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Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair, Children and Young People's Committee
National Assembly for Wales

30 August 2019

Dear Lynne

Developing the new Curriculum for Wales

I would like to thank the Children, Young People and Education Committee for the opportunity to update the Committee on the new Curriculum for Wales.

Since my last evidence session with the Committee, three significant milestones have been met – (i) publication of the White Paper on the proposed legislative framework; (ii) publication of the draft Curriculum and Assessment arrangements for feedback, continuing co-construction in the widest possible sense; and (iii) publication of the draft proposals for evaluation and improvement.

I must give credit to the Pioneer Schools and the vast number of educational experts who have contributed so much to get us to this position. The responses to the feedback have signalled we are well on our way to delivering a curriculum that will allow practitioners and professionals to meet our ambitions for learners in Wales.

An update is provided below, which responds in detail, where we are able to do so, on the matters you have raised in your letter.

Curriculum 2022 – feedback exercise

The development of the new curriculum arrangements is moving at pace. In April we published the Curriculum for Wales 2022. This phase of co-construction invited feedback from practitioners and a wide range of stakeholders to inform the refinement stage of the draft curriculum guidance.

The window for formal feedback closed on 19 July and the responses have been independently evaluated. The Welsh Government received 1,680 contributions online and via email from a diverse range of individuals and organisations. Of these, a significant

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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.

proportion were received from practitioners, teachers, senior leaders and governors. Another 116 responses were received in response to the Children and Young People's Survey.

In addition to the publication of the draft curriculum materials, the regional consortia, with Welsh Government support, held engagement events for schools including headteachers, practitioners and governors to help them fully engage with the process. 25 focus groups with children and young people also took place to encourage learners to participate and respond to the consultation. There were also specific events with a focus on equality, diversity as well as a business breakfast.

Overall, respondents are broadly supportive of the proposals for the new Curriculum for Wales. Many respondents, including teachers, welcomed many aspects, such as the emphasis on the four purposes, the greater agency offered to teachers within the curriculum, and the greater role of formative assessment. There were also many suggestions for ways in which the draft guidance could be improved. In very broad terms, the feedback can be grouped into two main themes:

- The guidance should be simplified, including the language and concepts used to communicate aspects of the curriculum, and the structure and presentation.
- The guidance would benefit from greater depth and detail in certain places to help practitioners and teachers understand how to implement the curriculum in practice.

In addition to seeking feedback via Hwb, we have also considered feedback through the following lines of inquiry:

- Innovation schools
- Quality Improvement (QI) inquiry process
- Early years review

The detailed nature of many of the responses, particularly those from practitioners, special interest groups and public sector organisations provides useful feedback and challenge for the refinement process. The guidance will benefit significantly from the feedback and the opportunity to look at the curriculum as a whole, not just each individual component separately.

I will be able to update you on the latest position when I attend committee on 18 September.

In terms of responding to the feedback leading up to the finalising of the new arrangements for publication in January 2020, the Welsh Government is, in co-ordination with Wavehill Consulting, identifying key issues and themes for refinement. Pioneer Schools, regional consortia (representing also WLGA and Local Authorities), Estyn and Qualifications Wales will be involved to agree a clear approach and plan for refinement over the autumn. In particular, focus will be given to how the guidance can be simplified and made more useful for the teaching profession.

The majority of this work will be undertaken in workshops between September and November. As part of this work, they will:

- Identify and respond to key issues arising from feedback;
- Draft changes to the guidance based on those changes; and
- Review all changes to ensure the guidance is coherent and consistent with the principles and ethos of the new curriculum.

To support the refinement process, the process will involve a range of experts including:

- Two meetings of the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG), representing expertise in curriculum design to support and guide the principles of refinement;
- Bilingual editors to ensure clarity and coherence of the guidance as a whole; and
- Area specific experts and stakeholder organisations to support the refinement of more technical elements of the guidance.

In addition, 16 innovation schools have been selected from the existing curriculum pioneer network from across the four regions to support school planning. Innovation schools will be provided with funding (£30,000 April 2019 to March 2020), to plan, trial and test the new Curriculum for Wales in readiness for 2022. Schools will be required to feedback their findings and work collaboratively to develop guidance materials for all schools.

