



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 17 November 2022

Curriculum for Wales Update

Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Panel on Curriculum for Wales (CfW)
Content:	An update on: 1. CfW 2022 Update
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Lead Officer & Report Author:	David Thomas, Principal School Improvement Adviser (Interim) E-mail: david.thomas1@swansea.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act) established the Curriculum for Wales in law and replaced the basic curriculum (which includes, for example, the national and local curricula set out in Part 7 of the Education Act 2002). The Act makes provision about progression and assessment in connection with the curriculum for 3 to 16 year olds.

Providers teaching year 7 learners can now opt in to start teaching the new curriculum. All other providers will begin first teaching of the curriculum for both year 7 and year 8 learners in September 2023. The rollout will then be staggered year on year, with implementation for year 11 learners in September 2026.

- 1.2 Schools and settings are at different points of their journey towards curriculum reform. Welsh Government (WG), regional consortia and local authorities continue to provide a range of resources to support schools appropriately. Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language, released a useful three-stage guide for schools [here](#) which poses a series of questions designed to support schools in their evaluation of progress towards reform. It outlines the following steps:

- Designing your curriculum
- Progression
- Assessment

- 1.3 WG recognise that curriculum design is an ongoing, cyclical process of engagement, design, planning, trialling and evaluation. It is an iterative process – a school’s curriculum will continue to evolve to meet the needs of their learners and enable progress towards the four purposes.
- 1.4 Estyn’s annual report summary findings for 2021-2022 makes specific reference to curriculum reform and identifies effective practice and areas for development.

What’s going well

- Providers are working to maintain their momentum in adapting teaching and learning to align with the Curriculum for Wales.
- A majority of providers recognise the importance of adapting and improving their teaching.
- In non-maintained settings and primary schools, where teachers place an emphasis on engaging pupils in planning their learning, this often results in more engaging learning experiences and better progress for pupils.
- In the secondary sector, where teachers have carefully considered the benefits and pitfalls of the approach, cross-departmental working is resulting in more cohesive and engaging learning experiences for pupils.
- Practitioners across all sectors have welcomed the freedom to experiment, adapt and develop their practice.
- In the most effective providers, they have engaged with a range of stakeholders to create a clear vision for their curriculum.
- A very few primary schools used curriculum guidance confidently to develop a picture of what progress looks like through their own individual curricula.

What needs to improve

- Overall, the progress providers are making towards implementation of the Curriculum for Wales is too variable.
- Schools need to prioritise improving the quality of teaching and learning alongside their curriculum design.
- Cross-phase working to ensure continuity and progression for learners through the curriculum is too infrequent and not sufficiently effective.
- Too often the support provided by local authorities and regional consortia is not bespoke to the needs of providers and they do not evaluate the impact of their work effectively enough.
- Many leaders remain concerned about assessment and progression in the Curriculum for Wales and what progress through the curriculum should look like.

The school improvement team (SIT) have engaged well with a range of stakeholders to consider both Estyn’s inspection framework, summary findings above, and WG’s school improvement guidance. As a result, the agenda for the

school support visits has been co-constructed resulting in an improved sense of ownership thus having greater impact on the work of school leaders.

- 1.5 During support visits, the SIT explores each school's work and supports their evaluations. Reflecting the school improvement guidance, each school receives a report that is shared with governors. This report is heavily influenced by WG's CfW guidance with a clear focus on the progress learners make.

2. Briefing

- 2.1 In February 2022, Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language spoke at an online event for school leaders entitled 'Curriculum for Wales – towards September 2022'. The Minister gave information about resources schools can access to support their preparations to implement CfW, how the system would support the realisation of the CfW, and how WG will promote collaboration.
- 2.2 A 'national professional learning entitlement' is intended to provide all practitioners with access to high quality professional learning. A dedicated WG area of its online platform sets out the offer for teaching, leadership and system leadership.
- 2.3 Resources for teachers and leaders have been developed. This includes guidance, materials, workshops and case studies. These can be found [here](#).
- 2.4 Ongoing collaboration is promoted through the National Network. The Network is an open platform, with opportunities for all practitioners in Wales to gather and share understanding, co-construct approaches, connect people, and drive change. In Autumn 2022, the Network will hold conversations on Expressive Arts. In addition to the work of the National Network, there are several networks in Swansea committed to supporting schools. For example, Swansea's Curriculum and Assessment Network (SCAN) collaborate closely with colleagues from Partneriaeth's leadership team, which informs the regional professional learning offer.
- 2.5 CfW professional learning has been a focus area for the SIT. In Swansea, approximately two hundred school leaders have been directly engaged in a cross-LA project to support the development of a shared understanding of learner progression. As a result, most schools have a good, practical understanding of the process for curriculum design and review.
- 2.6 Partneriaeth's PL offer is now broad. Regional leads report regularly to the principal school improvement advisor on the levels of attendance and contributions of Swansea staff. Of the three LAs in the consortium, Swansea's attendance and commitment is reported to be the strongest.
- 2.7 A summary of WG's school improvement guidance has been shared by the SIT with a wide range of stakeholders across the LA. The guidance, underpinned by the principles of CfW, sets out the areas of focus for schools' self-evaluation and improvement planning. As a result, the LA is beginning to share a consistent approach to the evaluation of school performance.

