



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT

# Curriculum for Wales: annual report 2023

Sets out progress and achievements to date, and our priorities for the next year from September 2023.

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# Contents

1. Ministerial foreword
2. Curriculum implementation: an overview
3. Ensuring and embedding equity for all learners
4. Curriculum and assessment design and refinement across and within Areas
5. Progression, assessment and communication to parents and carers
6. Cross-curricular elements
7. Relationships and sexuality education
8. Welsh language
9. Supporting reforms
10. Forward look

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# 1. Ministerial foreword

The last academic year has been a landmark in terms of our curriculum reforms. In the short time since the Curriculum for Wales was introduced in the majority of schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings last September, we are already starting to see reports of some of the benefits we expect the new curriculum to bring. It is still early days, yet there are some early and encouraging signs.

This second annual report provides an outline of the progress being made across our education system, areas where further focus is necessary, and priorities for support as we head into the 2023 to 2024 academic year; a year when all schools and settings will be using the Curriculum for Wales. It also includes a wide range of links and additional information to help draw together some of the key aspects of our reforms, and how they are supporting us realise our ambitions together.

I recognise that the last year has been a challenging time for staff across schools and settings with budget constraints, as well as well-being pressures for both practitioners and learners manifesting in industrial action and lower attendance. I also appreciate the scale of the task and work still in train. I am clear that curriculum reform is a journey which requires government support, and the support of various stakeholder organisations.

Over the last year I have been impressed by the schools and settings I have seen using curriculum reform as the catalyst to focus more on the needs of their particular learners and communities. Through this focus, and working in clusters and across Wales, we are collectively raising the aspirations and standards of learning. Estyn are seeing generally good progress, and early insights research highlights that school leaders are, among other things, taking the opportunity to improve equity and inclusivity for their learners and optimise the parallel implementation of ALN reform.

As I publish this 2023 annual report, I am also separately publishing our Curriculum for Wales evaluation plan. That will provide the necessary full formative evaluation of key elements of the curriculum we need to be able to assess what has worked, and to also guide us system-wide on future improvement.

Underpinning the development and roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales has always been co-construction and collaboration, including through our National Network. A self-improving system and a shared understanding of progression cannot work without collaboration. As we move forward together, it remains critical for us and our partners to provide the space, time and support for school staff to work together to bring to life the best curricula for all our children and young people.

I am delighted with the progress schools and settings have made so far and would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff across our education system for their relentless drive to improve the learning experiences of all our children and young people.

Jeremy Miles MS  
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

## 2. Curriculum implementation: an overview

Building on the progress and focus outlined in the [2022 annual report](#), this section provides an overview of progress being made on the Curriculum for Wales by schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings (settings), as well as areas of ongoing support.

This report draws on information collated in real time over recent months using a variety of methods across middle tier strategic partners (regional consortia and

partnerships, Estyn and local authorities), as well as some early insights from our evaluation and monitoring activities. Information has, for example, been sourced from:

- supporting improvement advisers, school improvement partners, curriculum team discussions and visits to schools by school improvement services
- local authority assessments on the work of funded non-maintained nursery settings
- Estyn inspections, updates and annual report
- the Camau i'r Dyfodol project
- evaluations of professional learning and support
- survey and focus group outcomes
- regional and partnership meetings with headteachers and senior leaders
- regional and partnership attendance at cluster meetings
- informal and formal feedback through networking, including via the National Network
- qualitative (early insights) research with school senior leaders on the early implementation of the Curriculum for Wales: [wave 1 report](#)

This summary of progress to date is based on an assessment of formal and informal evidence from across the system. This evidence has not been subject to a systematic review and synthesis. Also, in respect of the early insights research, there is a risk of selection bias among the sample engaged; those that progressed further than others may have been more likely to take part in interviews. However, the common themes emerging across information sources give us confidence that a coherent picture is emerging. [The Curriculum for Wales evaluation plan](#) sets out our approach to a systematic evaluation going forward.

All settings, primary schools, a number of pupil referral units (PRUs), and around half of secondary schools have been operating under the Curriculum for Wales framework this academic year. The remaining secondaries and PRUs will adopt the Curriculum for Wales for their Year 7 and Year 8 learners from September.

We are, therefore, still less than a year into what we recognise as a long-term process of curriculum realisation. That is why the Curriculum for Wales framework emphasises the importance of schools and settings continuing to trial, evaluate and improve their curricula as part of the continuing improvement journey.

In summary, the developing picture includes the following:

- senior leaders are generally content with the progress being made in designing and implementing their curriculum
- concerns about progress do remain in some schools, but others report they have worked through that and are now making good progress
- those schools which have been planning and developing their curriculum for three or four years appear more confident in their approaches than those at an earlier stage of implementing their curriculum
- practitioners are increasingly taking responsibility and ownership for curriculum implementation
- cluster collaboration is increasingly being used to support planning for progression, to ensure continuity in curriculum planning, and develop a shared understanding of progression
- there has been an increased focus on pedagogy and collaborative activity both within settings and in their clusters
- developing and implementing the school curriculum has created challenges for staff capacity and time, particularly in planning the curriculum and ensuring it covered the required elements set out in the Curriculum for Wales framework
- in settings, there remains a clear sense of determination to create high-quality learning opportunities for learners accessing childcare and education, with considerable optimism that progress was happening in a sustainable way
- equity and inclusivity for learners is benefitting, with the more learner-centred approach to curriculum design seen by leaders as helping schools to reflect society better and support all their learners appropriately

The vast majority of schools and settings that have adopted the Curriculum for Wales this academic year have now met the requirement to publish a **curriculum summary**. Support is being provided to those few remaining, as well as those who are adopting the Curriculum for Wales from September. A co-constructed toolkit on curriculum summaries is also being made available specifically for settings.

## **Funded non-maintained nursery childcare settings**

Settings continue to make an invaluable contribution to supporting the learning and development of our youngest learners. Around 530 non-maintained childcare nursery settings deliver nursery education to some 10,000 3 to 4 year olds. All of these childcare settings have adopted the Welsh Government published curriculum, **a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings**.

Evidence from local authorities and the childcare sector shows excellent progress, with early implementation providing opportunities for new developments and training as well as thorough and sensitive reflection on the emerging picture across Wales. The work ethic and effort in leading what is a substantial change, especially through difficult periods, is commendable.

The excellent progress being made by settings includes moves towards a more child-led approach and consideration of Curriculum for Wales requirements when planning. This is having a positive impact on provision. Settings are using learner interests as a starting point and ensuring appropriate focus on developing cross-curricular skills holistically. A few reports indicate how practitioners are adapting planning successfully to include opportunities for learners to use schema in play provision.

The Welsh Government has also worked with a range of practitioners and other specialists to develop assessment arrangements which support the curriculum

for non-maintained settings. The arrangements cover guidance to support them to develop a shared understanding of progression, initial assessment arrangements and support for the ongoing assessment and progression for all learners.

Following a consultation on draft arrangements which closed in December 2022, a [summary of responses](#) was published and refinement workshops addressing consultation feedback began in February. Through this we continue to work with the sector to strengthen the principles and a shared understanding of progression, provide further clarity on initial assessment arrangements, particularly terminology, and also consider further professional learning needs.

The [resulting co-constructed assessment arrangements](#) were published on 5 July.

We have continued to support local authorities and staff in settings and schools with their professional learning, developing modules to support [foundation learning pedagogy](#). Further modules focusing on a [curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#) have been published on Hwb. We also continue to share effective practice in a variety of formats for practitioners including playlists and case studies.

## Maintained schools

For schools, [Estyn](#) notes challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including limiting opportunities for practitioners to design curricula and collaborate with others, has meant that progress was variable. More recent [early insights research](#) also shows variation in the pace of progress.

Understandably, those that have been planning for three or four years are more confident than those who felt they were at an earlier stage of implementation. A few senior leaders noted they had previously been concerned about the size of the task ahead of them, but now felt they were making good progress. Also,



faster progress is being made in some parts of the curriculum than others, particularly those that represent a more significant change over previous curriculum approaches.

Despite this, the evidence does indicate tangible progress across Wales and increasingly confident approaches to curriculum design. Senior leaders report broad contentment with the progress their school is making. They report that feelings of confidence in, and ownership of, Curriculum for Wales design and delivery is rising in practitioners. Increasing cluster-level activity facilitated by practitioners was cited as an example of increasing practitioner autonomy and ownership of the curriculum. It is encouraging that early feedback flags an increased focus on pedagogy and on greater levels of collaboration within and across schools due to these reforms.

The early insights research found a greater sense of practitioner autonomy emerging among school staff as practitioners increasingly take responsibility and ownership of curriculum implementation. There appears to be growing recognition that the nature of curriculum reform is a longer-term process, rather than a single event.

While equity has always been a key focus for schools and settings, it is positive that school leaders are already noting the benefits of the more learner-centred approach to curriculum design and monitoring learner progression in the Curriculum for Wales, with the flexibility to tailor support. An increased focus on learner voice is contributing to learner-centred and inclusive curricula.

