worry about mathematics during and post-Covid-19 is that parental involvement in homework is known to have detrimental impact on children’s (especially boys’) mathematics-related performance and motivation (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019).

Both the youngest and oldest students may be at higher risk when ERT is used, but for different reasons. Entering a high school or college could be a life changing academic experience if it helps students to be more ambitious in their subsequent choices of work and education. School closures limit older students’ access to adults (teachers, counsellors, social workers) and peers who would normally support students making important decisions about their future (Carver, 2020; Harries, 2020). But the well-recognised summer learning loss effect may affect younger children’s progress more (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020).

Many students may face consequences for schoolwork not done during closures (Kurtz, 2020). These may amplify due to schools not being able to assess students promptly in September 2020 and then amplify further if schools have no strategies on how to mitigate these consequences quickly (Lake & Dusseault, 2020a).

Some more positive outcomes could be expected as well including:

- learner **digital confidence** improving as a result of Covid-19 blended learning as reported in Austria (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020),
- children becoming more **independent learners** as well as rediscovering the joy of learning once back in full time education as reported by Finland (Brookings Webinar, 2020),
- unplanned **teacher innovation** that happened during the pandemic benefiting learners beyond the crisis as reported by Finland (Brookings Webinar, 2020).

More generally, research suggests that those students who fall further behind during school closures, nevertheless, are likely to make most gains when they return to school (Kuhfeld *et al.*, 2020, Hattie, 2020b). In relation to this, some of the studies refer to the impact of 2010/11 earthquake in New Zealand where learner performance was lower in 2010 but not in 2011 when some affected regions performed higher than the country's average. Interpretations of this vary (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020). It may be due to an "earthquake impaired derived grade process" that allowed schools to apply for special dispensation for some (although not clear how many) students. But according to John Hattie this was due to teachers focusing on what students needed to learn rather than keeping students busy (Hattie, 2020b). Evidence from unplanned school closures sometimes do not agree on what effect it may have on learners and we refer the reader to Müller & Goldenberg (2020) for a more comprehensive discussion about these.

3.4 *Emerging advice on approaches to school education during and post-Covid-19*

The emerging advice relates to mitigating the impact outlined above as well as to building long term resilience in educational systems (EEF, 2020; Carver, 2020; Harris, 2020; Lake & Dusseault, 2020b; Kurtz, 2020; Hattie, 2020a and 2020b, Kanwar and Daniel, 2020, Bonilla *et al.*, 2020; Donaldson, 2020). Findings on short-term measures include:

- As an immediate response to the crisis schools and educational systems need to ensure **access to technology** but also **connecting learners to schools and teachers**, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- Educational systems that are already using digital resources might find the transition to RT easier but **facilitating access to learning** and **further differentiation** of teaching is the key. John Hattie (2020a) proposes as many as ten groups of learners that may need more of (and/or different) teacher time: (1) students with low self-regulation who are highly dependent on teachers; (2) those who return with high level of stress, emotional concerns and/or behavioural issues; (3) students with no or low access proficiency in using quality strategies and guidance necessary to promote development; (4) students who have access to fewer educational resources; (5) students who already had a lack of progress in school; (6) students who have low expectations of themselves as learners; (7) those who lack proficiency in reading and numeracy skills, particularly, in early years; (8) students living in homes which are not safe; (9) students whose parents have low capacity or desire to engage in the schoolwork at home; (10) learners who prepare for high stake exams losing opportunity to engage.
- **School rules** may need to be re-examined including policies on contact hours, school performance measures but also rules against teachers interacting with students outside of school including social media that make sense during normal times but may be the opposite of what students need in emergency crisis.

- Some difficult decisions need to be made when implementing solutions that are unlikely to reach all the students. The emerging advice is to do all one can rather than stick to the rules that fit all as part of addressing the crisis as not implementing measures that do not fit all would contribute to further inequity all the same.
- In relation to **post-16 students** in particular, proactive advice and support should be provided to all students and especially those who may decide not to continue with their education. “The class of 2020 may have been graduated but should not be forgotten” (Bonilla *et al.*, 2020, p.1).
- Timely teacher **training on remote teaching** cannot be over-emphasised.

Long-term measures include:

- Continuing developing **technological systems** for education, including distance and open learning opportunities,
- Including scenarios for coping with crisis in **teacher training and professional development**. Finland, for example, expressed an opinion that their online teacher training implemented as part of wider policy on digitalisation helped teachers during the school closures (Brookings Webinar, 2020),
- Strengthen **independent learning skills**.

In relation to developing independent learning skills in learners’ long term, John Hattie claims that Australian schools that implemented his Visible Learning framework with the focus on learners becoming their own teachers, found the approach paid back during the Covid-19 school closures (Hattie, 2020b). The responses to the Visible Learning framework since it was introduced by Hattie in 2008 have been mixed (see, e.g., Terhart, 2011) but other measures, such as engaging learners in regular homework, collaborative learning, ‘**flipped classroom**’ (see section 4) self- and peer-assessment and practices around assessment for learning could be employed to strengthen educational systems. One interesting example is Singapore where after the SARS outbreak in 2013, two days of home learning per year were introduced so teachers, learners and parents could practise RT environments (Hattie, 2020a). It is worth reinforcing that while RT requires learner’s maturity and self-regulation, distance learning environments are known to contribute to learner independence (see, e.g. Lyakhova & Joubert, 2019 and references within).

To address **learning losses** once students are back to school the following has been suggested (Bonilla *et al.*, 2020; Allensworth & Schwartz, 2020; Jones *et al.*, 2020):

- small-group or one-to-one interventions such as high-dosage tutoring that is directly tied to academic content should be prioritised,
- supporting learners’ additional needs in the general education classroom, condensed curriculum or repeating grade or year is recommended to be avoided,
- effective assessment of what students know but also how they feel need to be facilitated (Lake and Olson, 2020). It is recommend to engage parents as partners as part of school re-entry policy and to solicit parents’ observations about how their children’s strength, interests and learning habits developed but also to offer assessment literacy trainings,
- teacher training on assessment is recommended especially if teacher assessment is envisaged to replace standardised assessment (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020).