The areas of focus for innovation schools are:

- Curriculum Coherence senior leadership level
- Manageability
- School level design
- Inclusivity of all learners
- Progression of learning
- Assessment
- Professional Learning implications
- Accountability

Sixth forms and Further Education (FE) Colleges

The network of Pioneer Schools have been integral to the entire process and these include schools with sixth forms. We have also worked with Colegau Cymru during the development of the Curriculum for Wales guidance and representatives from FE have been involved in the development of each of the AoLE guidance frameworks.

Officials have met representatives of FE during the development process and will continue to work with the sector as the guidance is refined. One of the themes of the feedback from FE was the need to ensure the transition to post-16 education was supported effectively across the curriculum. This is something we will be working on with FE partners in the autumn and ensuring the benefits of a broad and challenging curriculum, which is directed towards the four curriculum purposes, are understood.

Qualifications Wales is working with the Welsh Government and other partners to consider what impact the new Curriculum for Wales will have on qualifications for the future. They will be consulting on their proposed approach in autumn 2019.

White Paper

Earlier this year, I published *Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum*¹ to seek views on the proposed legislative framework that will underpin the new curriculum arrangements. The consultation on the White Paper ran from 28 January – 25 March 2019 and set out the legislative proposals to support the new curriculum. It was also

¹ <https://gov.wales/our-national-mission-transformational-curriculum>

accompanied by a draft Integrated Impact Assessment and a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment for comment.

Arad Research was appointed to complete a full analysis of all the 2,000 responses received. In July a report² summarising the responses was published on the Welsh Government's website.

We are considering carefully the evidence gathered from responses to the White Paper and continue to work with our partners. This is crucial to informing our policy going forward and ensuring we propose a legislative framework that fully supports and enables our ambitions for the new curriculum. I will be updating Assembly Members on how I plan to proceed on the legislation in September.

In summary, this includes placing more detail on the face of the Bill to legislate for certain elements of the curriculum framework. Previously the proposal was to legislate for the four purposes and the Areas of Learning and Experience. Following the consultation, I will be proposing to legislate for specific aspects of the framework to ensure breadth of learning and to support progression.

I also intend to set out the expectations for different educational settings in addition to maintained schools and maintained special schools. This includes the expectations of non-maintained nursery settings, pupil referral units (PRUs) and other education provision which learners may attend when unable to attend school. The aim is to ensure all learners have access to the new Curriculum for Wales that offers them the opportunity to make progress in relation to the four purposes.

Many of the responses to the White Paper related to the right to withdraw learners from Religious Education and Relationship and Sexuality Education. Based on these, I have asked my officials to engage further with key stakeholders on this matter. My priority is that all learners have access to age appropriate learning that will enable them to become informed, healthy and ethical citizens.

New assessment proposals and evaluation and improvement arrangements

In line with the ethos of *Successful Futures*, the new curriculum and assessment arrangements are being built on learner progression. The focus of our new assessment arrangements will therefore be on discerning learner progression and using this to inform next steps in both learning and teaching. Central to this is supporting learners to understand how they are performing and what they need to do in order to progress.

The assessment proposals were published for feedback on 30 April 2019 and set out six key principles for assessment:

- The purpose of assessment is to support progression for each and every learner along the continuum of learning and towards the four purposes.
- Priority should be given to formative uses of assessment in order to support learning and teaching.
- A wide range of assessment techniques should be used to provide a picture of a learners' progress and needs across the breadth of the curriculum.

² https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-07/summary-of-responses-our-national-mission-a-transformational-curriculum_1.pdf

- Practitioners should work together to develop an informed, dependable, accurate and consistent understanding of learner progression in order to inform learning and teaching.
- Learners should be active participants in the learning and assessment process, taking ownership of their own learning.
- Information on a learner's progress and achievements should be shared effectively to engage the learner, their parents/carers and other practitioners in identifying and supporting their next steps.