Developing and implementing the school's curriculum had, however, created challenges in terms of staff capacity and time, particularly in planning the curriculum and ensuring it fulfilled the required elements set out in the Curriculum for Wales framework.

In addition to professional learning, consortia, partnerships and local authorities are tasked to deliver a range of support to schools on curriculum reform. This

approach is aligned with the development phases set out in the **journey to curriculum roll-out** section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance. A key priority for all consortia and partnerships is to support collaboration and this is explicit in grant funding terms. They are also specifically expected to support school engagement in National Network conversations and the Camau i'r Dyfodol project, as well as the provision of bespoke support to those secondary schools that will adopt the Curriculum for Wales in September. Other aspects of their 2023 to 2024 priorities include: supporting the development of a shared understanding of progression within and between cluster schools; supporting the development and sharing of purposeful assessment practices; and supporting all schools to develop their self-evaluation process in line with school improvement guidance, this to support the evaluation of impact from the first year of Curriculum for Wales implementation.

### **3. Ensuring and embedding equity for all learners**

#### **Ensuring equity through reform**

**Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all** sets out our roadmap to realign our vision for an inclusive education system. Breaking down barriers so that excellent education opportunities and outcomes can be achieved by all learners, at all ages, in classrooms, online, and in work, through early identification, support and targeted actions.

An inclusive education system is one where learners' needs are listened to, and they are supported to participate fully with a whole-school or setting approach meeting the needs of all learners. The curriculum should raise the aspirations for all and respond to individual needs, and it should therefore also support the identification, planning and progression for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The Curriculum for Wales provides flexibility for schools and settings to design their own curriculum. They are best placed to understand the needs and circumstances of all their learners, considering equity of opportunity when putting into place support and interventions or making reasonable adjustments. By design, the Curriculum for Wales empowers and encourages schools to proactively consider the educational effects of disadvantage as an integrated part of their planning and curriculum design, including raising expectations and addressing gaps in learner progress and attainment. At the very outset, the Curriculum for Wales guidance challenges schools to consider how their curriculum will account for ALN and different gaps in attainment. The curriculum framework has been designed for every learner in mind: to support them and to challenge them, recognising individual needs. In this way, together, the Curriculum for Wales and ALN reforms seek to transform the expectations, learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people so that life chances for all learners are enhanced across Wales.

The **early insights research** reported feedback from senior primary and secondary school leaders on the advantages of the Curriculum for Wales in allowing them to promote and focus on inclusivity and tackling the effects of disadvantage. Moreover, it pointed to wider improvements in learner-centred practice, noting the flexibility they now have to tailor learner support accordingly. Senior leaders felt they were now more learner-centred in their approach to curriculum design. An increased focus on learner voice activity was now considered to be more central to curriculum design, and more individualised approaches to monitoring learner progress was felt to support a learner-centred and inclusive education. Through close alignment of our evaluation plans and activities for both the curriculum and ALN reforms we will monitor the impact of these parallel reforms on learners with ALN.

More individualised approaches to monitoring learner progress were considered by senior leaders to be a key contributor to increasing equity, inclusivity and tackling the effects of disadvantage. Senior leaders commented on the importance of a coherent curriculum, giving learners access to opportunities they

might not otherwise have. The importance of curriculum content being able to respond to current events and embrace all learners' cultures was emphasised by senior leaders, with this content appropriate and relevant to learners from every background. Aspects such as racism, equality, tolerance and respect were reported by senior leaders to be interwoven across curriculum Areas as opposed to being solely delivered within Health and Well-being activities. Senior leaders also highlighted the importance of high-quality teaching in ensuring equity and mentioned examples of tiered interventions for learners as well as their approaches to creating links between subjects. They commented that greater emphasis on each learner making appropriate progress for their own individual learning and development supports equity and inclusivity. These are both welcome developments and critical to realising the opportunities within the Curriculum for Wales to improve standards, while reducing gaps in learner progress and attainment between different groups of learners.

Changing their curriculum content to be more diverse and a better reflection of society was considered by senior leaders to be a positive change. They felt this aspect of the curriculum was progressing well, with a range of resources and training opportunities available to support this.

## Understanding the challenges

Over the last year the Welsh Government has worked across curriculum and learner support teams to convene a practitioner group focused on the specific challenges and opportunities presented by concurrent introduction of curriculum and ALN reform. The group has been considering different ways to support the profession, as well as sharing experiences from their schools, settings, clusters and networks.

Group members have highlighted issues around parental understanding; ALN as a responsibility for all practitioners; and consistency of funding, for educational support in schools for all learners as well as for supporting learners with ALN,

that reflects the context of the individual school or setting.

The early insights research referred to highlights both opportunities and challenges faced by practitioners in relation to ALN and curriculum reform. Senior leaders recognise the value of a more learner-centred approach; however, concerns persist around gaps in attainment exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic.

Tackling the impact of poverty on attainment is also at the heart of our national mission. The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) has a key part to play in achieving this and we are building on existing effective practice by ensuring we target funding as well as possible. Whilst ultimately the use of PDG should be decided by schools, these decisions need to be more strategically influenced, better grounded in evidence, and rigorously monitored for impact. To that end, we are producing new guidance for schools on the use of the PDG, working closely with the Education Endowment Foundation.

## **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin**

Professor Charlotte Williams' **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group Report** identified ways to improve the teaching of themes and experiences relating to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across all parts of the curriculum. The explicit teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories, alongside Welsh history, supports all learners to make strong connections with their home and community, foster a sense of belonging and identity as citizens of Wales. The breadth of the recommendations across the education system contribute to a wider societal change and ambition for Wales to be **anti-racist by 2030**. The success in implementation is contributing to this goal.

The majority of recommendations from Professor Williams' report have now

been actioned, or are nearing completion, and we are confident that all the recommendations will have been met by the end of the calendar year. The [following details achievements since the last annual report update](#).

## Cynefin project

The 'Cynefin: ethnically and culturally diverse Wales' project is part of the joint Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales [Creative learning through the Arts programme](#). It draws upon the approach of the programme's Lead Creative Schools scheme, offering schools opportunities to work with diverse creative professionals to explore ways of examining the history and development of Wales as a multi-cultural society, looking at key themes relating to diversity, both past and present. Learners and practitioners work collaboratively with creative professionals, whose lived experience ensures authentic learning opportunities which connect the Curriculum for Wales to the real world of learners and their communities. Since the project started in 2021, 84 schools, around 2,500 learners, and over 70 creative practitioners have been directly engaged, while training to support the work has been delivered to over 100 teachers and 50 creative practitioners.

## Literature Wales

Between December 2022 and March 2023 Literature Wales ran a series of creative writing workshops to address issues of race and identity through spoken word and movement. Over 56 sessions were delivered by writers from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background to secondary aged learners from across Wales. The sessions provided learners with an opportunity to explore complex, thought-provoking concepts and opportunities for practitioners to consider how to incorporate these themes into future learning.

# Supporting the profession

## Professional learning: anti-racist practice

**Diversity and Anti-racist Professional Learning (DARPL)** has been prioritised as part of the professional learning offer for education practitioners. DARPL, formally launched in autumn 2022, is crucial to realising the Curriculum for Wales and achieving high standards and aspirations for all.

**DARPL** is a professional learning, teaching and resource hub for education practitioners and leaders to develop an understanding and development of anti-racist practice. The aim is to upskill practitioners across Wales in anti-racist practice and related themes. DARPL partners with diversity organisations to ensure practitioners can draw on a range of supportive networks.

All DARPL anti-racist resources, training, and guidance are available through the **DARPL virtual campus**, attracting over 2,000 hits monthly. Since its launch, DARPL has progressed at pace, with some 18,000 practitioners engaging at the time of preparing this report, through live events, consultations and asynchronous resources.

DARPL provision for senior leaders recently received endorsement from the National Academy for Educational Leadership and included a pan-Wales conference for over 250 educational leaders on 8 June. This event aligned with the launch of a new higher-level DARPL extended leadership module, providing a pathway for senior leaders towards sustained anti-racist leadership. Additional peer to peer support for educational leaders is also available through a national Anti-Racist Connect Group.

The National Masters in Education (Wales) has been developed by 7 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and includes 5 pathways including ALN and

leadership. One of the common core units includes consideration of equity and equality, which means all students are required to study at least one model relating to equity and equality to ensure practitioners are aware, understand and are able to implement anti-racist practice in their work.

## **Professional learning: vulnerable and disadvantaged learners**

Over the last year, the Welsh Government has enhanced funding to regional consortia and partnerships to develop national professional learning to support practitioners in significantly raising standards for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. Specifically, this programme provides access to professional learning focused on improving leadership, learning and teaching.

Bilingual professional learning resources aligned to the programme are now freely available to all maintained schools in Wales via the [Supporting vulnerable learners through effective teaching and learning website](#). The package of materials is divided into 10 key areas of pedagogy: feedback; metacognition; independent learning; differentiation; scaffolding and modelling; assessment for learning; talk, discussion and oracy; maximising the impact of teaching assistants; collaborative learning and pupil voice.