While many countries' end-of-year assessment systems appeared not to be resilient in the current crisis, there is a view that the role of **assessment** "is experiencing a renaissance as educators explore ways in which authentic assessment and feedback can be used to enable learning" (Kanwar & Daniel, 2020, p.9, see, also Contact North, 2020 for a list of trends in which assessment is changing during and after and the crisis). Permanently strengthening remote teaching including developing strategies for virtual assessment in parallel to preparing reopening schools is recommended (IE, 2020).

Finally, the advice on the approaches to ERT states that remote teaching can be effective if appropriate strategies are employed (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020) which we consider in section 4. Teaching quality is most important and is more important than how lessons are delivered (EEF, 2020). Factors that moderate the effectiveness of remote learning include teacher and student's readiness and capability and home learning environment and family support (Frankel, 2020). At practical level, peer interactions is found to improve learning outcomes in RT while peer collaboration can also provide motivation in RT (EEF, 2020).

3.5 Examples of school reopening plans from the USA

A report published on July 14th, 2020 states that three learning models are being considered (Lake & Dassault, 2020c): fully **in-person** teaching with social distancing; **fully remote teaching**; and a **hybrid** option that combines in-person and remote learning. All districts considered in the report are planning for at least two scenarios with some planning for all three. But less than a third of districts is not planning a fully in-person option. Some districts are planning "to open with fully remote instruction and gradually phase in an alternating day hybrid schedule by November, beginning with younger students" (p.4).

In relation to navigating families towards one or other model the following strategies are quoted:

- allowing students or families to opt out of **full-time remote** learning even when planning for full time in school teaching,
- asking parents to choose between either **full-time remote** or full-time **in-person** options before determining each school's schedule. "Schools with less than 75 percent interest in in-person instruction will have five days of classes a week, and schools with more than 75% interest will move to a hybrid option to reduce class size" (p.4),
- offering more than one **fully remote** option, such as (a) students receiving uploaded and live instruction from their school and (b) enrolling students for self-paced online school that employs local teachers but relies on the infrastructure of a state-wide virtual school.

With the **hybrid** model the preference is given to alternating day schedules that accommodates for teacher professional development, for opportunities to sanitize the school or for small group intervention with students who needs extra support. Examples include:

- splitting students into two cohorts, each receiving in-person learning two days a week and remote learning three days a week. This allows for one fully remote day a week with no students in school,
- splitting students into three cohorts that alternate one week in person and two weeks remote,
- splitting students into two cohorts with one week in school and one week remote with one day per week fully remote,

- offering primary students up to five days of in-person teaching, middle schools three to four days and high school students two days.

In addition to differentiating by age, examples of prioritised groups include students with disabilities, English learners or those who fall behind academically. Schools may be asked to monitor and refer more students as the year progresses. The report states that based on the feedback from parents about spring school closures, schools are planning to increase live instruction “to reduce family burden” (p.5).

4. Practical approaches to RT

Below we consider practical approaches to RT, based on a variety of sources including some practical guidance published specifically for Covid-19 and practice adopted by the FMSPW that has provided blended learning at school level in Wales since 2010 (COL, 2020; EEF, 2020; Finkel, 2020; FMSP, 2017; Golding & Bretscher, 2018; Hernández-García *et al.*, 2015; Hodges, 2020; IBO, 2020; IE, 2020; Imlawi *et al.*, 2015; Lyakhova & Joubert, 2019; Müller & Goldenberg, 2020 Sibley, 2020; S4, 2020; Appendix B).

Planning an RT course

According to Hodges *et al.* (2020), training, preparation and development of a fully online course could take nine months or more and at least two or three delivery cycles are needed before teachers become comfortable about a new mode of delivery. Planning, monitoring and reviewing an RT course is best to be done as a team effort. Subject to good planning (IBO, 2020), learning resources or even the whole courses could be shared between educational settings, while releasing more teacher time, school space and other resources to those learners who need it most.

Before planning teachers should have clarity on the following aspects:

- their institution’s policy on safeguarding, privacy and GDPR, recordings and channel of communications,
- infrastructure (what virtual room or recording facility, who supplies equipment and textbooks, is it enough for every learner),
- academic content of the course (what to teach),
- number of hours for synchronous (face-to-face or online) hours (potentially) available,
- high expectations on facilitating learning in between lessons (**asynchronous** mode) which is as important as actual lessons (**synchronous** mode) in RT.

Organisations experienced in remote teaching plan the whole course and often start by designing assessments that will be part of the course. Consider also what *new methodologies* and *new teaching skills* (screen sharing, recording, voice, room control, tools for delivering feedback) need to be acquired and how to achieve it. For example, in relation to managing behaviour for learning in online sessions, teachers need to address questions like “how do I know that students are present (that I am not simply talking to their machines)?” and “how do I know that students are learning?”. The approach will depend on many factors including the technological facility used, so considering how to harness the affordances of technology is important alongside the planning.

Synchronous, asynchronous and blended learning

There is evidence to suggest that **blending learning** as a combination of face-to-face and fully remote learning, may be as effective as classroom learning for many students (Frankel, 2020). But either mode has benefits and shortcomings, and either could support peer collaboration, see Table 4 below. Older learners may cope with, require and benefit from more flexibility, so **asynchronous** activities may work best for this group of students, while young learners may benefit from the structure of **synchronous** sessions.

Table 4. Online learning materials options (adapted and extended from Sibley, 2020).

