

## Welsh Government: Consultation Document

### Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum

Response by Vaughan Salisbury

Education Representative for The Free Church Council of Wales

Education Officer for the Presbyterian Church of Wales

#### Questions and Answers:

1. Do you agree with our approach to legislating for the new curriculum structure? (Page 24 – PDF file)

Yes.

2. Do you agree we should impose a duty on schools and Funded Nursery Settings to provide a curriculum to help most learners to reach, or go beyond the Achievement Outcomes set by the school and to progress children along the continuum for the Progression Steps in accordance with their educational development? (Page 24)

Yes.

We accept what is noted in **point 3.22**, namely that the references to promoting the spiritual, moral, development of pupils have been replaced by the Four Purposes of the new curriculum. We therefore welcome the inclusion of spiritual and moral elements as one of the key features namely 'All our children and young people will be healthy, confident individuals who: have secure values and are establishing their spiritual and ethical beliefs'. We look forward to seeing how this will be incorporated in practice when the detailed content of the new curriculum is published for consultation in the April 2019 document.

Also **Point 3.23**. Two comments:

- a) The third bullet point. In the Welsh language document it reads 'Dinasyddion egwyddorol' (principled citizens) while the English language document reads 'Ethical, ...citizens'. The English wording is more robust and therefore we suggest that the Welsh language version be changed to 'Dinasyddion moesol' (ethical ..citizens);
- b) Again, the third bullet point. Given the current challenges facing the world and that there is a 'Wales and the world' perspective here, we believe it would be proper and appropriate to include 'spiritual' at the beginning of this statement. We therefore suggest 'Spiritual, ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;..'

4. What support would be required to enable schools to take those actions?  
(Page 24)

One source of support would be to appoint full-time advisers who have subject specialism and who could give support to teachers at the local level. (see also our comment in answer to question 9 point 3.68). A clearly perceived weakness of the current system in the implementation of the new curriculum is the lack of full-time subject specialist advisors at Local Authority level.

6. Do you agree with making age and developmentally appropriate RSE compulsory for 3-16 years? (Page 29)

Yes

7. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the guidance making power so that it is designed to secure that RSE is provided in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate to the children receiving it? (Page 29)

Yes

8. Do you agree with our proposals to make RSE optional for learners in sixth forms? (Page 29)

No, we do not agree with this proposal and believe that RSE would continue to be worthwhile for learners in sixth forms.

9. Do you agree with the proposed approach to RE? (Page 32)

We accept and welcome the proposed approach to RE as noted in the following points: 3.65, 3.67, 3.68 (line 5 '(SACREs)' this should be WASACREs), 3.69, 3.70, 3.71 a 3.72.

**Point 3.66:**

The Education Act 1996, Section 375 (3) states 'Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

As it is the intention of Welsh Government to amend current legislation (see above) to 'take account of non-religious world views', we would appreciate the opportunity to scrutinise the wording of the new legislation when it becomes available.

We also raise the following questions:

Firstly, the statement '..takes account of non-religious'. What exactly does 'take account of' mean here? Is it expected that the teaching of these views

takes place at every Progression Step? If humanism will be taught, then given the philosophical nature of this viewpoint, we suggest that it be only taught for the 11-16 age range. Further, how much time/hours should be given to the teaching of this viewpoint? Given that Christianity will be given the largest number of teaching hours, we are of the opinion that no more time should be given to the teaching of humanism than that given to the teaching of any one of the other principal religions that are taught in a local authority's agreed syllabus.

Secondly, the issue of 'non-religious world views...(e.g. humanism)'. This is too open ended. How many non-religious views will teachers be expected to teach? Humanism is noted here as an example but are others in mind, e.g. Chinese Marxism or Modern Stoicism etc? If it is expected that more than one of these viewpoints will be taught, there will be considerable implications to the delivery of the Religious Education syllabus, that is, it will become overcrowded and the quality of the teaching and learning will suffer. In consideration of the above issues, we are of the opinion that only 'humanism' should be taught as the non-religious world view in the Religious Education curriculum.

Thirdly, who is to decide on these matters? Is this a legislative matter, or will this matter be presented in the new curriculum and assessment document (April 2019), or will it be expected that local authority SACREs decide? We are of the opinion that it would be better to have clear guidance on this matter from Welsh Government to ensure clarity and a consistent curriculum approach rather than expecting SACREs to decide on these matters.

There is an inconsistency in the Welsh language version regarding the translation of 'non-religious' as 'anghrefyddol' (irreligious) and 'nad ydynt yn grefyddol' (that are not religious). Given the educational context and for the sake of consistency we are of the opinion that 'nad ydynt yn grefyddol' should be adopted as the Welsh term for 'non-religious'.

**Point 3.68:**

The intention of having a 'supporting framework' is important and very worthwhile but who will ensure that it will be delivered and monitored to the highest possible standard in schools? It is of particular concern to us that only 2 of the 22 local authorities in Wales currently have a full-time specialist Religious Education adviser to lead on these issues. We are of the opinion that the Welsh Government should provide sufficient funding to ensure that this new exciting curriculum is presented to the highest standard, that teachers are given the necessary training and that the scheme is monitored and supported in a robust manner by the appointment of full-time specialist Religious Education advisers in the local authorities.

10. Do you agree with our proposals to make RE optional for learners in sixth forms? (Page 32)

**Point 3.73:**

No, we do not agree with this proposal. No reason is presented in the paragraph for the need to make Religious Education optional for these learners and we are of the opinion that the present arrangement should continue, namely that all sixth form learners must study Religious Education. Indeed, we are of the opinion that it would be very worthwhile for sixth form students to engage in the study of religious/moral issues.

11. Should the right to withdraw from RE and RSE be retained? (Page 33)

Our comments here relate only to Religious Education.

**Point 3.74:**

We are of the opinion that the right to withdraw from Religious Education should not be retained. There was justification for introducing this as a conscience clause in the 1870 Act when nonconformist parents were allowed to withdraw their children from Anglican teaching and worship in Anglican schools. Today, in the twenty first century, Religious *Education* is viewed in maintained schools as an *educational* subject like all other subjects on the school curriculum, i.e. it should be taught from an *educational* perspective and in a thoroughly professional manner. For these reasons and considering the world we live in today, we are of the opinion that it is very important that **every** pupil has the opportunity to study Religious Education in our schools and develop to become confident, ambitious and informed learners.

13. If the right to withdraw is removed, what alternative, if any, should be in its place? (Page 33)

We are of the opinion that the right to withdraw be removed and that no alternative should be offered in its place. Ensuring Religious Education teaching to the highest possible standard is what is required and nothing less.

22. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them. (Page 53)

We welcome the fact that this consultation document takes account of ITE reforms and that 'ITE Partnerships should be clear about the activity included in their programmes for the development of student teachers to teach the new curriculum'.