Up to March this year, 500 practitioners from across Wales had registered on the website. A sample of schools are participating in evaluation of the resources which will encompass quantitative and qualitative interviews to interrogate and identify trends and impact.

## **Initial teacher education**

The refreshed [criteria for accreditation of initial teacher education \(ITE\) programmes in Wales](#) was published in May following [public consultation](#). The refreshed criteria ensure that all new teachers have been educated in anti-



racist and inclusive practice, to foster inclusive classrooms which meet the needs of all learners, and understand the potential barriers to learning (for example cognitive, social, cultural, political and economic). The refreshed ITE criteria also ensures that student teachers develop the values, knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet national priorities. In addition to literacy, numeracy and digital competence, these include social inclusion and tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment, so all those new to the profession will understand how to support all learners realise their ambitions.

In addition, student teachers are also required to understand and manage the diverse barriers affecting educational attainment and impacting equity which learners' face at school. This should include meeting the needs of learners:

- from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds
- from diverse socio-economic backgrounds
- with additional learning needs (ALN)

Since the publication of the **Initial teacher education Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic recruitment plan**, all Wales' ITE partnerships have developed and published recruitment plans aimed to specifically increase the numbers of ethnic minority applicants to ITE courses. Progress against the commitments under the plan were published in April.

In October 2021 the Minister announced an incentive to attract more ethnic minority applicants to ITE to reflect this recruitment priority within the teaching workforce. The incentive scheme is now in place and up to £5,000 has been available to eligible student teachers from September 2022.

## **New Professional Teaching Awards**

The first Betty Campbell MBE **Professional Teaching Award** was launched in 2022 for promoting the contributions and perspectives of Black, Asian and

Minority Ethnic Communities. Ysgol Llanwern won the award for developing a culture of Cynefin, where all members of the school community foster a feeling of belonging. The school has embraced a whole-school approach to diversity, where all ethnicities are celebrated.

## School governors

New [school complaints procedures guidance](#) for governors was published in December 2022 and specifically provides advice on handling complaints about discrimination to help them to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination in their schools.

# 4. Curriculum and assessment design and refinement across and within Areas

## Understanding curriculum design

Building on the co-construction approaches modelled during the pioneer schools' development of the national Curriculum for Wales framework guidance, a curriculum design pilot during the spring has supported a representative example of schools across Wales to practically explore curriculum design approaches. Engaging with international expertise, the [Understanding by Design](#) project has involved 30 schools working alongside regions, local authorities and ITE providers to test the thinking of backwards design and assess its suitability for supporting the Curriculum for Wales. Project evaluations are very positive where co-construction approaches continue to benefit practitioners.

The project has highlighted that shared sense-making continues to impact positively on the quality of learning in our schools as learning becomes more

purposeful and authentic in helping realise the four purposes. The project outputs will be shared via blogs, podcasts and video case studies from the autumn, introducing schools to this particular method of curriculum design, and supporting schools to think critically about approaches that meet the needs of their learners and their contexts.

The project has confirmed 3 key principles in supporting Curriculum for Wales realisation:

- understanding the Curriculum for Wales framework, its component elements and their effective use is necessary for purposeful curriculum design
- understanding the purpose of learning is at the heart of effective curriculum design
- the power of collaborative working and engagement of high-quality professional dialogue is a powerful tool in supporting curriculum design

**National Network** conversations continue to inform the practical realisation of the Curriculum for Wales in schools and settings. Conversations on curriculum and assessment design throughout the year have demonstrated a commitment to make the time for reflection and evaluation processes as part of their expectations for iterative curriculum design. There was a consistent message that not all things were new or meant starting from scratch. The focus on considering the purpose (the why) of each approach was crucial in supporting change.

The value of purposeful authentic learning at the heart of learner progress has been a motivator of many approaches, alongside a desire to ‘understand understanding’ and the growing sophistication of learning that is created through consideration of the **principles of progression** and the conceptual triggers within the **statements of what matters**. Many practitioners talked about the role of research projects such as the National Professional Enquiry Project (**NPEP**) as a vehicle for informing their curriculum and assessment design processes. The value of identifying the purpose of both research and action was a clear

principle of informing curriculum design processes. The strategic evaluation to inform next steps is a prominent feature of curriculum and assessment design processes.

Many schools are consolidating actions around implementation, looking to regularly reflect and evaluate their progress, and taking a considered and research informed approach to next steps. **The school improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability** reflects this important message. Most participants felt that embedded processes of teaching and learning allowed learners to reflect on their progress, evaluate their learning and achieve a developing understanding of next steps. A range of **supporting materials** have been designed with practitioners across Wales that reflect the outputs from National Network conversations.

During the course of the year a change of tone was noted in National Network conversations, with developing processes and ways of working as a means of achieving positive impacts on supporting curriculum and assessment design being emphasised more than searching for products. Practitioners are increasingly valuing the time being dedicated to professional dialogue for joint planning. This remains an ongoing challenge, but similar commitments are being seen through wider feedback and early insights research findings.

## Developing curriculum Areas

Practitioners are planning and mapping elements of the Curriculum for Wales framework against each of the curriculum areas of learning and experience (Areas) to ensure purposeful and coherent learning and to avoid repetition where possible. A variety of approaches have been described in National Network conversations and early insights research regarding developing links between subjects and Areas. Primary schools were more likely to be adopting a more integrated thematic or topic-based approach, while secondaries tended to report increased collaboration between subject leads, compared with the

previous curriculum, and attempts to identify commonalities and links between learning in different subjects and Areas.

Generally, there have been variations in terms of which Areas senior leaders considered were progressing well in their curriculum design and implementation. They generally reported Health and Well-being and Languages, Literacy and Communication as more developed Areas in terms of joint planning and integrated working. Effort has been seen on ensuring Mathematics and Numeracy skills were mapped against and integrated effectively into other Areas. There was mixed feedback on the success of efforts to promote joint planning in the Humanities and Expressive Arts Areas. Science and Technology appeared to be the Area senior leaders felt was most challenging in terms of encouraging joint planning.

Mapping progression within Areas has been a focus in many settings, with senior leaders describing how cluster activity was playing a key role in developing their shared understanding of progression. However, senior leaders remain mindful of capacity challenges in releasing staff to participate in joint planning sessions and cluster activity.

Early insights research signalled clear differences in the extent to which primary and secondary senior leaders had incorporated international languages into their curriculum. Primary schools reported the early stages of implementing the teaching of international languages in their schools. While a few had already embedded international languages through other programmes, most noted that they were reliant on collaborative activity with secondary schools or external partners to implement international languages. Senior leaders in secondary schools reported a continuation in their international languages provision in-line with curriculum developments. A few reported an increase in their activity to support their cluster primary schools. Several senior leaders, in both Welsh and English-medium schools, referred to the importance of prioritising the development of Welsh language skills over international languages.

## 5. Progression, assessment and communication to parents and carers

To ensure learners increase their breadth and depth of knowledge, consolidate and deepen understanding, and make connections and apply learning in different contexts, schools are developing progression plans across curriculum Areas, incorporating the mandatory principles of progression into curriculum design. We also know from early insights research that they recognise the greater emphasis on the progress made by the individual learner as part of their thinking and planning in relation to progression. Senior leaders also recognised that new approaches to learner progression require a change in practitioner mindset, which is likely to take some time to embed.

Estyn's 2022 report on [Effective approaches to assessment that improve teaching and learning](#) reviewed how maintained primary, secondary, all-age and special schools developed effective approaches to assessment that improve learning and teaching. The report supports the fundamental [principles of assessment](#) within the Curriculum for Wales, highlighting good practice in many schools and acknowledging the critical role of assessment in supporting learner progression.

The early insights research also shows that schools are changing how they share information on progress with parents and carers, and senior leaders reported a welcome shift towards more personalised contact with them regarding individual learners.

### Progression

This is one of the most fundamental principles of the curriculum and is essential in raising standards and expectations for learners: ensuring they make

continuing, meaningful, evidence-based progress in their learning. That is why it is emphasised in several programmes of support, as well as evaluation and monitoring approaches.

The early insights research reported that senior leaders were developing progression plans across curriculum Areas, incorporating the mandatory principles of progression. School leaders recognise the greater emphasis on the progress made by the individual learner as part of their thinking and planning, and that new approaches to learner progression will require time to embed. Schools are working internally and in clusters to develop a shared understanding of progression, including in particular to support learners' transition from primary to secondary education.

Schools also noted challenges, particularly the risks of too much variation between schools' approaches. While the research acknowledged that schools were working in clusters to ensure coherence, time required for this could detract from other activity.

In secondary schools, leaders expressed concern about how to ensure approaches to progression (and assessment) meet accountability and statutory requirements. There was a sense among some leaders that curriculum progression steps were being interpreted as a 'framework for assessment' rather than as reference points for curriculum design. In some schools, there was reticence among practitioners to move from existing means of tracking learner progress, for example the continued use of National Curriculum levels, as well as how this information on learners' progress is then reported to parents and carers. Supporting schools to engage with new approaches to progression, and addressing concerns around coherence of approaches, are key priorities for the Welsh Government over the next year, set out in the forward look section.

