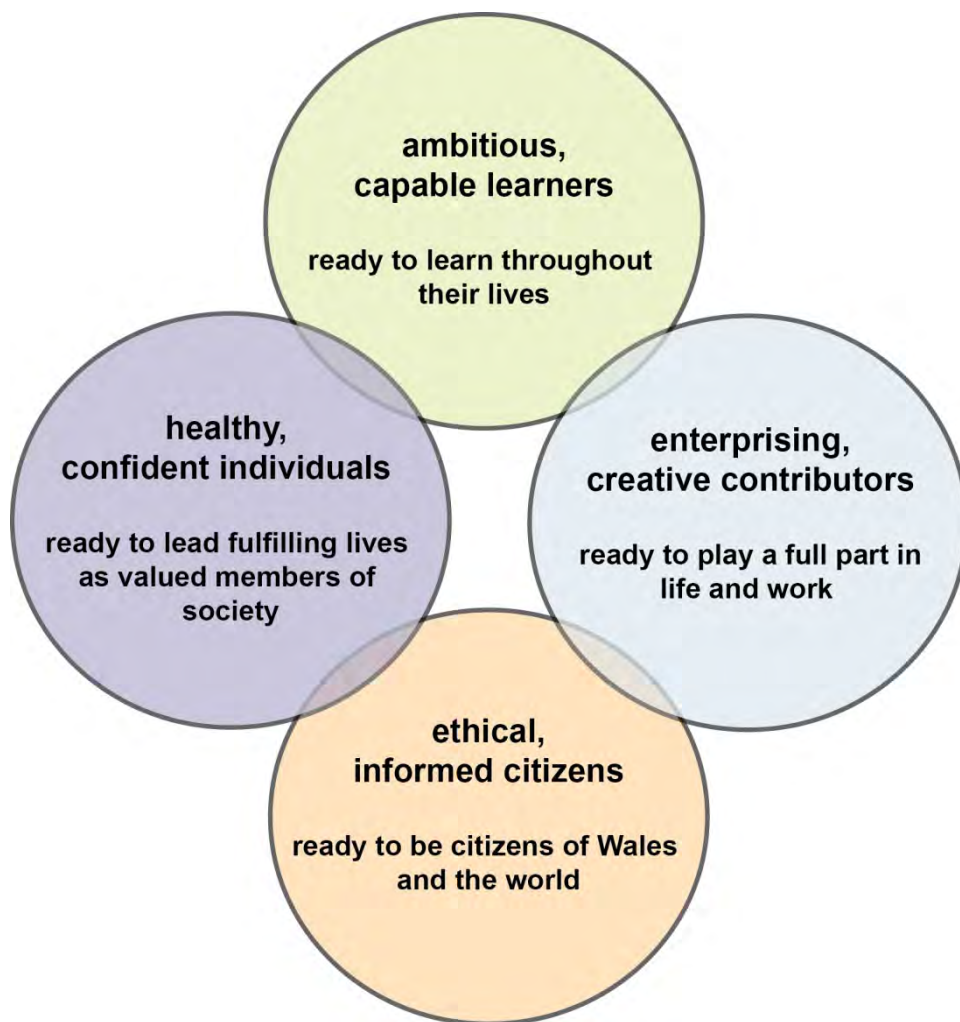


# Pioneer Schools

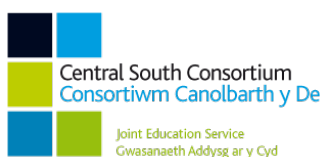


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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



## Welsh Government working in partnership with



## Introduction

On 30 June the Minister for Education and Skills announced that the Welsh Government would accept, in full, all of the recommendations set out in *Successful Futures*, Professor Graham Donaldson's independent review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales

Building on the Digital Pioneers model announced on 10 June, this document sets out how, working in a new way with schools, local authorities, regional consortia, Estyn, leading academics and employers as well as other key stakeholders we will together build our new curriculum in Wales.

This document invites the regional consortia to identify those practitioners and their schools whom they consider best placed to become Pioneer Schools – charged with building the new curriculum framework and designing and leading the professional development that will support all schools to realise it (i.e. The New Deal for the Education Workforce).