Recognising that a number of areas needed to be considered by a wider network of practitioners before they could be further refined, a Quality Improvement (QI) sub-group has been established to consider the following areas in more detail:

- Sharing information/reporting to parents
- Transition
- Ensuring accuracy and consistency ('moderation')

The Assessment Working Group responsible for developing the assessment proposals has now evolved into the Assessment Advisory Group (AAG) which has been established to have an overview of this refinement work. Membership includes practitioners drawn from both QI and Innovation Schools as well as practitioners from funded non-maintained nursery settings to ensure coherent discussions across both curriculum and assessment.

The AAG will draw together the wider feedback, outputs from the three QI groups and inputs from assessment experts to form proposed statutory guidance for assessment, which will be available in January 2020.

As part of our wider reform of curriculum and assessment arrangements, practitioners and experts from across Wales are in the process of updating the current Routes for Learning materials³. A Routes for Learning Advisory Group has been established to support this work, with representation from active researchers and practitioners with expertise in this field. An updated Routemap and examples of clips that exemplify some of the steps and milestones included on the Routemap were made available for feedback in April 2019 and an engagement event was held on 4 July. We are currently analysing the feedback received and further refinement will take place later this term to support the publication of updated materials in January 2020.

Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements

Separately, we have also been developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to replace parts of the current accountability system. This is focused on understanding how well the education system is working and how to support schools to improve within that system.

These emerging arrangements have also been co-constructed with colleagues in schools, Estyn, local authorities, regional consortia, and have taken international research into consideration. They have been carefully developed to ensure that they align with, and help support the realisation of the new curriculum and associated reforms around Leadership, Professional Learning, Additional Learning Needs, and developing a million Welsh speakers.

³ Routes for Learning materials support practitioners in assessing the early communication and cognitive skills of learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties

In February 2019, we published our draft proposals⁴ for evaluation and improvement to support and encourage engagement in the next stages. During March, we had discussions with headteachers from across Wales in a series of national conferences, and have followed these up with in-depth sessions with regional headteacher groups. We understand that delivering on our expectations will require significant changes to culture and behaviours across the whole education system, it is not expected that all of these changes will happen immediately. In 2019-20, we will be developing and piloting the approaches. Our aim is to build arrangements which create the culture and conditions for success in anticipation of the Curriculum for Wales in 2022.

At the heart of the evaluation and improvement arrangements is robust and continuous self-evaluation for all tiers of the education system. This, along with peer engagement, will support learning and continuous improvement, embed collaboration and drive self-improvement to raise standards for all our learners.

We have worked with our stakeholders and schools to develop a new National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR) to help schools develop the behaviour and practices which will support reform. This resource will be launched as a working draft in the autumn, and a small group of schools will work closely with their regional consortia, Estyn and Local Authorities to pilot its use and help us develop the resource for wider release.

We are beginning to remove the historic disproportionate emphasis on one or two isolated school performance measures, to a culture where a wider range of indicators which better capture the whole learning experience, learner progress and our ambitions for the new curriculum are considered. As part of this journey, we are implementing a suite of interim Key Stage 4 (KS4) performance measures that have been developed, in collaboration with headteachers and key stakeholder groups from across Wales.

These new measures, based on points scores, will remove the emphasis that has been placed on high stakes threshold measures which lead to a narrow focus on borderline C/D grade learners. Instead, they will reflect a school average of all individual learners' points scores, rather than a percentage attaining a minimum threshold level. The measures have been designed to help broaden learner choice, valuing individual learner needs and achievement. This will help better capture the progress of every learner. Whilst the interim measures are broader in order to achieve this goal, existing curriculum requirements and expectations of provision remain. There will continue to be headline measures on literacy, numeracy and science.

Detailed guidance on the interim measures and the changes to the analyses provided for schools has recently been published⁵. Over the next six months, we will commission an independent research project to review the performance measurement system. Decisions on future indicators, and the associated systems that will supersede the interim arrangements, will be informed by this research, in conjunction with the responses received in response to a full consultation with schools and key stakeholders.