## Camau i'r Dyfodol

The Camau i'r Dyfodol project is a key part of our ongoing work to support the understanding and realisation of progression in the Curriculum for Wales. The project is working with practitioners, senior leaders and representatives from across the education system to build capacity in designing progression in curricula.

The first phase of the project focused on understanding schools' and the wider system's understanding of and engagement with progression. This included discussions with partners in the education system; a National Network discussion to bring together practitioners to discuss approaches; conducting focus groups with schools to understand their experience of developing progression in their curriculum; and engaging with international evidence and research on learning progression.

The **phase 1 report** has been published by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The report's considerations are directly relevant to the ongoing development of support for schools, including through the next phase of the project. This includes the importance of supporting school-to-school collaboration in progression, the role of subject disciplines in progression, and creating a better understanding of what progression looks like in schools. The report also has important implications and considerations for schools. A **resource has been published summarising for school leaders the implications of this work**, including key insights and considerations for action at the school level; and conversations to support further capacity-building in progression within schools.

Phase 2 of the project is now focused on building capacity within the education system in learning progression. To support this, a co-construction group formed of schools and partner organisations has been working since October 2022. The group is identifying priorities for support on progression, and creating practical



supporting materials responding to these priorities, which encourage practice in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales focusing on the importance of practitioner ownership of their own curriculum. These materials will be published in September. Following this, we will continue to work with the project and with our partners to embed this learning in schools.

## Assessment

Early insights research reported new approaches to assessment in development in schools, with increased focus on formative, day-by-day assessment approaches. Both primary and secondary leaders noted a deliberate shift towards assessment for learning and embedding it among all staff. Many also noted they had been aware of the value of assessment for learning, but that the Curriculum for Wales was a catalyst in bringing about change.

Practitioners' strong commitment to ensuring high-quality assessment for learning practices to support individual learners on an ongoing, day-to-day basis as indistinguishable from learning and teaching is worth noting. In particular, the focus on systems that support coaching and mentoring of learners are becoming more focused on purpose-led learning and supporting the skills of reflection and independently improving learning.

Research also highlights reductions in the volume of formal assessment during the year, though schools continue to use national personalised assessments to gauge reading and numeracy progress. Some senior leaders emphasised their continued importance in benchmarking learner attainment. In other cases, personalised assessments are used to map what has or has not been sufficiently realised. This reflects a welcome shift by a number of primary and secondary schools to using assessment information to support and improve curriculum planning.

Establishing purposeful learning and capturing the 'why' of any learning

sequence made decisions around assessment much easier to grasp. In identifying the purpose of any learning, the knowledge, skills and experiences became more focused on learner progress, in turn supporting decisions on the indicators practitioners would expect to see if learners were making progress. In designing opportunities to capture this, assessment design is also emerging in a much more purposeful way than what may have previously been isolated proxies of learning.

In feedback, schools also talked about the authentic nature of any specific assessment opportunity with celebration events and exhibition events that provide the learning context and often shared with their school community. The use of digital learner portfolios to capture learner development was a common feature emerging in schools and settings alongside more traditional methods of learner work.

For many senior leaders, significant questions remain relating to assessment. Alongside the Curriculum for Wales framework guidance, the framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability published in June 2022 makes clear that assessment should not be undertaken for accountability purposes. Instead, the rich information obtained from assessment should underpin self-evaluation and improvement practices within schools to drive higher standards. Nevertheless, a number of schools report remaining concerned about assessment data they will be required to provide as part of accountability arrangements. In a number of cases, schools are continuing to use external assessment tools alongside the new assessment methods being developed.

## Supporting the profession

The 3 year Camau i'r Dyfodol project, as noted above, is working with practitioners, senior leaders and representatives from across the education system to build capacity in designing progression in curricula.

We continue to deliver National Network conversations bringing practitioners together to share approaches to progression and to inform our support for schools. Supporting resources, videos and question packs are available to practitioners to support them to workshop issues in their own settings.

Linked to work on developing learner progression, and as highlighted in the curriculum annual report last year, supporting the profession's understanding and confidence about assessment continues to be a priority of our ongoing work to support successful implementation. We have been working with regional consortia and partnership colleagues throughout the year to embed the assessment resources, developed last summer, into their assessment support offer, promoting and supporting their use, and ensuring they are valuable for schools and practitioners.

All schools continue to have access to the **CAMAU Assessing for the Future Workshops**: a series of workshops developed with practitioners to support assessment practice capacity-building. The workshops help develop approaches to assessment that build progression in learning rather than just prove current learning. And, following on from the series of **supporting materials for curriculum, assessment and evaluating learner progress (June 2022)**, we have continued to add to these resources this academic year, publishing a number of case studies on approaches to curriculum design, transition, assessment and progression.

## Qualifications

### 14 to 16 curriculum offer and qualifications

The vision for the learning that 14 to 16-year-olds will benefit from under the Curriculum for Wales, and the important role of qualifications within that, was set out in the **Minister's written statement on 20 March**. Schools' curriculum

offers should ensure learners leave compulsory education with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to succeed on their individual pathways, as they progress towards the four purposes, and for their achievements and progression to be recognised. It is critical we encourage focus on the breadth of learning and experiences offered in secondary schools as young people transition to their next steps, and acknowledge the role qualifications play in achieving this. Under the Curriculum for Wales, learners also benefit from the mandatory parts of the curriculum that do not necessarily lead to a qualification but contribute to their development, success and onward progression.

Following their third consultation last autumn and extensive stakeholder engagement, Qualifications Wales have published their **decision report** which confirms the **new suite of made-for-Wales GCSEs** available from 2025 when the first cohort of Curriculum for Wales learners reach Year 10. In addition to the technical approval criteria for each new GCSE, the report provides the context of this work and its role in supporting Curriculum for Wales realisation. The rationale for each decision is provided, combined with an overview of Qualifications Wales' co-construction and consultation processes, which informed each decision. The increase in non-examination assessment and a requirement that all made-for-Wales GCSEs build on learners' conceptual understanding will be important elements of the new suite of qualifications.

Qualifications Wales are working with the WJEC to support them in their role to create the new GCSEs, aligned to the published approval criteria. WJEC will work towards the publication of examination specifications in September 2024, allowing practitioners to prepare for first teaching of the new GCSEs from September 2025.

The **Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer** Qualifications Wales consultation closed on 14 June. This detailed thinking on non-GCSE (skills, pre-vocational and foundation) qualifications which complement the new suite of GCSEs. The Full Offer is designed to ensure inclusive, accessible qualifications for all learners. Achieving a sustainable, bilingual offer that provides learners with clear

progression pathways will be key. This element will be available to learners for first teaching in 2027. Qualifications Wales is committed to continuing a collaborative approach to the development of the Full Offer, ensuring it aligns with the Curriculum for Wales. It should support schools to realise their broad and balanced curricula.

The new qualifications developed as part of the Full Offer will sit alongside general qualifications, along with the mandatory parts of the curriculum that do not necessarily lead to qualifications, to support learners to progress confidently towards the four purposes and into the next stage of their lives. In light of this objective, we have committed to work with practitioners and partners to develop proposals for a learner portfolio approach that will support learners' self-reflection, planning for next steps and, ultimately, successful progression along their individual pathways. We have also committed to work with Qualifications Wales to evolve the Welsh Baccalaureate in line with these wider changes in learning and qualifications.

Qualifications Wales will continue to review and reflect on different assessment methodologies in qualifications, linked to the need to keep them modern and relevant. This is particularly important in the context of developments in artificial intelligence.

## **Communicating with parents and carers**

The Curriculum for Wales emphasises the importance of learner progress. A measure of attainment alone cannot provide clear understanding of how a learner has developed and reflect on what and how they are learning. Schools should focus on assessment which supports learners to make progress and which forms an inherent part of that learning and teaching partnership. From this process, practitioners will work with parents and carers to find ways to communicate progress effectively, and to indicate the next steps in that learner's journey.

The **Supporting learner progression: assessment section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance**, sets out statutory requirements for sharing information with parents and carers on a termly basis, and the requirement to provide a summary of individual learner information annually. To support practitioners to meet these requirements, we have **developed video case studies** showcasing innovative ways that two primary schools, Ysgol Min Y Ddol and Ysgol Merllyn, and a secondary school, Ysgol Calon Cymru, have approached this. The case studies evidence enhanced engagement with parents and carers that these approaches have enabled.

In addition, early insights research reported schools utilising a variety of approaches to disseminate information on the curriculum to parents and carers. Some expressed caution in communicating Curriculum for Wales changes and highlighted a range of methods used to ‘drip-feed’ updates in an effort to avoid overwhelming parents and carers with too much information. Schools reported using their mandatory curriculum summaries to share information, setting out how the Curriculum for Wales is organised and an overview of approaches to learner progression.

Some senior leaders mentioned that Curriculum for Wales specific events for parents and carers, such as workshops about the changes, were poorly attended. They found better engagement through events which embedded Curriculum for Wales information, such as via presentations, celebration events and assemblies that learners also participated in. Several settings have started to include ‘learning days’ as a new means of reporting, inviting parents and carers in to view and discuss their child’s work.