Options for considerations	Advantages	Challenges
Pre-recorded lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reusable - does not depend on full live attendance - editable - not dependent on a room's recording facility, can be recorded or hosted anywhere - one team member can make video for several people to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - several interactions may be needed to create quality materials that would last - no live interaction, communication or supervision - no feedback for either learners or teacher; content may not generate any learning, but teachers may not know - recording and editing can require paid-for software - can take a lot of drive space -
Live online lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - immediately responsive - offers supervision - allows a view of student responses in real time - creates a feeling of community - may serve for a variety of activities - collaboration may be achieved through chat, Q&A, screen sharing, polling and breakout rooms - opportunity to see one another face-to-face - may be informal, does not need over preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - requires an Internet connection - must have a plan and backup plan - time is needed to familiarise with the room's features - may need another teacher to keep an eye on chat (visible to everyone) and Q&A (visible to teacher only) - managing online behaviour for learning may be challenging - Seeing direct faces may be exhausting, participants may find what feels like a continuous direct eye contact distressing - Some activities only suitable for small groups
Recording live online lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reusable - keeps a record for safeguarding - available for absentees to catch up - learners like to revisit recordings to improve their understanding and when revising before the exam - self- or peer-reviewing recorded lessons for professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not fully reusable, e.g., errors stand - anonymity and data protection issues may be problematic - attendance may be affected - students may not want to be recorded

Showing direct faces when conducting an online lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can create a sense of community - may be necessary for some content - may be necessary for some forms of assessment - may be needed for younger learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - careful consideration needs be given as to what is visible (data protection, safeguarding) - seeing direct faces could be exhausting and distracting - may feel like being closely watched
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In relation to **fully online learning**, a comparison study of two modes of teaching, **asynchronous** and **synchronous**, delivered by schools in China during the six weeks of Covid-19 found that school classes that received live online lessons (**synchronous**) had significantly improved learning outcomes in comparison to the classes where lessons were pre-recorded and sent by email (**asynchronous**) (Yao *et al.*, 2020). The study proposes that teachers should not only transmit knowledge but act as “leaders” and “accompaniers” in RT. At the higher education level, reduced opportunities for one-to-one discussions with students were identified by lecturers as important to compensate for, such as by offering additional and extended student consultations (Watermayer *et al.*, 2020).

Evaluating and authenticating students’ work online

Evaluating and authenticating students’ work online should take a holistic approach. Schools using a **learning management system** (LMS) may consider login time, collaboration data and submission data to evaluate how long and how often students were involved with assignments. Interviewing students about their work on a synchronous chat may help teachers to authenticate student work. Other advice includes

- creating assignments that are collaborative and working directly with groups of students,
- using plagiarism checkers,
- evaluating drafts before final submission (and providing feedback),
- creating libraries and pathfinders for students to use and quote in their assignments,
- creating questions and experiences that require learners to draw on their knowledge and experience,
- having a clear policy on submitting assignments and homework,
- maintain assignments that need to be handwritten and graded (by hand or online) if examinations and tests require students to write. The design of these needs to allow space for teacher feedback (see, e.g., S4, 2020).

Parental involvement and mentor roles

Studies of school children studying online noted that, in addition to the role of the tutor who is remote from the learner, a mentoring role need to be fulfilled (Hernández-García *et al.*, 2015; Imlawi, 2015). Parents are known to assume this role when they provide equipment, monitor students’ homework, make sure that children have time and space to complete online work and help them with the revision schedule. Greater parental involvement may be influenced by parents’ academic skill, availability, or interest (Lyakhova & Joubert, 2019) which may exacerbate equity issues during ERT.

Learner support.

Some students may be better equipped to learn remotely and independently than others, and establishing support for all learners is recommended through creating novel learning situations and supporting learners in developing new learning strategies. In addition to building various sources of formative feedback (automated, teacher and peer) into an RT course, practitioners may consider:

- implementing study skills modules or orientation days,
- establishing a pre-course assessment of academic knowledge but also of learner study skills, see e.g., learner self-regulation scale in Appendix A,
- creating clear expectations about different types of work required from students, such as homework, self-study, '**flipped classroom**' (see below), collaborative projects etc;
- helping students to create and follow a self-study schedule,
- establishing efficient learner access to teachers when working off campus,
- monitoring students' participation in lessons (listening, taking notes, answering/not answering questions, asking/not asking questions, taking part in polls, chat box, Q&A and other activities) and peer collaboration in lessons and between the lessons and arranging regular discussions with learners and families about these,
- informing parents about key events and deadlines in advance.

FMSPW top tips are:

- to create and share a study plan with the students at the start of the course outlining dates and topics of **synchronous** sessions (lessons, revision days, school visits) linked with **asynchronous** materials (pre-requisite materials, assignments and extension questions) for each lesson,
- to link some (but not all) of the assignments to standard examinations,
- to include interchangeable, printed and digital, sources for homework and self-study.

Remote Teaching or Flipped Classroom?

Some teachers may be familiar with a '**flipped classroom**' approach (FC) when students are introduced to new learning materials, such as via a short video, to watch at home. This allows more time for collaborative learning and higher problem solving in class (Oakes *et al.*, 2018). FC is different from BL but either approach could be useful for RT. In FC materials learnt at home prepare students for learning in class (synchronously) while in BL synchronous sessions (online or face-to-face) aim to prepare learners for learning independently.

Transitioning back from ERT

Transitioning back from ERT may also need to be planned as learners may have become accustomed to independent learning, shorter activities, asynchronous assignments, more freedom in their schedule and less face-to-face collaboration. Teachers may feel tired of rapid professional development, may not have had time to evaluate students work and may feel less confident that their remote teaching prepared students for traditional face-to-face assessments and exams.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, RT is challenging and implementing it at school level would be a considerable innovation that needs adequate support. RT requires new approaches to learner scaffolding, assessment and feedback, different structure of a school ‘day’ or ‘week’ for both learners and teachers and further differentiation of teaching. There is no recognised methodological framework for implementing RT at the level of school, and particularly for younger children, and there is limited subject-specific evidence. When hints to successful approaches are available (such as for older students), the “fuzziness” of their definitions and terms is unlikely to allow for clarity on implementation and consequences of RT (Farley, 2020).

When implementing RT, it is recommended to consider the following at the level of school guidance and infrastructure:

- re-emphasising each learner’s entitlement to the curriculum and (a) facilitating access to resources and (b) setting consistently high expectations in relation to the quality of instruction, monitoring attendance, providing feedback and assessment,
- re-examining regulations and policy to allow RT-purposeful teaching innovation,
- strengthening teacher use of technology and assessment through professional development,
- creating the infrastructure to support the innovation.