Earlier this year we consulted formally on changes to KS4 target setting requirements⁶. These changes will come into force from September 2019. This means there will no longer

⁴ <https://gov.wales/school-evaluation-and-improvement-accountability-arrangements>

⁵ <https://gov.wales/interim-key-stage-4-school-performance-arrangements>

⁶ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-05/summary-of-responses-changes-to-target-setting-requirements-on-schools.pdf>

be a statutory requirement to set targets for specific measures at KS4, whilst the number of non-specified targets to be set will increase to six. Therefore, all targets will be local, school level targets. This is a step towards subsidiarity and increased autonomy for schools to self-improve. More flexible targets will draw on teachers' professional opinions and the knowledge of their pupils, encouraging the development of genuine targets that make a constructive contribution to learners' learning. In the autumn term, we will be providing further information on how to consider these changes to the Regulations when setting targets. The National School Categorisation System will remain for the immediate future, with the next round of outcomes scheduled to be published in January 2020.

We have already indicated that the categorisation system will need to evolve to fit with the new Evaluation and Improvement arrangements. In developing any new approaches over the next academic year, we understand they need to be aligned to the new culture that we are cultivating. To this end, we will be working with schools across Wales to consider new approaches to identifying school support needs from September 2019 – ready for any changes for autumn 2020.

In response to the recommendations from the Learning Inspectorate, Estyn has recently consulted⁷ on phase 1 of a transition period to new inspection arrangements that will align with the curriculum and evaluation and improvement reforms. During phase 1 (September 2020- September 2021), a partial suspension of school inspections is proposed, with schools causing concern still being monitored. During this period, Estyn will undertake inspector engagement visits to all schools to understand how well schools are developing their practices in relation to the new curriculum, and other education reforms. It will also allow time for the changes needed within the Inspectorate to move forward to the new purpose of inspection. We await the outcome of Estyn's consultation on this phase. To assist the proposed partial suspension of school inspections an amendment to the various inspection Regulations will be required and a consultation on that proposal will take place in the Autumn.

Effective Implementation

To ensure effective implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that all educational practitioners receive the support they need to deliver the new arrangements. Recognising and promoting teaching excellence is a key objective of *Our national mission* and will be crucial to translate the new curriculum into practice.

Integral to the National Approach is ensuring that professional learning for our practitioners is adequately resourced including both financial resources and time for teachers and leaders to engage with high quality development opportunities.

We are expecting a profound transformation in the way our practitioners and leaders think about their professional learning in light of the new curriculum. We need to provide support to schools to enable them to make this step-change.

The National Approach to Professional Learning⁸ was officially launched in 2018. This approach to professional learning marks a key point in the reform journey. It aligns with the new professional standards, the Schools as Learning Organisations approach and professional learning model, to create a vision fit for the evolving education system in Wales

⁷ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/learning-inspectorate>

⁸ <https://gov.wales/national-approach-professional-learning-napl>

for all educational practitioners, not just teachers. We are committed to ensuring that all practitioners receive the support they need to deliver our new transformational curriculum.

We also made available an enhanced funding package of an additional £24million to ensure all practitioners are prepared for the roll-out of a new curriculum in Wales. The funding will be passed in its entirety to schools and can be used flexibly to allow schools to work together in ways that suit their own circumstances. The funding is to create the time and space for practitioners and leaders to work together in their own settings and across networks to prepare for the new curriculum, we also consulted proposals to extend existing INSET (In service training) arrangements to introduce an additional INSET day in 2020.

Following on from that consultation it was announced, as part of the broader package to support the enactment of the curriculum, that it is our intention to give each school an extra INSET day each year for the next three years during the summer term specifically to give teachers more time for their professional learning.

This additional INSET day is to be introduced by way of the Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 which are currently passing through the Assembly and are due to come into force on 1 September 2019. The first additional INSET day should take place during the summer term 2020.

We recognise that one additional INSET day in itself is not enough. This is why this Professional Learning inset day is part of a wider package as part of our National Approach to Professional Learning, supported by our additional £24 million investment. The Welsh Government will also produce bilingual, digital resources to support the INSET day.