Pioneer Schools represent a critically important and a very exciting opportunity to be part of an all-Wales partnership team that will play a key role in ensuring better learning and higher standards for all of our children and young people and ultimately for Wales itself. It is vital that we get the right practitioners, departments<sup>1</sup> and schools for the role – the capacity to innovate will be as important as the ability to deliver existing curriculum arrangements. Together, we have a real opportunity to create a world class curriculum for Wales.

Our new curriculum must be aspirational but also realistic. To ensure this is the case, Pioneer Schools will work in close partnership with their wider clusters (including the non-maintained sector), networks, and beyond, to ensure that as many of our schools as possible are part of the design and development process.

## Background

Professor Donaldson's report on the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales sets out 4 purposes of the curriculum in Wales – that all our children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

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<sup>1</sup> References to 'departments' apply only in the case of secondary schools

The aim of the report is to ensure better teaching and learning in all our schools in Wales, to raise standards and to improve outcomes for all our learners. It includes the recommendations that:

- The school curriculum should be designed to help all children and young people to develop in relation to clear and agreed purposes. The purposes should be constructed so that they can directly influence decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.
- All teaching and learning should be directed to achieving the four curriculum purposes.

*Qualified for Life* - sets out our vision that all our children and young people benefit from excellent teaching and learning in the context of a continuously self-improving system. We are now at a seminal point on this education journey. Taken together, *Qualified for Life*, *Successful Futures*, the New Deal for the Education Workforce and the recommendations in Professor Furlong's review of Initial Teacher Training provide us with the foundations on which to build a world class, self-improving system.

To achieve this, we will need to work together to establish the collaborative culture that characterises excellent education systems.

The Minister for Education and Skills has already announced his intention to fast track the development of a cross curriculum Digital Competence Framework that will be available to schools from September 2016. We have asked our regional consortia to identify a small group of Digital Pioneers – who are already leading this agenda in Wales – to come together with experts from industry and HE to design and develop the framework – drawing on their own experiences and international best practice.

Building on this model, this document sets out a new way of thinking and working together to build our new curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, underpinned by the New Deal for the education workforce and the National Model for regional working. The proposals included here represent emerging thinking. Going forward – we will work with the consortia, supported through the local authorities, and with Pioneer Schools themselves to determine the best approach.

To underpin this work we have identified 4 key principles for realisation of the new curriculum - to which the proposals contained in this document adhere and to which we will return at regular intervals. Realisation of the new curriculum will be:

- Evidence led, and based on subsidiarity
- Ambitious and inclusive
- Manageable, with pace, passion and professionalism
- Unified

## Role and purpose of Pioneer Schools

In line with these principles, we are inviting the consortia to work with us to identify a network of innovative Pioneer practitioners, their departments and schools across Wales who will play a pivotal role in developing and realising the new curriculum and key elements of the New Deal. All Pioneer Schools will work with each other, with other schools, the consortia, Welsh Government and wider stakeholders as part of an all-Wales partnership.

In discussion with regional consortia we have agreed that, in the first instance, Pioneer Schools will be asked to focus on either one or both of the following:

- the design and development of the curriculum framework – including content of the new Areas of Learning and Experience, progression steps and achievement outcomes and associated assessment arrangements (Curriculum Pioneers); and/ or
- laying the foundations for change by ensuring all practitioners have access to effective professional learning – enabling them to continuously develop and enhance leadership and pedagogy in practice, and supporting them to realise the new curriculum (New Deal Pioneers).

All Pioneer Schools, regardless of their initial focus (Digital, Curriculum and/ or New Deal), will need to work closely together to challenge and learn from each other. Together, they will provide a vehicle to realise the new curriculum across Wales, including ongoing, high quality support in developing their skills in pedagogy and leadership.

## How will we identify Pioneer Schools?

Identifying the right practitioners and schools is central to our shared success. The following criteria have been developed to help in the process of identifying the best possible candidates for Pioneer Schools status. **They are for guidance only and should *not* preclude schools with particular departmental or other expertise from being included in the shortlist presented to the national panel.** As stated above, capacity for creativity and innovation is as important in these roles as ability to deliver the existing curriculum.