In relation to the latter, it is recommended to consider if the structure developed for the new curriculum development could be utilised to support ERT and post-ERT teaching. A vertical structure where expert practitioners grouped by subject area could support subject-specific RT teaching approaches, while a horizontal structure where practitioners grouped by education phase (primary, secondary, post-16) could develop age-specific considerations. Linking with RT experts and HEIs’ education researchers may further support the innovation in teaching but also in the initial teacher training.

At the level of educational settings, it is recommended to consider:

- differentiating teaching so that it allows releasing more teacher time, school space and other resources to those learners who need it most. Generally, differentiating in access to in-person teaching is a common strategy deployed by countries moving towards remote teaching part time or full time (IE, 2020),
- facilitating sharing of resources between schools and teachers to allow more efficient use of teacher time for learner scaffolding but also for innovation,
- planned parental involvement and introducing mentoring roles,
- creating mechanisms for soliciting views from children, parents and teachers about what helps children learn remotely.

Teacher support could not be over-emphasised. Little evidence appeared at school level, but surveys of HEIs identified perceived feelings of “deprofessionalisation as pedagogues” among academic teaching communities in addition to feeling under-resourced when working from home (Watermeyer *et al.*, 2020).

In view of the evidence considered in this report, the immediate response when children are back to school should concentrate on mitigating consequences of learning losses, such as efficient assessment and individualised learner support; special attention may need to be paid to

mathematics. There may be issues around integrating NQT teachers in ERT or post-ERT environments.

To build long term resilience it is recommended to consider:

- developing RT courses in the areas where provision is weak or missing so that useful methodology and infrastructure could be developed and applied to more courses when in crisis,
- permanently strengthening independent learning skills as part of learning,
- strengthening channels for research-informed teacher innovation, professional learning and initial teacher training,
- continue investing into digital learning technologies.

Finally, consider if innovation in the curriculum delivery and teacher training that took place during Covid-19 school closures could benefit the ongoing curriculum reform, e.g., what practices may be beneficial to retain and what needs further development.

Appendix A. Learner self-regulation assessment (adapted and extended from Zimmerman & Pons, 1986).

Self-regulation categories	Examples of learner statements indicate that the strategies are self-initiated
Self-evaluation	"I check over my work to make sure I did it right."
Organising and transforming learning materials	"I annotate my notes."
Goal-setting and planning	"First, I start studying two weeks before exams, and I pace myself."
Seeking information from non-social sources	"Before beginning to write the assignment, I go to the library to get as much information as possible concerning the topic."
Keeping records and monitoring	"I took notes of the class discussion."
Environmental structuring	"I isolate myself from anything that distracts me.", "I turned off radio so I can concentrate on what I am doing."
Self-consequences	"If I do well on a test, I treat myself to a movie". "If my grade is not good enough, I will revise further".
Seeking social assistance	"If I have problems with maths assignments, I ask a friend/parent/teacher."
Reviewing records	Efforts to re-read tests, notes or textbooks and/or re-watch video.

Appendix B. Further Mathematics Support Programme Wales.

The Further Mathematics Support Programme Wales (FMSPW) is a Welsh Government funded initiative launched in 2010 with the purpose of widening access to Further Mathematics GCE AS/A2 level in Wales. FMSPW operates around six strands: professional learning, tuition and student support, free teaching resources, enrichment at pre-16, extra curriculum and enrichment at post-16, and research and innovation.

The programme provides tuition to students who cannot access Further Mathematics through their local schools or colleges if other options are not available to the students. FMSPW provision is a blended learning model that uses a combination of live online sessions, interactive resources for self-study and homework and face-to-face sessions (such as orientation days, study days, revision sessions and small group tutorials). FMSPW research into learner experience (Lyakhova & Joubert, 2019) showed the experience of learners is shaped by the technology and extended opportunities of asynchronous learning it offered.

Adobe Connect virtual classroom is used for synchronous online delivery. Teaching material (powerpoint) is uploaded in advance before each session. No personal video from teachers or students is streamed during sessions. Only teachers can share the content, all rooms are protected with passwords and participants are set in advance. In lessons participants observe a whiteboard with the powerpoint, where teachers write and explain tasks. Interactivity and opportunities for formative assessment are afforded by students answering questions via chat box, scribbling answers on screen and using the polling facility. Sessions are recorded for safeguarding purposes (MEI, 2020). Anonymised recordings are shared with all the participants and their schoolteachers. Students find revisiting lesson recordings beneficial and this is featured as one of the most useful elements of studying with the FMSP. *“The best thing is to be able to go back and review the work.”* Students use recordings to make more detailed notes in their own time, and to work on mathematical tasks in more detail. Students may revisit recordings three times or more, i.e., after the lesson when working on homework, for a quick re-cap before the next session and when revising for the exam.

In addition to extending their mathematics knowledge and skills, FMSP students perceive developed independent learning skills an important benefit of the FMSP course. For example, a student graduated in 2020 wrote that the course *“developed not only my mathematical ability but critical thinking and problem solving skills which will be extremely useful to me in the future regardless of whether my career is maths based or not”*.

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Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Ein cyf/ MA-KW-2320-20

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

3 September 2020

Dear Lynne

I am writing to you to provide an update on our reforms to transform the existing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system into the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system. As you are aware the ALN system will focus on ensuring that all children and young people who require additional support to meet their needs have that support planned for and protected. The reforms will place the learner and their parents or carers at the heart of the process. This will help to ensure that all learners with additional learning needs reach their full potential.

The last few months have been an extremely difficult time for all of us due to the pressures and disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the implementation of the ALN Act remains a personal and government priority. My officials continue to work on revising the draft ALN code and operational regulations and it is my intention to lay these before the Senedd in February 2021.

Timelines for the commencement of the roll out of the new ALN system remain unchanged and the statutory posts (Additional Learning Needs Coordinators, Designated Education Clinical Lead Officers, and Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officers) are still planned to commence in January 2021, with the rest of the new system commencing on a phased basis from September 2021.

To accompany the commencement of the statutory roles, I intend to lay regulations on the ALN Co-ordinator role and publish guidance on all three statutory roles under the new ALN system. The guidance will include text from aspects of the revised Code related to these roles and will clarify their responsibilities. Both the guidance and regulations will be informed by the responses to the previous consultation on the draft ALN Code and the ALNCo role regulations. Furthermore to support the implementation of the Act from September 2021, information will also be provided around the implementation and transitional arrangements.