Senior leaders have also described a variety of attempts to involve parents and carers in curriculum design. However, they tended to report limited responses to methods such as surveys or meetings. There were reports of settings limiting their consultation with parents and carers until practitioners and settings had spent more time designing their curriculum and felt more confident in their approaches.

For settings, a toolkit has been developed to support their Curriculum for Wales engagement with parents and carers. This is supporting them in explaining curriculum changes and how it supports their children's first learning and development experiences. The toolkit provides a range of resources including a poster, newsletter template and key messages to be promoted through social media channels to support the understanding of parents and carers.

A previously published guide on the benefits of nursery education for 3 and 4-year-olds is being updated to reflect curriculum changes, and provides parents and carers with advice on play-based learning and how to find a nursery place, either in a school or setting.

## 6. Cross-curricular elements

### Cross-curricular skills

Literacy, numeracy and digital competence are mandatory cross-curricular skills and are the essential building blocks that underpin all learning. They are critical for all: enabling learners to access the breadth of the curriculum and the wealth of opportunities it offers, equipping them with lifelong skills and supporting the embodiment of the four purposes. Developing these skills is particularly important for disadvantaged learners, and consideration has been given across our literacy, numeracy and digital programmes as to how the impact and benefits for these learners can be maximised.

Curriculum support provided for cross-curricular skills includes:

- updated versions of the **literacy, numeracy and digital competence frameworks** to support learning and teaching throughout the Curriculum for Wales
- **personalised assessments** as flexible tools for practitioners to integrate

with other approaches when assessing skills and progress in reading and numeracy

- a digital landscape review is being conducted and overseen by an internal cross directorate Digital Education Project Board. The review will identify gaps and priorities for provision of support including that for cross curriculum digital skills and the Digital Competence Framework
- a toolkit for a whole-school approach to oracy and reading was published on 23 March, and will include four case studies which showcase some of the positive work on oracy and reading taking place in schools
- an **animation to support and encourage parents and carers of older learners to continue shared reading experiences with their children** to help generate a love of reading
- a book has been gifted by the Welsh Government to every learner in Wales
- the **Reading Mentoring Pilot Project** commenced in February. Led by Cardiff University in partnership with Bangor University, it is developing training materials and resources for mentors and mentees
- the **Research on the Instruction of Literacy with Language** project is focusing on a bespoke Welsh-language programme which builds Welsh vocabulary and literacy skills

We are reviewing evidence to further inform the Welsh Government's position on the teaching and learning of reading and in particular the role of phonics. Should any changes to the Curriculum for Wales framework guidance be needed, they will be considered as part of the next annual update cycle. We remain committed to the whole-school approach to reading and oracy as the route to embed engagement with reading through all years.

We are also developing an evidence analysis in relation to numeracy which will be available in September. The review will provide an overview of the current position of mathematics and numeracy in Wales, identify current work to raise numeracy standards for all learners and support discussion around further courses of action which may be needed to secure improved standards for attainment and enjoyment of mathematics and numeracy.



## Human rights

The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2021 requires schools to promote knowledge and understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the UNCRC and UNCRPD respectively) among staff providing learning and teaching.

Human rights is one of the cross-cutting themes of the Curriculum for Wales, and guidance is available to support the incorporation of opportunities for learning and consideration of human rights in the design and implementation of curricula. The UNCRC is one of the key principles of policy making with regard to children and young people in Wales. Its conventions are reflected in the **four purposes** of the Curriculum for Wales.

The Welsh Government has worked with regional consortia and partnerships, supported by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, to develop **professional learning resources** to support practitioners' understanding. Funded by the Welsh Government, Disability Wales has also worked with World of Inclusivity in 2022 on a pilot project introducing the UNCRPD to staff and learners in schools across Wales. Disability Wales is working to make the resources developed for this project available for free to all practitioners via Hwb.

## Careers and work-related experiences

The early insights research is covering the teaching of careers and work-related experiences (CWRE) across the curriculum in wave 2. Field work is underway and the results will be published in September.

This year, the Welsh Government asked the Career Development Institute to carry out a literature review and consultation with key stakeholders to identify

good practice in work experience in schools. Experiences should aim to open learners' eyes to the possibilities that lie ahead and should provide high-quality advice about skills and career pathways, raising the aspirations of learners who may not consider that some opportunities are available to them. We also commissioned research to evaluate current relationships between schools, industry and employers, in order to identify and build on good practice in this area, and support schools to build links with local businesses, entrepreneurs and employers. We will use this research and resulting recommendations to consider further action required to support schools embed CWRE within the Curriculum for Wales.

Last year the Minister for Education and Welsh Language asked Hefin David MS to review education to employment transitions across schools, FE and HE. The review is to inform how learners are supported in their experience and understanding of the world of work, and how our schools, colleges and universities are working together on successful transitions between different stages of learning. The resulting '**Transitions to Employment: report**' and recommendations relating to businesses and employer engagement with schools has now been published, and will inform further work in this area.

We have committed to the **Robert Owen one-year pilot** on cooperatives within CWRE, supporting learners understanding of the role of co-operatives within the economy. It is being delivered by Cwmpas, who will engage with schools to develop learning resources.

**Careers Wales** contributes and supports schools to design and develop CWRE across all six curriculum Areas. They provide real and meaningful opportunities for learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in preparation for the challenges and opportunities of further learning and the ever-evolving world of work. Careers Wales are developing a CWRE quality award to support schools in their CWRE programmes and to recognise achievements.

## 7. Relationships and sexuality education

The early insights research reported that the implementation of relationships and sexuality education (RSE) had progressed well. Many school leaders had not encountered concerns from parents and carers despite sometimes having anticipated that there might be issues. Some senior leaders had experienced negative responses from parents and carers about RSE, but many were able to address concerns through open and transparent communication.

Many senior leaders, particularly in primary schools, reported that they were using externally sourced (usually purchased) materials to inform and guide RSE design, planning and delivery. In some cases, they had adapted some of these materials to ensure they were developmentally appropriate. Some expressed a desire for more centralised support for RSE curriculum design and concerns were raised about their ability to deliver this aspect of the curriculum without financial outlay.

It is a critical priority for the Welsh Government to support schools in delivering RSE and in respect of this we are committed to ensuring that the Health and Well-being resources section of Hwb has a breadth of reputable, high-quality and developmentally appropriate RSE materials, aligned with the Code, which schools can draw on with confidence.

A specialist group of school practitioners and healthy school co-ordinators are reviewing the RSE resources currently on Hwb. Key resources are being signposted in the new Curriculum for Wales resources section on Hwb this term, with additional materials being added in the autumn. We are also working closely with other partners, including regional consortia, partnerships and local authorities, to ensure their approaches are consistent with the review principles.

This review is also serving as a mapping exercise, and where there are gaps, the Welsh Government will consider investing additional funding to support the

co-development of resources for schools.

The review of resources demonstrates the importance we are placing on ensuring that all schools and settings can be confident that their approach is consistent with the RSE Code. Over the next academic year, we will work in collaboration with our partners to ensure practitioners are increasingly able to draw on professional support and resources that are publicly available and shared with other schools and settings across Wales.

In terms of the judicial review of RSE, following the dismissal of the case in the High Court last year, the Court of Appeal has also refused the claimants permission to appeal the High Court judgment and dismissed their claims about the RSE Code and guidance on all grounds. The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Males in the Court of Appeal said:

“ The applicants' various challenges to the Code and the guidance all proceed on the basis that these documents mandate the teaching and promotion of particular sexual lifestyles in ways which amount to indoctrination. As the respondents point out, however, the fundamental difficulty with these challenges is that the Code and guidance do no such thing. ”

With regards to how the Code and guidance approached issues relating to different sexualities, gender identification and the respectful treatment of LGBTQ+ people, the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Males said:

“ It is inconceivable that such teaching could be contrary to the common law or the Human Rights Act. On the contrary, diversity and inclusion (including as to the LGBTQ+ community) are fundamental values of British (including Welsh) society. ”

This is an important vindication of the approach taken by the Welsh Government to RSE. That approach is intended to keep children safe and to promote healthy, respectful relationships. Schools are legally required to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate, to provide information on RSE which includes a range of views on the subject and which does not seek to promote one view over another.

During the past year, we have consistently encouraged schools to take their time to ensure they engage with parents and carers closely. As the academic year has progressed, there are some very positive approaches emerging which have involved parents and carers ensuring clarity about what will be taught and when and which resources will be used. This transparency, along with a constructive, open dialogue where issues are raised is critical to securing the confidence of parents and carers.

## 8. Welsh language

The Welsh language belongs to us all. It is part of what defines us as people and as a nation. The ambition is that everyone learning in a school or setting in Wales is supported to enjoy using Welsh, to make continuous progress in learning Welsh and to have the confidence and language skills so they can choose to use Welsh beyond the classroom. This is why it is a mandatory subject for all 3 to 16-year-old learners, with schools and settings deciding the best way of ensuring the progression of their learners.

