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CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: Curriculum for Wales: Implementation Plan

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

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Today I am publishing the Curriculum for Wales implementation plan. I committed to publishing this plan in response to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill Committee Stage 1 Report, published by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. The plan has been developed collaboratively with our partners and is intended to provide reassurance and support the Senedd's consideration of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill. It sets out how we will support schools in delivering Curriculum for Wales and the collaborative ways of working that we will continue to use to make this happen. I do not expect schools to take action because of this document right now, but it is there to set out the support they can expect in the coming months.

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A year after the publication of the Curriculum for Wales guidance in January 2020, I recognise that we are moving forward in a different context.

As schools and learners try to recover and return to full learning, building their confidence and skills along the way, we also know that some of our most vulnerable learners and schools have been disproportionately affected. As we progress towards implementing the Curriculum Implementation Plan, we will provide the necessary support for all schools to engage and progress towards curriculum reform in an equitable way. Importantly, we must work with schools at the pace that is appropriate to them, in the context of their and their learners' recoveries. This is why the Curriculum Implementation Plan sets fluid timelines for the steps towards 2022 – because we must listen and work in partnership with our schools and they must take the path to 2022 that is right for them.

The disruption that learners have experienced this year has affected many parts of the educational community. We start from a place where parents, carers and communities have varied experiences, concerns and priorities. A core principle of our new Curriculum for Wales is that we build engagement with our communities, parents and carers, and learners themselves, around the offer of the new curriculum. As has been highlighted by Estyn in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report, this engagement between schools and families has deepened and strengthened during the last year.

I intend to expedite and build on this now, to further develop that dialogue with parents and carers, learners, and wider stakeholders, to understand their experiences and priorities for learning recovery. We will work with stakeholders to explore the key elements of learning recovery – and put that into practice through a Learning Recovery Plan that enables us to move on from the disruptions of COVID-19 and towards curriculum reform. This will focus on supporting the learners most disadvantaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, and enabling them to progress along their learning pathway. It will continue to emphasise the need for well-being, the core skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence, and broad and balanced learning. We will put in place a remote learning plan to support this.

Our recovery also needs to prioritise the needs of our exam year cohorts, who have been severely affected by the disruption, and their learning and progression plans. I recently set out our intentions for these qualifications for 2021, and we will prioritise how we support these learners' progression into further or higher education, employment or training over coming months. This effort will embed and move towards the principles and priorities of the Curriculum for Wales. Qualifications Wales will publish their consultation on the new approach to qualifications for 16 year-olds imminently, and I anticipate that further work and good practice will emerge on assessment for qualifications, well-being and progression, from our experiences this last year. Guidance is available on [expectations for remote learning](#) for pupils in exam years this year.

We will step up our engagement with schools, giving them time and space to come together in a national conversation to reflect on their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, their challenges around learning recovery, and how we can co-construct the approaches and support that will allow us to move forward together. I know that practitioners and learners will not be able to focus on learning unless we create the space for this. We cannot expect schools and practitioners to build an understanding of and vision for the new curriculum until they have worked with their learners to refocus their learning journey. This space must be a long-term commitment, both to support learning and to continue to provide support to progress the Curriculum Implementation Plan.

I am therefore also launching today a consultation on non-statutory School Improvement Guidance. This guidance sets out the new framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability, aligned to the Curriculum for Wales. The guidance makes clear the distinction between evaluation and improvement activities and accountability. Both during the recovery period and beyond, the majority of the energy and focus in the system should be on delivering school improvement, guided by effective self-evaluation, improvement planning and support in all schools. In contrast, the accountability system should not drive school improvement activity, although effective governance and inspection should ensure that issues are identified and addressed.

I publish the Curriculum Implementation Plan knowing that it is the right thing to do to reassure Members of the Senedd and our partners of our plans and the breadth and ambitions of our intentions. However, I know that schools are still working to deliver the best for their learners in deeply trying circumstances. We will continue to work with our partners to engage schools at their pace to deliver learning and progression in a way that is consistent with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales, and puts us firmly on the path to recovery.

A link to the Curriculum Implementation Plan is available [here](#).

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