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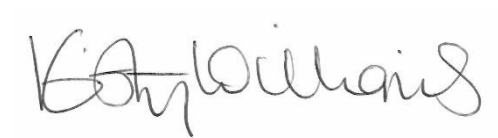
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support during these extremely challenging times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg

Minister for Education

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: 20 August 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Scrutiny of the awarding of 2020 examination results**

Dear Kirsty,

On 18 August you attended Committee to discuss the awarding of 2020 examination results. I would like to put on record our thanks to you, your officials, and representatives of the WJEC and Qualifications Wales for contributing to the important scrutiny we are undertaking on this matter.

It is clear that the awarding of 2020 examination results has created a very stressful and concerning situation for thousands of young people across Wales. The volume of correspondence we have received as Members and as a Committee, as well as the public outcry in relation to this issue, demonstrates the significant distress experienced by young people, their parents and carers, and education staff alike as a consequence of the arrangements adopted to award exam results in 2020. We recognise the unprecedented challenges of developing an approach to exams during a global pandemic. However, the impact the approach has had on young people's well-being and the public's confidence in the system that awards qualifications to them, is a matter of deep concern and regret to us, especially in light of the wider collateral damage caused to children and young people by this pandemic.

We welcome your direct and unreserved apology to all those affected by recent events. While striking a balance between maintaining standards and fairness is complex, the impact of the shortcomings in the process that was adopted in light of the disruption to exams caused by COVID-19 has become clear and must be avoided in future.

As a Committee, it is our view that the priority must now be to ensure those young people worst affected by this system are supported and able to move forward with the next steps in the career or learning paths they have chosen. Longer term, we need to know what the Welsh Government and relevant public bodies are doing to make sure this does not happen again, and that the risk of any unintended consequences arising from recent decisions is mitigated. As future lockdowns remain a possibility, we must learn from this year's experiences to avoid any repetition of the distress caused to some children and young people, parents and carers, and education staff and institutions.

We are reassured by your commitment as Minister to an independent review of the events following the cancellation of exams this year, and welcome your willingness to consider our views on that work. We will take an active role in monitoring its progress and findings, and we will keep



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a close eye on ensuring that lessons from this period are learned for future years. It is important to us that the interests of past and future cohorts of young people – as well as those who sat exams this year – are taken into account.

In the meantime, we will be continuing our work to represent and support children and young people in Wales through what has been one of the most challenging times of their lives. The ongoing situation in relation to university admissions is one we will monitor closely. We are particularly concerned regarding places on medical courses where we understand that there are now more applicants who have met their conditions than places and funding available for 2020/21 entry. We are also concerned about the situation with regards to higher cost and expensive subjects in general - these courses attract additional HEFCW funding and there is a real risk course quality could suffer if additional funding is not provided in proportion to an increased student intake. **We would welcome an urgent update on university medical places, and updates from you on any other significant developments in regards to the university admissions matters outlined above.**

Furthermore, since our meeting on 18 August, further disruption has occurred in relation to Pearson BTEC results which will now be re-issued, with Level 1 and 2 results consequently delayed and already-issued Level 3 results now subject to revision. We are extremely concerned that this last-minute decision by Pearson will mean further disruption and distress for learners who have university offers based on BTEC Level 3 qualifications, and has potential to disadvantage them in securing their place in higher education. We are also concerned about what this might mean for other vocational qualifications. **We would welcome an urgent update on the arrangements for the awarding of vocational qualifications across all awarding bodies who offer significant numbers of vocational qualifications in Wales; an indication of when you expect BTEC results to be issued for Level 1 and 2, and re-issued for Level 3; and an indication of whether other awarding bodies plan to re-grade their qualifications.**

Subject to your announcement next week relating to the independent review, **we would welcome an urgent update on the steps you will take to provide clarity about any remaining action relating to the awarding of qualifications in 2020 and preparations for 2021.**

We would also welcome more information on the points listed in the annex to this letter as soon as possible.

Kind regards,



Lynne Neagle MS
Chair

Cc Qualifications Wales David Jones (Chair), Philip Blaker (Chief Executive) and Jo Richards (Regulation Director) **WJEC** Ian Morgan (Chief Executive) and Elaine Carlile (Director of Qualifications, Assessment and Responsible Officer)

ANNEX – Further information requested in light of the evidence provided by the WJEC, Qualifications Wales and the Welsh Government on 18 August 2020

The Committee would welcome the following:

- A **timeline of events** since the cancellation of exams was announced, to include:
 - the meetings undertaken between the Welsh Government and the WJEC, the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales, and the Welsh Government, the WJEC and Qualifications Wales. Please could the timeline specify if these meetings involved officials only and/or the Minister;
 - dates on which details of – and advice about – A-level results were provided to the Minister for Education;
 - dates on which there was communication between the Welsh Government (Minister and/or officials) and other devolved administrations relating to the awarding of examination results.

NB We are grateful to the Minister for her commitment in our meeting on 18 August to provide a timeline of the meetings she held personally with Qualifications Wales during this period.

- Further information about the **Qualifications Wales Sponsorship Unit within the Welsh Government**, including:
 - details of its remit;
 - details of its membership;
 - confirmation of when it became aware that the standardisation process had resulted in 42% of A-level results being downgraded or any earlier estimates;
 - confirmation of whether this information was passed on and, if so, to whom and when.
- A commitment from the Welsh Government to provide the Committee with **regular updates** on the steps taken to establish the independent review, and to ensure that updates on its progress thereafter are also provided to us.
- An assessment of the **impact on specific groups of pupils** (eFSM, BAME, ALN etc), of the proposed standardised grades and the awarded Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) respectively. In addition, an assessment of how the differential between proposed standardised grades and the awarded CAGs has affected individual centres and particular types of centre.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

Eich cyf/Your ref 200820-CYPE
Ein cyf/Our ref HED/KW/0026/20

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

7 September 2020

Dear Lynne,

Scrutiny of the Awarding of 2020 examination results

Thank you for your letter of 20 August following my appearance at Committee on the 18th. I trust that this reply provides the clarification that you have requested.

