



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 June 2024

Curriculum for Wales Update

Purpose:	To brief/update the Scrutiny Panel on Curriculum for Wales (CfW)
Content:	Annual update on new Curriculum for Wales progress
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
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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.

Curriculum for Wales (CfW) is mandatory for years 7 and 8. 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. The Welsh Government (WG), regional consortia and local authorities continue to provide a range of resources to support schools appropriately. WG 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 The WG recognises 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 2022-2023 makes specific reference to curriculum reform and identifies effective practice and areas for development. [LINK HERE](#)

Primary Schools

What’s going well

“A few schools have made strong progress with their implementation of Curriculum for Wales. Often, these schools have been on their journey to reform for some years and this means that teachers have a secure understanding of the principles behind the changes.”

What needs to improve

“A minority of schools are still at the early stage of implementing Curriculum for Wales. Many of these schools have adapted planning to focus on what pupils learn rather than how they learn and only a minority of schools plan effectively to ensure progression in pupils’ skills and knowledge over time.”

Recommendations

Sixty (27%) of primary schools in Wales had a recommendation to improve their curriculum to ensure the progressive and systematic development of pupils’ skills.

Secondary Schools

What’s going well

“A majority of schools have developed a clear vision for Curriculum for Wales and are experimenting appropriately with new approaches.”

What needs to improve

“In a minority of instances, schools’ planning for Curriculum for Wales does not have a positive impact on pupils’ learning experiences.”

Recommendations

Fourteen (50%) of the schools inspected received a recommendation to improve the planning and co-ordination of provision for pupils’ skills.

- 1.5 The school improvement team (SIT) have engaged effectively with a range of stakeholders to consider both Estyn’s inspection framework, summary findings above, and the 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 allowing for a greater view of the impact of school leaders.

During support visits, the SIT explores each school’s progress towards curriculum design and review. 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. A focus for the SIT’s visits in the Autumn term 2024 will be to support schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their curriculum plans informed by the progress learners make.

2. Briefing

- 2.1 In May 2024, WG's Cabinet Secretary for Education, spoke on the national mission – delivering on Wales' national priorities. In terms of CfW, she highlighted:
- *Commitment to progressing the new curriculum.*
 - *Prioritise support in curriculum design, progression, and assessment.*
 - *Ensuring teachers receive the necessary support and resources.*
- 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](#).

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. Past networks have focused on:

- Progression
- Curriculum and assessment design
- Preparation for roll out, are we on the right track?
- Resources and supporting materials
- Qualifications reform
- Welsh and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories
- Oracy and reading
- Expressive Arts
- Assessment arrangements for funded non-maintained nursery settings
- Equity and inclusion

Current networks will take place in June locally and focus on curriculum purpose, pedagogy and progression.

In addition to the work of the National Network, there are several networks in Swansea committed to supporting schools. For example, Swansea's Secondary Curriculum network (SCASEN) which is a well-established collaborative partnership between schools in Swansea. Such networks/partnerships work closely with colleagues from Partneriaeth's leadership team, which informs the development of the regional professional learning offer. The region's 'Teach for Purpose' programme has been highly successful and accessed by around 200 practitioners locally. As a result, more schools have identified and prioritised improving teaching and learning in the following areas:

- Challenge and Pace
- Questioning
- Retrieval Practice
- Independent and Collaborative Learning
- Effective Feedback

Through its summer and autumn visits, SIT will be supporting schools to evaluate the progress of school development plan priorities linked to improved teaching and learning and CfW reform targets.

- 2.4 Following Swansea's previous work in supporting schools and settings to establish a shared understanding of progression, most schools and their partnerships have agreed cross-phase plans that support learner transition well. Curriculum maps make explicit reference to subject-specific progress indicators which supports the short and medium-term planning for learning. As a result, most schools have appropriate curriculum plans and few schools have Estyn recommendations linked to CfW.
- 2.5 A seconded officer has undertaken an in-depth study into the progress of CfW implementation in Swansea secondary schools. This work highlighted many strengths in the overall offer in Swansea. Key next steps are as follows:
- many schools require time to continue to make links across Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) within the secondary schools.
 - there is a need to develop a shared understanding/refining of pedagogy; focusing on shared pedagogical strategies in years 5-7 across feeder schools.
 - to provide support to ensure schools have effective transition requirements;(shared understanding of knowledge, skills, understanding and pedagogy) 14-16 in light of new GCSE specifications and statutory transition arrangements as outlined in '2022 Transition Regulations' 1 July 2022.
 - to undertake a review of the efficacy of the literacy and numeracy frameworks (LNF) and digital competency framework (DCF) in supporting the development of skills.
 - to revise the Literacy strategy across the local authority.
 - to develop opportunities to align work portfolios across the partnership to support the sharing of effective practice.
- 2.6 Regional lead officers continue to report attendance and contributions of Swansea staff. Of the three LAs in the consortium, Swansea's attendance and commitment is reported to be the strongest. For example, the teach for purpose programme regularly attracts 60 participants locally while only 20-30 attend from other LAs. As a result, Swansea is a key stakeholder and can influence the regional professional learning design.
- 2.7 A summary of the 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 schools/settings now have better consistency in their approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning. School Improvement Advisers (SIAs) support schools well and many schools have clear view of their strengths and areas for development in terms of CfW.

- 2.8 The SIT evaluate 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. Cynefin, a term used to describe a sense of belonging to a place, is used widely to promote the development of a local curriculum offer that meets the needs of children and young people in each community. As a result, Swansea schools plan this well and many pupils are given rich learning experiences.

Increasing referral rates to additional learning needs (ALN) panel, and other support services, continue to add pressure. Schools find it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of all learners through a traditional approach to the teaching of discipline-specific skills. Schools and settings are required to offer an alternative provision and more vocational-focussed opportunities in order to meet needs. In the best examples, schools establish nurturing environments that focus on reducing the impact of trauma and improving engagement/attitudes to learning.

- 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 Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 assessments concluded in July 2022.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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, regional adviser 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.
- 2.13 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 parent groups. This continues to provide LA officers with

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

3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary

- 3.1 The focus for schools in Swansea will be the evaluation of the impact of their curriculum offer. Officers will support the use of toolkits e.g. NR:EI which provide effective, thought-provoking questions and promote deep self-evaluation.
- 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 how school leaders influence ongoing CfW design.
- 3.4 LA officers need to ensure schools are supported well to make use of and evaluate the impact of professional learning offered locally and by the region.
- 3.5 Further develop collaborative partnerships to support a better shared understanding of progression across and between schools.
- 3.6 School improvement advisers have and will continue to identify schools that have the capacity to share effective practice in terms of curriculum design and review.
- 3.7 School improvement advisers will sensitively identify schools that require additional support in their reform journey indicated by the progress that learners make over time.
- 3.8 SIT and ALN officers will collaborate more closely to support a more holistic view of the support for learners.
- 3.9 School improvement advisers will continue to make representations to WG on behalf of our stakeholders to inform national policy.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 6.1 The report is for information and not for decision.