To support this, we published the [Welsh language framework](#) for English-medium schools and settings in October 2022. It underlines how the language is integral to the Curriculum for Wales and sets out the statutory requirements for Welsh, as well as setting out the experiences, knowledge, skills and dispositions implicit in the curriculum. The framework has been developed by practitioners for practitioners. It is designed to help schools develop their understanding of what

to teach, as well as their understanding of progression in learning Welsh. It can be used by schools as they design their curriculum and assessment to help identify the knowledge, skills, experiences, and dispositions that will be central.

## Progress over the year

Estyn's annual report identified the pandemic's detrimental effect on the learning of Welsh for all learners, both in the primary and secondary sectors and across Welsh and English-medium schools due to fewer opportunities to use the language, particularly where Welsh was not spoken in their homes. Since lockdown, a majority of schools have made rebuilding learners' ability to speak Welsh a priority and this is beginning to have a positive impact. The Welsh language framework is intended to support English-medium schools to develop this work further.

Projects such as the Welsh Government funded 'Ein Llais Ni' project jointly developed by GWE and Bangor University and delivered across North Wales in Welsh-medium schools have contributed to boosting oracy skills in Welsh. The project has now been shared nationwide and has received further Welsh Government funding to be adapted for English-medium schools.

Estyn is undertaking a thematic review on developing learners' Welsh reading skills which will inform future support, alongside the findings from school leaders and learners arising from wave 2 of the early insights research being published in September.

## Supporting the profession

Our ambition for a million Welsh speakers by 2050 demands far-reaching changes and actions to be taken. The Curriculum for Wales puts the Welsh language at the heart of learning in Wales as, if we are to create a nation where

people speak and use the language as part of their everyday lives, increasing the number of learners in Welsh-medium schools is vital. For us to do that we need a strong and skilled workforce.

In May 2022 the Welsh Government published the **Welsh in education workforce plan** which sets out actions under four overarching aims:

- increase the number of teachers able to teach Welsh as a subject and other subjects through the medium of Welsh
- increase the number of practitioners able to work through the medium of Welsh who are supporting learners
- develop all practitioners' Welsh language skills and expertise to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh
- develop leadership capacity for Welsh-medium schools and equip all leaders with the skills to strategically plan the development of Welsh within a culture of schools as learning organisations

There has been significant reform to initial teacher education (ITE) in recent years. New ITE programmes were rolled out from September 2019 and the **accreditation criteria** requires partnerships to be clear about activity included in their programmes for the development of the Welsh language. The accreditation criteria were recently refreshed, further strengthening the need for ITE programmes that support the required increase in the number of practitioners able to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh, and for the language development of all student teachers to teach Welsh as part of the Curriculum for Wales.

We **continue to support teachers** in English-medium schools to develop their ability to use and teach the language. The Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme has a central role in developing practitioners' Welsh-language skills and ability to teach through the medium of Welsh. The scheme provides methodology and Welsh language training for teachers and classroom assistants from primary and secondary schools throughout Wales. Since September 2022, education

practitioners can access courses via the [National Centre for Learning Welsh](#) for free.

Regional consortia, partnerships and local authorities lead on a range of professional learning programmes to support the teaching of Welsh and through the medium of Welsh. They have a team of individuals who support the strategic development of Welsh in schools and who support practitioners who would benefit from the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme and other professional learning. In addition, a range of learning and teaching resources have been developed by the teams across Wales to support the teaching of Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh. These can be found in the networks section on Hwb by searching for 'Y Pair' and 'Y Gist'.

Wider work that contributes to the sector's understanding of Welsh as part of curriculum requirements includes the development of a [resource on Hwb](#) to support leaders to evaluate their progress in developing Welsh in their school.

## Legislative proposals

We have a Programme for Government and Co-operation Agreement commitment to introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill during this Senedd term. The Bill will take steps to enable all learners in Wales to become confident Welsh speakers through the statutory education system.

On 27 March we published a white paper setting out our Bill proposals, with the 12 week consultation ending on 16 June. Further policy work is now underway to develop a Bill to be introduced to the Senedd this legislative term.



## 9. Supporting reforms

### Resources and supporting materials

Drawing on the expertise of a wide range of practitioners from across Wales, alongside Welsh Government policy officials and in partnership with resource authors, a wholesale **review of all curriculum resources** and supporting materials on Hwb is ongoing. This follows the publication of a **guide co-constructed with practitioners and stakeholders for the development of curriculum materials in 2022** following consideration through the National Network. The review is also considering all new resources submitted for Hwb publication, as well as a specific workstream considering materials relating to RSE.

To ease practitioner access, the relevant pages on Hwb have been updated, now providing a **clear home for all resources that are aligned to the Curriculum for Wales**. As the review progresses, resources are being added almost weekly to the Curriculum for Wales sections.

### Adnodd

The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language made an **oral statement on 28 March on the establishment of Adnodd**, the company charged with the development of high-quality bilingual education resources. As it adopts its functions, **Adnodd** will provide a platform for collaboration and co-construction, bringing a more strategic approach to the provision of curriculum resources.

During this summer term, Adnodd has started work in building the connections, systems and foundations necessary for it to operate efficiently. In its first year, and working with the National Network, it will engage stakeholders to seek views on what resources are needed, the best means of commissioning, how to

collaborate on resource development, and what a quality-assurance process should look like. Following this, we envisage it will adopt its new commissioning functions from spring 2024.

In the interim, needs already identified for curriculum resources and supporting materials are being addressed through ongoing Welsh Government commissioning work. The resources and supporting materials guide is also being updated over the summer, in conjunction with Adnodd, to reflect the new company's responsibilities.

## **National Network for curriculum implementation**

Launched in 2021, the **National Network** brings together teaching professionals, experts, stakeholders, policy makers and enabling partners (including regional consortia and local authority partnerships and Estyn) to identify and address the barriers to, and opportunities for, the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. During this academic year 7 National Network conversations will have taken place. Recurring conversation themes have focused on cross-cutting elements such as curriculum and assessment design and also on progression. Other conversation themes included expressive arts and the Curriculum for Wales for early years.

Over 500 practitioners participated in National Network conversations in this academic year alone, benefitting from this opportunity to share what's working and tell us where they need further support. Feedback from National Network conversations included that 100% of participants felt the conversation allowed them to engage with other practitioners to support their thinking, and 100% would recommend the National Network conversations to colleagues.

We continue to deliver National Network conversations bringing practitioners together to share approaches to progression and to inform our support for schools. **Supporting resources, videos, and question packs** are available to

practitioners to support them to workshop issues in their own settings.

## Professional learning

### National professional learning entitlement

The **National Professional Learning Entitlement** (NPLE), launched in September 2022 is key to ensuring all practitioners have access to quality professional learning to enable high standards and aspirations for all. All education professionals are entitled to:

- an individual professional learning journey
- well-designed professional learning that includes a blend of approaches and opportunities for reflection, enquiry and collaboration for learning
- work in a school or setting, that sees itself as a learning organisation and uses professional standards in all aspects of professional development

As part of the entitlement's implementation a new validation process is being developed to ensure all national professional learning is subject to common assurance processes. This will be in line with the principles of the national approach to professional learning, with 3 levels of recognising professional learning: accredited, endorsed and recognised.

Work is also underway to develop a new digital solution to improve access to professional learning opportunities, and we have established a practitioner group to ensure that this meets the needs of education professionals. This will be available in the autumn.

## **INSET and the professional learning grant**

To support the implementation of the curriculum and other national priorities, we are providing an additional INSET day per year for the next 3 academic years starting in 2022 to 2023. This additional INSET day is dedicated to Curriculum for Wales professional learning, with an emphasis on supporting learners with additional learning needs and embedding equity, well-being and the Welsh language across the whole-school community.

A further £12 million was allocated directly to schools during 2022 to 2023 to build on the £55 million professional learning grant awarded over the last 5 years. This funding allows time and space for practitioners and leaders to work together across schools and networks to realise the curriculum, in line with the NPLE. This funding is to enable all practitioners to develop skills and practice to deliver high-quality learning and teaching.

To ensure that INSET has a positive impact, we published [guidance to support schools get the best out of INSET](#) and professional learning.

## **Schools as learning organisations (SLOs)**

The [national SLO survey](#) continues to support schools to undertake a baseline assessment to support curriculum realisation and school improvement. Significant, high-quality SLO activity is taking place; examples include headteachers working together to share resources and ways of working that support the SLO agenda, and the appointment of SLO champions to support senior leaders embed the SLO approach.

## Curriculum for Wales development programme

Delivery of the national Curriculum for Wales development programme, via education consortia, partnerships and local authorities is ongoing. Schools implementing the Curriculum for Wales this year have accessed more bespoke support.

A **cross regional website** provides equitable access to information regarding professional learning provision for practitioners and open access to the Curriculum for Wales offer across all Wales.

In 2023, senior leader aspects of the programme received endorsement by the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL). The programme has been focused on Area curriculum design, with webinars led by regional curriculum Area leads providing opportunities for practitioners to access exemplars across Wales.