We would welcome an urgent update on university medical places, and updates from you on any other significant developments in regards to the university admissions matters outlined above.

I recently established an HE Admissions Task and Finish Group, which I chair, to identify any impact on HEIs and students from the recent awarding of A Levels and other qualifications.

The group brings together representatives from the NUS, staff unions, Vice Chancellors, UCAS, Universities Wales, HEFCW and Government health and education officials.

We have met three times in the last two weeks, with medical school admissions being an agenda item for each meeting. Working with my colleague the Minister for Health and Social Services, we have agreed to fund an increase of 25 in the undergraduate medical intake at Cardiff Medical School for the 2020-21 cohort with a further 12 deferring to 2021-22.

On the wider issue of university admissions, as of 3 September Welsh higher education institutions had 22,960 placed applicants, 2% more than in 2019, and 18,520 Welsh domiciled applicants have been placed to higher education institutions in the UK, 1% more than in 2019.

We have seen an increased number of applicants placed at their firm choice, and fewer placed at their insurance choices. There are now fewer 18 year old Welsh domiciled applicants holding a yet-to-be resolved offer than at the same time in the admissions cycle last year.

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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.

We will continue to work with HEFCW, Universities Wales, UCAS and others to monitor the situation and its impact on the sector and on students.

We would welcome an urgent update on the arrangements for the awarding of vocational qualifications across all awarding bodies who offer significant numbers of vocational qualifications in Wales; an indication of when you expect BTEC results to be issued for Level 1 and 2, and re-issued for Level 3; and an indication of whether other awarding bodies plan to re-grade their qualifications.

On 19 August Pearson announced that it had decided to re-grade BTECs to fully reflect Centre Assessment Grades. The rationale for this was that whilst BTEC qualification results had been generally consistent with teacher and learner expectations, Pearson had become concerned about potential unfairness for vocational results in relation to the higher outcomes for GCSE and A Levels.

As you will be aware, Pearson's vocational qualifications are delivered UK-wide. They are designated for delivery to learners in Wales, but Ofqual approves the design and assessment arrangements for these qualifications, reflecting the fact that the vast majority of delivery is in England.

Although Centre Assessment Grades for internal (i.e. coursework) units were accepted, the grades for the examined units had been calculated using historical performance with a view of maintaining overall outcomes over time. Pearson's review has removed these calculated grades and applied consistency across teacher assessed internal grades and examined grades that students were unable to sit.

Pearson worked with schools and colleges to reissue these grades with all qualifications being re-graded by 28 August at the latest. The regrading exercise covered Level 1/2 and Level 2 qualifications as well as Level 3.

Other awarding bodies operating in Wales that used the statistical standardisation model, instead of adapted qualifications, have also re-graded their vocational qualifications in line with the approach for A levels. This includes, for example, WJEC and AQA.

I understand awarding bodies' wish to ensure fair outcomes for BTEC students in relation to A Levels and GCSEs to ensure that no BTEC student is disadvantaged. This aligns with Welsh Government policy to ensure that learners studying vocational qualifications are not disadvantaged compared to their peers studying A levels, including in relation to progressing to higher education. Once again, I would like to apologise for the anxiety caused by recent events.

During summer 2020, we also provided guidance enabling further education institutions to reopen, so that vocational learners who needed to complete "license to practice" assessments were able to do so.

Subject to your announcement next week relating to the independent review, we would welcome an urgent update on the steps you will take to provide clarity about any remaining action relating to the awarding of qualifications in 2020 and preparations for 2021.

The key actions remaining in relation to 2020 are the publication of additional analysis which I have detailed later in this response, and the resolution of appeals.

In relation to appeals received by WJEC, the regulator Qualifications Wales is carefully monitoring this process to ensure they are expedited as quickly as possible. Further analysis will also be published in relation to appeals received for the summer 2020 series.

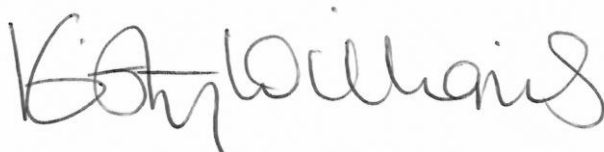
In terms of considerations for 2021, I have been clear that I believe it is in the best interests of learners to take their exams next summer but that there should be some adaptations to take into account the disruption to teaching and learning, as well as social distancing considerations. Qualifications Wales established an extraordinary regulatory framework in July that allows WJEC to make adaptations to general qualifications in summer 2021.

On 1 September, WJEC published the adaptations that will be made to general qualifications in summer 2021, following considerations on a subject specific basis and engagement with practitioners. These adaptations were provided to schools and colleges over the summer to facilitate their planning for the autumn term but have now been made publically available to help provide reassurance to learners and their families. I have enclosed a link to these documents for you: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/summer-2021-adaptations/>

As we continue to operate in an uncertain public health environment, whilst we plan to proceed with examinations as normal in 2021, as a responsible Government, it is only right that we also develop contingency arrangements in case of further disruption.

Therefore I have also asked Qualifications Wales and WJEC to develop contingency arrangements in relation to exams, drawing on our experience and learning from this year. Lessons learned and proposals for 2021 will also be a key focus of the independent review which I announced on 28 August, its chair, Louise Casella, will report initial findings next month.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education

ANNEX – Further information requested in light of the evidence provided by the WJEC, Qualifications Wales and the Welsh Government on 18 August 2020

The Committee would welcome the following:

- **A timeline of events since the cancellation of exams was announced, to include:** ▪ the meetings undertaken between the Welsh Government and the WJEC, the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales, and the Welsh Government, the WJEC and Qualifications Wales. Please could the timeline specify if these meetings involved officials only and/or the Minister;
- **dates on which details of – and advice about – A-level results were provided to the Minister for Education;**
- **dates on which there was communication between the Welsh Government (Minister and/or officials) and other devolved administrations relating to the awarding of examination results.**

The requested information is provided at Annex A to this letter.

NB We are grateful to the Minister for her commitment in our meeting on 18 August to provide a timeline of the meetings she held personally with Qualifications Wales during this period.

