

This is written as supporting evidence for the consultation by the National Assembly for Wales, entitled: *Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS)*.

The Catholic Education Service ('CES') is the education agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (Bishops' Conference). The Bishops' Conference is the permanent assembly of all the Catholic Bishops in England and Wales and the CES, as the education agency of the Bishops' Conference, is charged with promoting and securing education on behalf of the Bishops. Catholic schools make up 10% of the national (England and Wales) total of maintained schools and over 800,000 pupils are educated in Catholic schools.

The Catholic Education Service supports the inquiry by the Children, Young People and Education Committee into the range of EOTAS provision including Pupil Referral Units. Every child has the right to be supported, even if outside a formal school setting, and EOTAS provision is essential to preserve that right for what are often the most vulnerable children in society.

As part of this consultation, we have liaised directly with Welsh Catholic dioceses to canvass opinion. We would also like to relay the verbatim points raised by classroom practitioners and senior figures in Catholic education across Wales:

- *The best practice occurred where there was proper accountability and responsibility for each learner. Too often, once pupils had been referred by a school, they could become 'lost' in the system. Referring schools need to work with providers to closely monitor both the quality and outcomes of provision and the attendance, engagement and progress of learners. Where possible learners should continue to feel part of their school community.*
- *The curriculum needs to be suitable for the needs of each learner*
- *High expectations are crucial – young people respond to people who believe in them.*
- *Quality vocational opportunities helped to motivate and engage pupils – there needs to be encouragement and support for industry to engage with this provision*
- *Funding is crucial – In the past, the continuity and quality of provision has been negatively impacted by a lack of certainty about long term funding or the use of annually renewed grant funding which inhibits planning and the building of meaningful partnerships and quality provision.*
- *There needs to be agreement about suitable qualifications and expected outcomes and how they can be linked in a meaningful way to quality vocational experiences especially with respect to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy*

- *There must be appointment of suitably qualified and trained staff with the skills to provide quality teaching, support and guidance.*
- *Learners need a suitable well equipped and easily accessible learning base and environment.*
- *The provision of transport helped to ensure high levels of attendance and achievement*
- *Sometimes groups of schools working closely together in local clusters with the LA can provide local centres of excellence with school leaders/governors from each school on a board which has oversight of planning provision and quality.*
- *For several years [I] was Chair of the Carmarthenshire Vocational cluster where the 5 Secondary schools worked closely with Coleg Sir Gar (Carmarthenshire College) to establish a vocational village including a vocational centre providing high quality cost effective vocational experiences for 900 pupils. We also engaged with local EOTAS providers. There was a joint leadership, governance and inspection arrangement which facilitated the sharing of resources and oversight of provision and standards. I think this kind of partnership working involving the provision of a mix of approaches can be successful in motivating pupils to keep them engaged in school and contributing to quality EOTAS provision.*

Whilst this feedback is quite varied, we hope it helps you to clarify the different views on this issue and the importance of clear channels of accountability to ensure high standards in education otherwise than at school.

We would welcome further discussions about this issue if they would be constructive to your call-for-evidence.

Yours faithfully,