A key feature of our approach has been to engage schools in a Critical Collaborative Professional Enquiry (CCPE) programme. This is one 'enquiry' model, and has been successful in schools in Wales and elsewhere, but it is not the only model, and we welcome schools, regions and universities working together on forms of enquiry and learning that are fit for local and regional purposes. We have taken the opportunity to work with a range of higher education partners across Wales (Bangor University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and UWTSD) to develop our pioneer schools as critical, collaborative professional enquirers to support the transition to a self improving system. As part of the emerging National Approach to Professional Learning, we are also scoping the development of a national programme to support all practitioners to become professional enquirers, to become 're-professionalised' through investigating their own practice. The role of school leaders will be particularly important in enabling and fostering a national enquiry programme

Wales also has an ambition that all schools develop as learning organisations in keeping with OECD principals. Schools that are learning organisations have the capacity to adapt more quickly and explore new approaches, with a means to improving learning and outcomes for all their learners.

The Welsh Schools as Learning Organisation (SLO) model focusses on realising seven 'dimensions'. Our highly effective partnership with OECD has been instrumental in introducing a bespoke SLO approach for Wales. The Welsh SLO approach was co-constructed with pioneer schools, regional consortia, Estyn, the National Leadership Academy, Welsh Government and OECD.

Those schools identified as early enablers of the SLO approach are now supporting the work in the regions, as we move towards national SLO implementation with the launch of an automated online survey for all of schools to access.

Through partnerships facilitated by OECD, we have also explored the British Columbia 'Spirals of Inquiry' approach to further embed SLOs in Wales.

Teaching Assistants are an integral part of our education system; and it is the quality of our school workforce that will make the difference in transforming young people's lives. Over the past few months a consultation on new Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants⁹ has been undertaken. Joint work on developing both the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) and the Teaching Assistants Learning Pathways (TALP) is continuing to ensure that the TALP and HLTA Status is aligned to the new Professional Standards and is in line with the National Approach to Professional Learning Framework.

The current range of reforms heightens the need to ensure that school leaders are well prepared and supported to lead their organisations through these changes. Our National Mission puts leadership at the centre of reforms and 'Inspiring Leadership' is a key enabling objective.

To support this area of work the Welsh Government established The National Academy of Educational Leadership (NAEL). The NAEL will in the main be a strategic organisation that will not be a deliverer of leadership programmes but will quality assure, support and build on what currently exists ensuring that provision is universally available but delivered locally ensuring equity of access and provision in the language of choice.

We continue to train and prepare future headteachers through the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) Programme and also offer senior leadership teams (SLTs) training through Middle Leadership and Aspiring Heads programmes which includes both leadership and management aspects.

An Academy Associates Programme has also been piloted that supports setting based system leadership. NAEL is committed to drawing on the expertise of current leaders and growing the current and next generation of leaders for Wales by improving the status, morale and pride in being a Welsh leader in the education system. Its approach to leadership development will aim to empower leaders to lead the system by building strengthening partnership working within and between all parts of the sector.

Qualifications

There is a clear recognition that qualifications may need to change to align with and support the new curriculum and this presents a fresh opportunity to consider the nature and role of qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds.

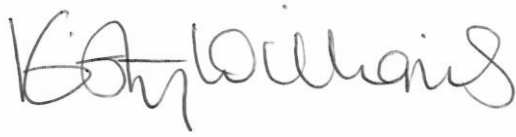
Qualifications Wales, along with Estyn and other key educational organisations are fully involved in a wide range of stakeholder groups established to develop and implement the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. This includes representation at each Area of Learning and Experience group, Coherence Group, Operational Delivery Board (ODB) and Change Board, as well as the Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG).

Qualifications Wales is also working closely with pioneer schools and other practitioners on the development of the curriculum, reviewing the possible implications for qualifications to be taken by 14 to 16-year-olds. As mentioned earlier, in the autumn Qualifications Wales will be consulting on the principles of 14-16 qualification provision needed to complement the new curriculum in the autumn.

⁹ <https://gov.wales/draft-professional-standards-assisting-teaching>

I look forward to discussing the progress set out above in more detail with the Committee on 18 September.

Yours sincerely

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

Kirsty Williams AM
Minister for Education