- **Further information about the Qualifications Wales Sponsorship Unit within the Welsh Government, including:** ▪ details of its remit;
- details of its membership;
- **confirmation of when it became aware that the standardisation process had resulted in 42% of A-level results being downgraded or any earlier estimates;**
- **confirmation of whether this information was passed on and, if so, to whom and when.**

The Qualifications Wales Sponsorship Unit comprises of three Welsh Government officials at Grade 7, MB1 and MB3 level. The unit reports into a Grade 6 official who provides oversight of the team's work alongside responsibilities for two other teams. The Grade 6 reports to the Deputy Director for Curriculum and Assessment.

The remit of the Sponsorship Unit is to provide the administrative, monitoring and accountability functions to ensure the effective and appropriate interface between the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales as a sponsored body. These functions are provided in line with the advice and requirements for sponsored bodies in Wales. Key responsibilities include financial management, public appointments, issuing of remit letter, accountability arrangements including attendance at Board meetings and holding sponsorship morning meetings and managing the effective interface between Welsh Government policy team and Qualifications Wales to ensure alignment of policy and delivery.

On 28 July an Information Sharing Group meeting was held between Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government officials providing an update on the awarding process and the role of standardisation. A further meeting was held on 3 August at which officials were advised by Qualifications Wales that due to inconsistencies across centres and to prevent grade inflation that the centre assessment grades after standardisation may result in:

- a small percentage of learners receiving a grade higher than their centre assessment grade;

- a majority of learners receiving a grade the same as their centre assessment grade;
- the remainder receiving a grade lower than their centre assessment grade. A small percentage of calculated grades would be two or more grades lower than the centre assessment grade.

A further meeting was held late afternoon on 11 August between Welsh Government officials and Qualifications Wales. This meeting discussed a results overview including the numbers of grades that were being standardised below the centre assessment grade and the detailed equality analysis. This information was reported to the Minister and senior Welsh Government officials during a number of meetings held on 12 August, as part of the normal pre-results briefing that is held on an embargoed basis ahead of the publication of exam results.

• A commitment from the Welsh Government to provide the Committee with regular updates on the steps taken to establish the independent review, and to ensure that updates on its progress thereafter are also provided to us.

On 28 August, I issued a written statement on my appointment of Louise Casella, Director of the Open University in Wales, as Chair. The review will examine the arrangements which were developed and put in place for this summer's awarding of grades, and will draw lessons from events this year specifically to provide recommendations for approaches in preparation for 2021.

Given the risk of further disruption that may be caused by Covid-19 in the 2020/21 school year, I believe that it is essential to act quickly and have early findings to inform planning and to put contingency arrangements in place for next summer. I have therefore asked that the review provides me with an interim report on key issues by the end of October. The final report and recommendations will follow by mid-December. The review will provide reassurance to stakeholders, including learners, parents, carers, teachers, and education bodies, that this year's arrangements have been scrutinised and that measures are being put in place for 2021. I would welcome the Committee's views and input as the review progresses and will ensure that you are kept updated.

• An assessment of the impact on specific groups of pupils (eFSM, BAME, ALN etc), of the proposed standardised grades and the awarded Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) respectively. In addition, an assessment of how the differential between proposed standardised grades and the awarded CAGs has affected individual centres and particular types of centre.

Qualifications Wales has recently published a statement on its plans for further analysis of this summer's results and I have provided a link to this below:

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/results-2020/qualifications-wales-statements/statement-on-plans-for-further-statistical-releases/>

Qualifications Wales is currently working towards publishing an update to its results overview and this is expected to be published in the next week. This will provide more accurate estimates of final results this summer for A levels, AS, GCSEs and the Skills Challenge certificate as well as comparisons to results in previous years and the proposed standardised grades. Qualifications Wales will also update the information on attainment gaps and expand it to include an analysis of results for learners with a special educational needs status and further information on results by ethnicity.

There are additional plans to produce and publish the following analysis:

- Analysis of results, centre assessment grades and proposed standardised grades with regional and local authority breakdowns.

- An enhanced version of the [centre variation](#) statistics publication that were produced in summer 2019, with a view to including information by centre type.
- A document that draws together equalities impact analysis with some more detailed analysis.

Summer 2020 Exam Cancellation Timeline

Date	Event
4 March	Call with Michelle Donelan, Minister of State for Universities
6 March	Weekly Catch Up on Exam Contingency Arrangements – Qualifications Wales and WG Sponsorship Unit officials
12 March	Fortnightly meeting between Education officials from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
16 March	Meeting with Qualifications Wales to discuss Qualified for the Future
17 March	Call with Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education
18 March	Meeting with WJEC & Qualifications Wales to discuss options and contingency arrangements for the summer 2020 exam series
	Formal advice on exam cancellation for summer 2020 and options for calculating grades.
	Statement cancelling exams for summer 2020 and announcing alternative arrangements to award grades
	Call with Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education
19 March	Attendance at Children, Young People and Education Committee
20 March	Announcement bringing Easter holiday forward and closure of schools for most learners
	Formal advice on not using outcomes from the summer exam series to calculate performance measures, nor including them in data packs, or publishing on My Local School.
24 March	Education Ministers Four Nation call
24 March	UK Government Ministerial Information Group
26 March	Meeting with WJEC & Qualifications Wales to discuss options on awarding grades to learners in Years 10 and 12
	Formal Advice on arrangements for awarding grades to learners in Years 10 and 12
	Letter to the Secretary of State for Education about maintaining normal results day and not bring results forward
	Qualifications Wales Board Meeting – WG officials attend as observer
27 March	Announcement of approach for learners in Years 10 and 12
	Letter to Higher Education Institutions Regarding Implications of COVID-19
	Quarterly Management Meeting – Sponsorship meeting with Qualifications Wales and Senior Officials