## New professional learning

Work is ongoing with a range of partners and experts to develop **professional learning resources to further support practitioners** to realise the Curriculum for Wales requirements. Current partners include the BAME Ed (Wales) Network at Cardiff Metropolitan University who are delivering DARPL.

Work is also ongoing with a range of other stakeholders to support education practitioners on RSE, human rights, and religion, values and ethics (RVE).

New resources are being published through a phased approach and range from 'awareness raising' to 'aspiring for excellence' to further support practitioners to deliver high-quality learning and teaching. These are promoted via virtual **policy insight events**.

## Research and enquiry

HEIs continue to play an integral role in supporting professional learning across the wider schools' network, with the continued roll-out of the National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP) to grow professional enquiry capacity across the system.

Since inception, NPEP has supported schools in their preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. Almost 250 schools have been involved in the 2022 to 2023 NPEP as emerging, developing or established enquirers, based on their level of expertise. All 2022 to 2023 NPEP enquiries have an overall focus on the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales to enable evidence to be collected and shared across the wider system.

## Pedagogy

Our channel, **Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning** provides a digital space to share practice and support collaboration within and across our schools to explore pedagogy and practice as we continue to realise the Curriculum for Wales. Practitioners are able to:

- find out what others are doing and what is working through sharing practice, as well as find opportunities to collaborate
- engage in informal professional learning conversations regarding pedagogy and the Curriculum for Wales
- access recordings and other stimulus materials to support conversations in schools, clusters or networks
- engage in conversation about pedagogy in relation to a blended approach, as well as explore the implications for learning design

During 2022 to 2023 collaborative research has been undertaken on the 12

pedagogical principles to provide schools with stimulus activity and research summaries to facilitate reflection on the 12 pedagogical principles in order to plan for and develop authentic learning experiences, and present these research findings in an accessible manner that promotes reflection and enquiry.

## **Leadership**

The NAEL continues to support leaders in the system providing a range of opportunities including:

- well-being support for leaders in partnership with others
- leadership development events such as the Leadership Unlocked series and In conversation events to support the Curriculum for Wales

## **Masters in education**

The National Masters in Education (Wales) is delivered by 7 HEIs and has 5 pathways including ALN and Leadership. From September, 2 new pathways in both Curriculum and Equity in Education will be available.

The programme is offered through a blended learning part-time course and supports practitioners to improve their professional judgement, autonomy and ability to respond innovatively to challenges.

## **Impact of professional learning**

We know it takes time for professional learning to impact learning and teaching in the classroom and learner outcomes.

We are working with education consortia, partnerships and local authorities on an agreed approach to measuring the impact of professional learning over the

short, medium and long-term.

## Evaluation and monitoring programme

In April 2023 we published the [findings of research with schools and learners on the early implementation of the Curriculum for Wales](#). The report presents findings of the first wave of qualitative research with 64 senior leaders in schools and PRUs which examined schools' early experiences of Curriculum for Wales roll-out. It follows on from [Qualitative research with practitioners on preparations for curriculum and assessment reforms](#) published in January 2022. A report detailing findings of a second wave of interviews with senior leaders, as well as fieldwork with learners, will be published later in 2023.

In July 2022, we published the Government's Social Research Report (GSR), developed by Arad Research in partnership with The Open University in Wales, [Scoping study for the evaluation of the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales: final report](#), which presented the findings relating to the evaluation of the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales. A key focus of the report is the theory of change, which explains how the process of reform is intended to achieve its aims and objectives, by making explicit the expected inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts, as well as the assumed links between them. The report presents the research and evaluation questions that the Welsh Government should ask in order to explore the extent to which the mechanisms in the theory of change are happening as expected and recommends a comprehensive suite of studies which, collectively, enable an examination of the progress and impact of the curriculum reforms over time.

The [Welsh Government published a response to the evaluation scoping report](#) accepting the authors' approach and findings. We acknowledged the need for an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of research, monitoring and evaluation proportionate to the scale of our transformational Curriculum for



Wales, and committed to considering the recommended programme of work in the development of our evaluation approach. We also agreed that the research and evaluation activity should be underpinned by the **10 principles set out in the evaluation scoping report**.

We have considered the recommendations in the evaluation scoping study and used them to develop the Curriculum for Wales evaluation plan.

Aligned with the resources available, we propose focusing on a number of studies that will give us a range of perspectives and types of information. Triangulated with a broader suite of information from across the school system, including well-being, attainment and school improvement data, we can use this evidence to understand progress at a national level and inform support to the system and policy development going forward. The evaluation plan provides more detail on the nature and timings of these studies.

We are mindful that curriculum reform is a far-reaching change which will fundamentally change the experiences of learners, practitioners and schools. As detailed in the evaluation plan, we are working to ensure that other evidence is aligned appropriately with the Curriculum for Wales evaluation to ensure that we have a coherent understanding of education reforms more widely.

## School improvement

We have been clear that we need to ensure that all aspects of the education system are aligned with and fully support Curriculum for Wales realisation. Last year we published the **school improvement guidance**, introducing a new way for the education system to work together to support schools in their improvement, build confidence in the system and retain a clear focus on supporting all learners to progress through their education. We are now working towards putting this guidance on a statutory footing next year, helping us move towards an evaluation, improvement and accountability system firmly grounded

in school self-evaluation and school-to-school collaboration for improvement.

Estyn has a key role to play in supporting this vision. Estyn's new approach to inspection includes a move away from summative judgements to focus more on strengths and areas for improvement. There is also greater flexibility in the framework to consider the context of each school or setting. Professional dialogue is now at the heart of the inspection process.

In their annual report, Estyn stated that regional consortia and local authorities not in a consortium 'developed suitable approaches to support schools to develop their curriculum' and began to develop stronger approaches to supporting primary and secondary collaboration. Estyn also noted that too often this support was not bespoke enough to meet needs and provision was not evaluated effectively enough.

Senior leaders recognised in early insights research that school improvement services provide a range of support to schools (for example, regular network meetings for assessment and progression leads; materials to help schools develop approaches to map progression and attainment; access to expert speakers and advisers to support curriculum planning). Senior leaders reported that schools value the support provided through clusters and networks.

## **School information ecosystem**

A school improvement system that fully supports the ambitions of the Curriculum for Wales needs an information ecosystem that can facilitate this. We want a streamlined, coherent approach to information across our education system: one which puts learning and learners at the centre and minimises the burdens on our practitioners. A large-scale research project into the information and data needs of the school system in Wales came to its conclusion in January, after an 18-month duration. The [report on developing a new data and information ecosystem](#) presents findings and recommendations relating to the development

of a new data and information ecosystem that underpins curriculum reform.

Following the **Ministerial written statement on school improvement and information on 19 January**, we are now in touch with schools, local authorities and regional consortia, Estyn and our international expert advisors. Our aim is to develop a new school improvement and information landscape which supports and enables schools to realise the Curriculum for Wales, and enables us and education partners to use information constructively for national improvement. We will do this by building an information ecosystem that is holistic; one that continues to feature qualifications data but as part of a broader information landscape. In taking this work forward, we remain mindful of **our commitments following Audit Wales' 2022 report**. We are:

- considering how the recommendations can be applied to a data and information ecosystem that supports Curriculum for Wales ambitions and underpins the aims of all school education policy, whilst balancing the varying needs of different stakeholders
- drawing on the report to design an information ecosystem based on firm principles, that can continuously develop as reform embeds in the school system and as education policy continues to evolve
- drawing on the recommendations to improve ways in which we can contextualise data to:
  - i) support its interpretation, and
  - ii) better analyse the impact of poverty and other barriers faced by learners and support effectiveness for disadvantaged young people
- continuing to work in partnership with stakeholders on the detail of the report's recommendations and taking forward the appropriate programme of work
- fully considering the recommendations in developing our reformed approach to using information to support school improvement, and, in partnership with schools, moving towards a more holistic system that promotes learning and puts learners, practitioners, parents and carers at the centre

## Funding attributable to curriculum reform

To provide ongoing support for effective Curriculum for Wales implementation, funding levels were maintained for the 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 financial years. In 2024 to 2025, funding levels are set to taper down year on year to reflect implementation of the reform programme.