➤ Criteria for the identification and selection of Pioneer Schools		
What are we seeking to achieve?	What are we assessing?	How will we assess it?
A rolling start to the engagement programme	Familiarity with, and understanding of, the underpinning principles of Professor Donaldson's report, <i>Successful Futures</i>	A statement, signed off by the CA, on the degree to which the principles are already embedded in practice or planning
Confidence that the practitioner/dept/school/cluster has embedded excellence in the existing range of approaches as a platform for innovation	A proven track record in curriculum and/or assessment practice at practitioner or departmental level.	Already available: Estyn report, SER, CA report, Categorisation report
Confidence that the lessons learned from the R+D and innovation phases will pass through into learning across the system	A commitment to professional learning at all levels within the school and their partnerships/networks	A statement, signed off by the CA, of track record
Commitment to the element of risk taking inherent in an R+D and innovation programme	A passion for innovation and creativity	A statement of commitment, based on at least one exemplar case study, signed off by the CA
Assurance that the leadership of the engaged setting is able to manage the risks and maximise the benefits of the process in the setting itself	Excellent leadership – including dispersed leadership	Already available: Estyn report, SER, CA report, Categorisation report
Confidence that cluster arrangements will support the effectiveness of the process	How the cluster will work as an effective team to lead on key activities – including a clear understanding of the strengths of each member of the cluster	A summary of cluster working arrangements
Confidence that the practitioner/dept/school/cluster is in a robust position as regards current practice	Performance data at individual or department level	Data available from the region
	Relative performance of FSM pupils at individual or department level.	
Confidence that there are no factors in the context of the practitioner/dept/school/cluster that will bring undue risk to the process or to learner and other stakeholders in the process	Estyn, Challenge adviser and other external challenge	Confidence statement signed off by the CA

More detailed specifications for Curriculum and New Deal Pioneer Schools are set-out below.

# CURRICULUM PIONEER SCHOOLS

## How will the model work?

The Curriculum Pioneer model is predicated on the basis that Pioneer Practitioners – and their departments, schools and settings will work together as part of an all-Wales partnership team to design and develop the new curriculum. They will be charged with designing the new curriculum framework. This partnership team will need to work closely with those focusing on the New Deal, as well as more broadly with their own clusters (including the non-maintained sector), networks and beyond.

The all-Wales partnership team, drawn from across Wales, will need to be inclusive and representative of all of our schools – including Welsh medium schools, special schools and PRUs. It will need to include, as a minimum, Pioneer Practitioners, facilitators, expertise (technical/content/design) as appropriate, Welsh Government and Estyn representation. Welsh Government will also put in place appropriate research arrangements to underpin and inform development of the new curriculum framework. The emerging model will be subject to robust quality assurance arrangements - designed to ensure that it is ambitious and of the necessary high, internationally comparable standard. We will also put in place, from the outset, evaluation arrangements which will be key to informing design and development.

The all-Wales partnership team will be charged with designing the new Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), including progression steps, achievement outcomes, and assessment and reporting arrangements. The 6 new AoLE will also need to reflect the 3 cross-curriculum responsibilities - literacy, numeracy and digital competence, 'wider skills', and include both a Welsh and an international dimension. As a consequence, we envisage that the all-Wales partnership team will include around 70 Pioneer Practitioners, working from 70 Curriculum Pioneer Schools across Wales. This would include the following practitioners:

- 7 x AoL at current Foundation Phase
- 12 x subjects at current KS2
- 13 x subjects at current KS3
- 13 x subjects at current KS4
- literacy, numeracy, digital competence and wider skills expertise for each AoLE -
- expertise in relation to the various frameworks – including PSE
- assessment expertise

It is envisaged that Pioneer Practitioners will form smaller teams focusing on design and development of one of the six AoLE. So, for example, the team charged with developing the new Humanities AoLE will include Pioneer Practitioners of history, geography and RE from KS2-4 as well as experts from the Foundation Phase. The resulting AoLE will then be subject to robust quality assurance at key stages throughout the process

As well as working as part of the all-Wales partnership team to design and develop the new curriculum framework, the Pioneer Practitioners will be expected to draw on the knowledge, skills and experience of their wider networks – including their departments, schools and wider clusters - to design, develop and test thinking on the emerging model.

In terms of time commitment, it is envisaged at this stage that Pioneer Practitioners will need to be available for a minimum of 2 consecutive days in the early autumn - and up to 2 days a week from January 2016. Some of this time will be spent working as part of the all-Wales partnership team, some with their local networks to share and refine the emerging model. Once in place, the all-Wales partnership team will be expected to develop and agree its forward work plan – including preferred approaches to the task.