1 April	UK Government Ministerial Information Group
2 April	Formal Advice on Issuing a Direction to Qualifications Wales regarding the cancellation of the summer exams and the calculation of grades
3 April	Qualifications Wales issues guidance to exam centres on the calculation of Centre Assessment Grades Four Country Meeting – regulators and Education Department officials from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England
6 April	Direction formally issued to Qualifications Wales regarding the Welsh Ministers' policy on cancellation of the summer 2020 exams and arrangements for awarding grades
7 April	UK Government Ministerial Information Group
8 April	Education Ministers Four Nation call
14 April	Meeting with Qualifications Wales to discuss arrangements for Vocational Qualifications
16 April	Formal advice on maintaining the pre-planned results days Statement on the dates of results days UK Government Ministerial Information Group
17 April	Call with Michelle Donelan, Minister of State for Universities
22 April	Education Ministers Four Nation call
24 April	Formal advice on issuing a Direction to Qualifications Wales regarding arrangements for vocational qualifications
28 April	Publication of Qualifications Wales consultation on arrangements for calculating grades
28 April	Attendance at Children, Young People and Education Committee
30 April	UK Government Ministerial Information Group Welsh Government Director of Education and Chief Executive of Qualification Wales Bilateral
1 May	UK Government Ministerial Information Group
5 May	Call with Richard Lochhead, Scottish Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science
6 May	Education Ministers Four Nation call
7 May	Vocational Qualifications Meeting – Qualifications Wales and policy officials
11 May	Call with Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education

13 May	Qualifications Wales Board Meeting – WG Officials attend as an observer
14 May	Qualifications Wales Board Meeting – WG Officials attend as an observer
19 May	Education Ministers Four Nation call
28 May	Education Ministers Four Nation call
29 May	Qualifications Wales pre-notification of decision regarding appeals process following consultation
1 June	Call with Michelle Donelan, Minister of State for Universities
3 June	Education Ministers Four Nation call
	Welsh Government Director of Education and Chair of Qualifications Wales Board Bilateral
12 June	Formal advice on consulting on the relaxation of school reporting requirements
	Qualifications Wales and WG officials meeting – planning for 2020-21
16 June	Qualifications Wales Extraordinary Board Meeting – WG officials attends as observer
17 June	Education Ministers Four Nation call
18 June	Formal advice on sharing Welsh Government Key stage three teacher assessment and nation test data to support the development of standardisation models
22 June	Meeting with Qualifications Wales regarding initial considerations for exams in 2021
25 June	Quarterly Management Meeting – Sponsorship meeting with Qualifications Wales and Senior Officials
26 June	Formal advice on the continued suspension of KS4 performance measures to 2020/21, continued collection of GCSE and A Level awards data and production of a national level Official Statistics publication
30 June	Call between three devolved Education Ministers
	Qualifications Wales Extraordinary Board Meeting – WG official attends as observer
1 July	Education Ministers Four Nation call
3 July	Letter to Qualifications Wales regarding the approach to be taken for exams in 2021
	Statement announcing changes to the publication of qualification awards data due to COVID-19

	Weekly Results Planning and Communications Meeting Between WG, WJEC and Qualification Wales – held weekly until the end of August
6 July	Qualifications Wales and WG officials
7 July	Attendance at Children, Young People and Education Committee
	Qualifications Wales Extraordinary Board Meeting – apologies given and no WG official attended to observe
9 July	Qualifications Wales and WG officials – Qualified for the Future Next steps
	Covid-19 resilience Planning – A Levels task & Finish Group – WG, QW & WJEC officials attend as part of wider key representation
10 July	Formal advice on making the Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020
15 July	Children, Young People and Education Committee debate - The impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on children and young people in Wales
16 July	Education Ministers Four Nation call
	Call with Michelle Donelan, Minister of State for Universities
	Qualifications Wales Board Meeting – WG Officials attend as an observer
17 July	Welsh Government Director of Education and Chief Executive of Qualification Wales Bilateral
21 July	Qualifications Wales Extraordinary Board Meeting – WG official attends as observer
22 July	Covid-19 resilience Planning – A Levels task & Finish Group – WG, QW & WJEC officials attend as part of wider key representation
28 July	WLGA & Local Authority Directors of Education, Minister for Education, Qualifications Wales and WJEC
	Information Sharing Group – QW and WG officials meeting to discuss preparing for results
3 August	Information Sharing Group – sub-group results preparation – QW and WG officials
7 August	The Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 came into force
10 August	Information Sharing Group – sub-group results preparation – QW and WG officials
	Meeting with Qualifications Wales
11 August	Meeting with officials regarding Scottish Government announcement
	Call with Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education

	Information Sharing Group – sub-group results preparation – QW and WG officials
12 August	Meeting with Qualifications Wales
	Follow up meeting with Qualifications Wales
	Results pre-briefing with Qualifications Wales
	Discussion with DFE Officials
	Formal advice on ensuring that appeals made to the WJEC are free
	Call with Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education
14 August	10am Meeting with Qualifications Wales
	4pm Meeting with Qualifications Wales
	5pm Meeting with Qualifications Wales
	Formal advice on revised arrangements for AS & A level including the introduction of AS floor and broadening of appeals rights
	Issuing of addendum to the Direction to Qualifications Wales regarding AS & A level and broadened appeals process
15 August	Meeting with Qualifications Wales and WJEC
16 August	Meeting with Qualifications Wales and WJEC
	Formal advice about options for GCSEs, as well as the implication of moving to Centre Assessment Grades
17 August	Statement on the Announcement of move to Centre Assessment Grades for GCSEs, AS, A level and Skills Challenge Certificate
18 August	Issuing of revised Direction to Qualifications Wales about Awarding Grades on the Basis of Centre Assessment Grades
19 August	Meeting with Qualifications Wales – Pre-briefing on GCSE Results

Please note the meetings highlighted in blue are those attended by officials only. There are two meetings which have been held on a weekly basis and for brevity only the first occurrence of these has been included within the table, these are Weekly Catch Up on Exam Contingency Arrangements – the first of which was held on 6 March and Weekly Results Planning and Communications Meeting - the first of which was held on 3 July. There has also been two meetings held on a fortnightly basis and again for brevity only the first occurrence of these has been included within the table. These are fortnightly meeting between Education department officials from Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales and again only the first

meeting has been included within the table the first of which was held on 12 March and the Four Country meetings between Regulators and Education Department officials, the first of which was held on 3 April.