In [response to Audit Wales' new Curriculum for Wales report](#), and in line with the approach set out in [last year's curriculum annual report](#), we are publishing information on Welsh Government funding from the Education and Welsh Language main expenditure group (MEG) that is directly attributable to curriculum reform. In doing so, we recognise that a number of other budgets within the MEG also indirectly contribute to the reforms (for example: initial teacher training, support for digital delivery, literacy and numeracy, National Music Service). Funding directly attributable to curriculum reform from the Education and Welsh Language MEG is, therefore, defined as covering:

- direct funding for schools' curriculum and assessment reform
- support for non-maintained settings
- professional learning for curriculum reform
- Camau i'r Dyfodol progression support project
- Qualifications Wales new qualifications development
- resources and supporting materials
- school improvement services support for children and assessment reform
- evaluation and monitoring programme
- communications
- Welsh Government operational costs

## Table 1 builds on last year's annual report and sets out directly attributable spend in these areas over the last 4 financial years

Activity	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
<b>Curriculum reform</b>				
Practitioner costs for Curriculum for Wales guidance development	1,148,001	997,997	86,250	143,000
Regional and local authority support for curriculum and assessment reform	2,002,000	2,002,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Schools' curriculum and assessment reform, including wellbeing and progression	-	-	9,203,000	6,346,000
Schools' network engagement	-	-	3,240,000	3,000,000
Resources and supporting materials	-	-	306,749	403,274
Non-maintained settings support	-	-	314,020	289,199
Progression support programme	-	-	499,546	1,314,454
Communications and stakeholder engagement	216,289	77,447	327,150	258,327

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<b>Activity</b>	<b>2019 to 2020</b>	<b>2020 to 2021</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>2022 to 2023</b>
Research evaluation and monitoring	82,301	17,293	235,701	276,775
Welsh Government operational costs, including guidance development and the National Network	421,069	288,597	240,664	405,535
<b>Curriculum and assessment</b>				
Regional and local authority assessment for learning support for schools	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000
<b>Teacher development and support</b>				
Professional Learning pioneer schools and cluster schools	2,580,000	2,280,000	680,000	-
Curriculum Professional Learning programme (regional consortia and schools)	2,225,000	1,771,000	5,900,000	6,400,000
Curriculum national Professional Learning resources	300,000	300,000	390,000	170,000
Professional Learning grant for schools	15,000,000	7,000,000	12,000,000	12,000,000
<b>Qualifications Wales</b>				

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Activity	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
New qualifications development	319,000	686,000	1,142,000	1,327,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,693,660</b>	<b>15,820,334</b>	<b>37,965,080</b>	<b>35,733,564</b>

Of the £35.733 million spent on curriculum reform in 2022 to 2023, over £21.7 million was passed to schools to support their implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, exceeding our planned sum of £21 million.

**Table 2 below sets out current spend projections in these areas over the next 2 financial years covered by the current Welsh Government budget**

Activity	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
<b>Curriculum reform</b>		
Practitioner costs for Curriculum for Wales guidance development	255,000	200,000
Regional and local authority support for curriculum and assessment reform	3,000,000	3,000,000
Schools' curriculum and assessment reform, including wellbeing and progression	6,346,000	3,006,000

Schools' network engagement	3,000,000	3,000,000
Resources and supporting materials*	1,098,000	1,500,000
Non-maintained settings support	198,000	200,000
Progression support programme	600,000	0
Communications and stakeholder engagement	250,000	250,000
Research evaluation and monitoring	1,050,000	1,100,000
Welsh Government operational costs, including guidance development	785,000	750,000
<b>Curriculum and assessment</b>		
Regional and local authority assessment for learning support for schools	400,000	400,000
<b>Teacher development and support</b>		
Professional Learning pioneer schools and cluster schools	-	-
Curriculum Professional Learning programme (regional consortia and schools)	5,700,000	5,700,000
Curriculum national Professional Learning resources**	400,000	tbc
Professional Learning grant for schools	12,000,000	12,000,000

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## Qualifications Wales

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New qualifications development	1,450,000	1,330,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,532,000</b>	<b>32,436,000</b>

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\* including support for new qualifications in due course

\*\* figure for the next financial year to be agreed in due course

Future annual reports will again update on actual spend and forward projections, highlighting any anticipated pressures or savings.

## Legislation

The **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (Consequential Amendments) (Secondary Legislation) (No. 3) Regulations 2022** came into force on 1 September 2022. These regulations made provision for the necessary consequential amendments to other legislation arising from the commencement of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021. This includes changes in terminology to align with the Curriculum for Wales.

Welsh Ministers issued a revised **statements of what matters Code** on 2 June to bring about changes to the mandatory statements of what matters in respect of **Welsh histories, following consultation in 2022**. The **Curriculum for Wales framework guidance** for the Humanities Area has been updated on Hwb to reflect these changes.

As noted in the **Welsh language section of this report, following consultation** work is in train to introduce a Welsh Language Education Bill to the Senedd this legislative term.

## 10. Forward look

As the Curriculum for Wales enters its second year, we will take steps to help schools and settings consolidate the excellent work they have already undertaken. We have been clear that roll-out is an important staging point in our reform journey, rather than its end. We will support schools and settings establish ongoing cycles of refinement, ensuring we continue to learn, develop and evolve. We will also ensure that we learn increasingly from the practical experiences of schools and settings as they engage with their curriculum reform on a daily basis.

### Clarifying expectations

We will keep expectations about roll-out and approaches to reform under review, in light of emerging experiences. In particular, we are reviewing and amending the content of the journey to curriculum roll-out section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance to ensure it remains relevant and provides more support about schools' approaches to continuing refinement. As part of this, we will also ensure expectations about preparation for roll-out and curriculum design in statutory guidance are clear, simple and coherent. We will not substantively change the nature of these expectations at this point, but clarify them, condense them and ensure they are clearly communicated. We will consult on redrafted guidance in the autumn with refined versions being published in January 2024, ahead of the next academic year.

### Expanding the National Network

We will continue to evolve the National Network to ensure to that it helps raise capacity and develop connections across the profession. The scope of National Network conversations will develop, building on successful conversations about

curriculum design and progression but also expanding into more specific aspects of the curriculum. We will also ensure that practitioners are at the heart of co-ordinating, leading and drawing conclusions from the Network to support schools and settings, and to develop national policy on the curriculum. There will be opportunities to register to be part of this policy development work in the autumn. We will also look to provide opportunities for hybrid and in-person collaboration and will publish a calendar of Network events at the beginning of the autumn term.

## **Welsh Government priorities for ongoing support of curriculum realisation**

We will establish a number of key priorities to secure the continuing successful roll-out in the coming years. These focus on consolidating the fundamental aspects of the curriculum that are critical to its success while also recognising support needed on specific aspects of the curriculum. These have been directly informed by a range of evidence including: early insights, Estyn and Camau i'r Dyfodol phase 1 reports. They reflect our intent in the short term to respond to the experiences of schools as the curriculum rolls out as well as our long-term intentions; they are:

### **Monitor and consider additional support in aspects of the curriculum where the profession welcomes it**

We will review guidance, support and resources in these aspects and will work with the National Network to identify and develop additional support required. We will also work closely with supporting partners to ensure common approaches to support and professional learning. By its nature, this priority is more fluid but this year focus includes:

- sharing and supporting emerging approaches to curriculum design,

progression and cluster working

- the application of cross-curricular skills as key enablers of and gateways to learning, specifically oracy, reading and numeracy
- supporting international languages implementation in primary schools
- support for Welsh language and use of the Welsh language framework

## **Work with partners to ensure dependencies which are critical to the success of the curriculum reflect its ethos and are consistent with the approach of the Curriculum Framework**

This relates to aspects of the wider education system that are key enablers of reform and are central to promoting positive approaches. These dependencies are also aspects that we know, internationally, are key obstacles if they do not reflect reform. We have strong working relationships with partners in this area and will work closely with them to ensure common understanding of how these can and should reflect reform, and develop plans with them about how these areas can and should evolve in the longer term. Communicating this is critical to this priority so all parts of the system recognise that these areas are expected to be driven by the Curriculum for Wales, its philosophy and concepts. This year and in following years this will focus on:

- ensuring alignment of qualifications with the Curriculum for Wales
- ensuring alignment of accountability, inspection and school improvement systems with the Curriculum for Wales
- continuing to ensure that professional learning supports Curriculum for Wales priorities

## **Continue to develop policy on curriculum to ensure the national framework is clear and supports schools**

The Curriculum for Wales national framework guidance will need to continue to

evolve to reflect experience, evidence and research. In the short term, this will focus on clarifying and simplifying, not adding new substantive expectations, but we will also consider what longer term changes might need to be considered. We will also work with the profession to understand how helpful expectations and support are, and where additional support and detail is needed. This year and into following years, this will encompass:

- ensuring expectations are clear and simple: we will update the content of the journey to curriculum roll-out section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance and consider how best this information can be presented. We will consult on this in the autumn term
- working with the National Network to envisage how those expectations might evolve in the long term to reflect experience of reform and the findings of the Camau i'r Dyfodol project
- establishing a long-term cycle for review and refinement of the Curriculum for Wales framework

## **Enable coherence of expectations and support in foundational concepts and processes of the curriculum**

These entail the common principles and processes that support equity and coherence across schools' curricula. We will ensure that national guidance is sufficiently clear and will collaborate with partners and the National Network to develop additional support to clarify expectations and raise capacity. In the coming years this will focus on providing coherent expectations and support on:

- the process of design of curriculum, progression and assessment arrangements
- supporting cross-cluster working on curriculum, progression and assessment design

## **Enable coherence of expectations and support in aspects of the curriculum where the profession require particular support**

As above, we will ensure that national guidance is sufficiently clear and will work with partners to develop additional support for schools to clarify expectations and to raise capacity: this is specifically relevant to relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in the coming year.

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