- 2.8 The SIT evaluates the impact of each school's engagement with WG's schools as learning organisations (SLO) and national resource for evaluation and improvement (NR:EI). These tools support the audit of schools' provision and provide prompts/activities that enable leaders to evaluate their progress towards curriculum reform. In the best examples, these tools are used in a focussed way to develop lines of enquiry which help inform improvement planning.
- 2.9 As schools design a curriculum, they select the knowledge, skills and experiences that best support their learners to progress in the ways described in CfW – they will need to develop assessment arrangements to support each individual learner to progress in relation to their school/setting's curriculum.
- 2.10 Schools are to conduct on-entry assessments for all learners who move settings at any age (3 to 16). The SIT has begun to support schools to develop a cluster/partnership approach to this. The personalised assessments remain a statutory requirement. The requirement to report baseline assessments and end of key stage assessments concluded in July 2022.
- 2.11 The principal school improvement advisor has established several additional networks designed to support the development of new structures as a result of CfW guidance. For example, on-entry assessment tool, published curriculum summaries and school development plan (SDP) changes. These are effective in supporting a reduction in head teacher workload by creating effective templates and examples.
- 2.12 Transition plans will establish processes that jointly support learner progression, the overall needs and well-being of the learner and ensure appropriate pace and challenge in their approach to progression and developing curriculum and assessment arrangements. Schools will communicate with parents/carers each term. The method of communication can be done in a variety of ways that best suits the audience. The feedback to parents/carers is to include:
- a brief summary about progress across the breadth of the curriculum.
 - information about future progression needs/next steps.
 - advice on how parents/carers can support progression at home.
 - information on general health and well-being.
- 2.13 In collaboration with a range of stakeholders, Swansea SACRVE have produced an agreed syllabus. This has been shared with all schools in Swansea. Jennifer Harding-Richards, Swansea advisor for RSE/RVE continues to provide a host of local and regional professional learning opportunities to ensure practitioners have the skills required to teach RVE effectively.
- 2.14 Swansea has produced and shared its RSE policy to support WG's statutory guidance and RSE code. Swansea has engaged directly with WG curriculum officers to represent the view of parents and carers. The right to withdraw pupils from the RSE curriculum has been removed by WG causing some considerable unrest among some parents' groups. This continues to provide LA officers with

challenges and complaints. Despite this, schools feel well supported by the LA and officers have identified many schools who have the capacity to share their effective practice.

3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary

- 3.1 WG produce a wide range of materials and guidance designed to support schools in the realisation of CfW and reform. Officers produce useful summaries of this guidance to reduce school-based leader workload.
- 3.2 Swansea schools continue to feel they are supported well by the LA's RSE/RVE Lead.
- 3.3 LA officers need to continue the focus on the impact of leadership on the progress learners make.
- 3.4 LA officers need to ensure schools are supported well to make use of the professional learning offered by the region.
- 3.5 We need to continue to support schools in their implementation and ongoing review of curriculum provision with a sharp focus on the impact on learner progress.
- 3.6 School improvement advisers have and will continue to identify schools that have the capacity to share effective practice.
- 3.7 School improvement advisors will sensitively identify schools that require additional support in their reform journey indicated by the progress that learner make over time.
- 3.8 School improvement advisors will continue to make representations to WG on behalf of our stakeholders to inform national policy.

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also considers other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 4.4 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required for the following reasons:
- This is a report to share information. The summary of impacts is low. No mitigation is required.
 - This is a report to share information regarding the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, which is linked to the corporate objective of improving education and skills.
 - This is a report to share information. No risks have been identified and no impact is envisaged.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Glossary of terms:

Acronym	Expansion
LA	Local Authority
WG	Welsh Government
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
BSL	British Sign Language
CfW	Curriculum for Wales
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
RVE	Religion, Values and Ethics
SACRVE	Standing Advisory Council on Religion and Values Education
IIA	Integrated Impact Assessment
SLO	Schools as Learning Organisations
NR:EI	National Resource for Evaluation and Improvement

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – IIA Screening Form