Going forward, Pioneer Schools will play a key role as pathfinders for the new curriculum, supporting, leading and embedding realisation of the new curriculum framework both locally and nationally - sharing our vision, knowledge, understanding and experience of the new curriculum with their cluster schools and settings and beyond. Pioneer Schools and their Pioneer Practitioners will also have a key role in developing materials and guidance to support the new curriculum framework. The all-Wales partnership team will also be responsible for developing plans for how to achieve this.

Pioneer Practitioners' schools will be ascribed Curriculum and/or New Deal Pioneer status. These schools will be funded to enable their Pioneers Practitioners to engage fully with the all-Wales partnership team. In the first instance, funding will be provided at the rate of up to £7,500 per practitioner from January to end March 2016 (the equivalent of £30k per annum). Funding thereafter will be determined in the light of Welsh Government budget decisions.



A summary of the activities which Pioneer Practitioners and their Pioneers Schools will be expected to undertake is set out in the following table:

Activity	Detail
Provide curriculum expertise;	Pioneer Schools to release Pioneer Practitioners to be part of the all-Wales partnership team, in particular the design and development of the AoLE and/ or the new Digital Competence Framework
And/or: Provide assessment expertise	Pioneer Schools to release Pioneer Practitioners to be part of the all-Wales partnership team, in particular the design and development of achievement outcomes as part of the progression steps
And: Provide pedagogical expertise	Through testing thinking on aspects of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements, to provide advice and support on pedagogical practices to support curriculum realisation
And: Local, regional and national leadership	Act as champion for the curriculum and assessment changes locally, regionally and nationally
And: Pathfinder	Test thinking and trial aspects of the new curriculum, including assessment arrangements and feedback to the all-Wales partnership team. Monitor and review and feed into evaluation process – longer term

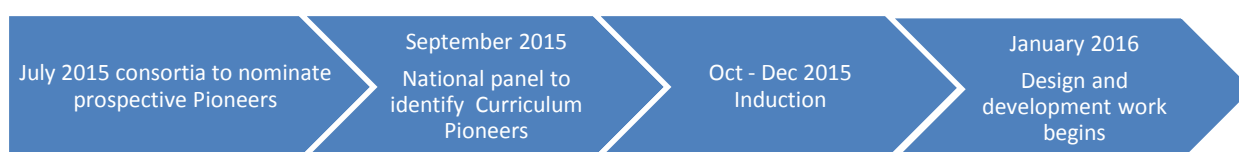
## Timeline

In July 2015, you (consortia) will be invited to nominate those practitioners and their schools in your area which you consider best placed for Pioneer School status – with proposals submitted in the early autumn.

Pioneer Schools and their Pioneer Practitioners will be announced in the early autumn of this year. Work on building the new curriculum framework together will start in the autumn with an introductory event and induction programme that all Pioneer Practitioners/ schools will be required to attend ahead of embarking on the design phase from January 2016.

Development of the new curriculum will be an iterative process and will take time. We envisage that the initial development phase will take until at least December 2016 with iterative trialing and testing of thinking thereafter.

Further details of plans for full realisation of the new curriculum across all schools in Wales will be announced in the autumn.



### **How will we identify Curriculum Pioneer Schools?**

Identification of the right practitioners and schools is central to our shared success. You as consortia are therefore being invited to nominate those practitioners and their schools in your area which you consider best placed for Pioneer status. Using the criteria for Pioneer Schools, set-out on page 4 above, you will use your local knowledge and evidence to determine a shortlist for discussion with a national panel of experts including Estyn, the consortia and Welsh Government. In drawing up your shortlist you will need to be mindful of being inclusive and representative of your area.

**An application form for schools on your shortlist is available on the Welsh Government website<sup>2</sup>.**

<sup>2</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/reform/pioneer-schools/?lang=en>

# NEW DEAL PIONEER SCHOOLS

## How will the model work?

This work forms a key part of the “*The New Deal for Education Practitioners*” where we are committed to encouraging effective professional learning which is developed and delivered through collaboration between practitioners.

The New Deal aims to maintain the focus on improving teaching and learning by ensuring all practitioners have access to effective professional learning – enabling them to continuously develop and enhance leadership and pedagogy in current practice, and preparing for the future by supporting them to realise the new curriculum.

We want, therefore, to build upon and help to accelerate the work that consortia and schools have started by building additional school-based capacity for delivery of professional learning and support for schools. We also want to work in partnership with schools and consortia to deliver our key national programmes (such as statutory induction and NPQH) through this network of schools.

We are therefore inviting the consortia to work with us to identify a network of innovative Pioneer Schools within each consortium with a focus on the New Deal. These schools will work with other schools, consortia, and with stakeholders as part of a regional and national network to design and deliver a range of professional learning opportunities and support for practitioners and schools across Wales. In drawing up their shortlist, consortia will wish to consider applications from both individual schools and partnerships of schools. Across Wales, we will be keen to identify a geographic spread of schools to include a mix of primary, secondary (or all-through (3-16/18)), Welsh medium, English medium and special schools. Links with FE and PRUs would also be welcomed. This mix will be essential so that there is sufficient capacity across all regions.

During the first phase of this programme, funding will be allocated to enable schools to free the time of key members of staff to work within their own setting, with other schools, the consortia and with the Welsh Government. This time will be used to develop plans which identify opportunities to deliver professional learning and support for other practitioners and schools and to work in partnership to design, develop and trial these programmes. This will include designing quality assurance and sustainable funding mechanisms. The types of programmes that we are planning to deliver in partnership with Pioneer Schools are set out in the table below. The list is not comprehensive so we can retain maximum flexibility for the development stage of this work where more opportunities may emerge.

The second phase of the programme will move to delivery of these programmes as part of a national network of schools working in partnership with the Consortia. The timing of the start of the second phase of the work will also be flexible so that it can be negotiated in collaboration with schools and consortia.

Alongside the work to improve current pedagogy and leadership practice the New Deal Pioneer Schools will be asked to work closely with the Curriculum Pioneer Schools to:-

- provide expertise and challenge on the development and delivery of professional learning to support the realisation of the new Curriculum
- provide leadership for the new Curriculum by acting as champions for the curriculum and assessment changes locally, regionally and nationally
- act as Pathfinders to test thinking and trial aspects of the new curriculum, including assessment arrangements and feedback to the all-Wales partnership team.
- monitor and review and feed into evaluation process in the longer term

## **Funding**

Pioneer Practitioners' schools will be ascribed Curriculum and/or New Deal Pioneer School status. From September 2015 to March 2016, these schools will be funded to enable their staff to engage in the process of designing and collaborating with consortia and Welsh Government to develop an offer of professional learning in their area. In the first instance, funding will be provided at the rate of up to £7,500 per term. Funding thereafter will be determined in the light of Welsh Government budget decisions

## Timeline

In July 2015, you (consortia) will be invited to nominate schools in your area which you consider best placed for Pioneer School status – with proposals submitted in the early autumn and further developed in collaboration during the Autumn term.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Detail (plus and minimum requirements)</b>
Trainee Teachers	Support the initial training and development of trainee teachers.
Induction of NQTs	Provide mentoring and support to NQTs to support them through their statutory induction period, including regular observation and assessment of their teaching and performance
Leadership development and support	Providing mentoring, development opportunities and support for aspiring head teachers or senior leaders – including supporting them in response to their feedback from NPQH assessment. Offer specific programmes of leadership development for teachers at all career stages who aspire to leadership roles
Action based research	Work with HE providers and other schools to lead practical research projects on the impact of different approaches on teaching and learning
‘Improving teaching’ and ‘Outstanding Teaching’	Provide programmes to support teachers to improve their practice through a range of coaching, observation and professional support.
Masters in Continuing Educational Practice and Masters in Educational Leadership	Support the development of the Masters programme and support participants during the programme in partnership with HE provider and consortia.

## **How will we identify New Deal Pioneer Schools?**

Identification of the right practitioners and schools is central to our shared success. You as consortia are therefore being invited to nominate those practitioners and their schools in your area which you consider best placed for Pioneer status. Using the criteria for Pioneer Schools, set-out on page 4 above, you will use your local knowledge and evidence to determine a shortlist for discussion with a national panel of experts including Estyn, the consortia and Welsh Government. In drawing up your shortlist you will need to be mindful of being inclusive and representative of your area.

**An application form for schools on your shortlist is available on the Welsh Government website<sup>3</sup>**

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