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Evaluation of the professional standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching: Final report

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Evaluation of the professional standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
ALN	Additional learning needs
CPD	Continuous professional development
EWC	Education Workforce Council
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HLTAs	Higher Level Teaching Assistants
INSET	In-service Education and Training
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LSW	Learning support worker: used to refer to both Teaching Assistants and Higher-level Teaching Assistants
Middle school	Ages 3 – 16 / 19 school
NAEL	National Academy for Educational Leadership
NAPL	National Approach to Professional Learning
NPEP	National Professional Enquiry Project
NPLE	National Professional Learning Entitlement
NEIR	National Evaluation and Improvement Resource
NQTs	Newly Qualified Teachers
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLJ	Professional Learning Journey
PLP	Professional Learning Passport
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
The standards	Professional standards : used to refer to both the professional standards for teaching and leadership and the professional standards for assisting teaching
PSATs	Professional standards for assisting teaching
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
REC(s)	Regional Education Consortia, also referred to as School Improvement Partners.
SLO	Schools as learning organisations: national approach to professional learning
TAs	Teaching Assistants

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government commissioned Arad Research, in partnership with OB3 and the University of South Wales, to evaluate the professional standards for teaching and leadership and the professional standards for assisting teaching (referred to in this document as ‘the professional standards’ or ‘the standards’). This report presents the findings of this evaluation.
- 1.2 This report sets out the evaluation methodology (Section 2) and findings from the evaluation (Sections 3-6). Conclusions and issues for consideration are set out in Sections 7 and 8. Research tools are set out in Annex A. The report provides a synthesis of final evaluation findings over the two years of the evaluation and refers to findings from the [Year 1 evaluation report](#) (Welsh Government, 2021) where appropriate. In sections 3-6, findings from Year 1 are presented, followed by findings from Year 2, which include any changes observed over time. Case studies based on settings engaged during both waves of the evaluation are presented in Annex B.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

- 1.3 The aim of the evaluation was ‘to evaluate the implementation, effectiveness and anticipated impacts of the professional standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching in terms of their ability to support the development of a highly-skilled workforce ready to meet the challenges of education reform in Wales’ (Welsh Government, 2019a).
- 1.4 The evaluation’s objectives were to:
- Assess the engagement with the standards among practitioners
 - Review the implementation of the standards among practitioners
 - Understand what factors and/or conditions support or impede effective implementation of and engagement with the standards

- Consider whether the standards have been effective in terms of their intention to:
 - Set clear expectations about effective practice during a practitioner’s career including, where applicable, entry to the profession
 - Enable practitioners to reflect on their practice, individually and collectively, against nationally agreed standards of effective practice and affirm and celebrate their successes
 - Support practitioners to identify areas for further professional development
 - Be used as part of the performance management process.
- Explore the anticipated impacts of implementing the standards at the practitioner, school and system level.
- Make recommendations for future policy and practice across the whole system to support the future implementation and effectiveness of the standards (Welsh Government, 2019a).

Overview of the standards

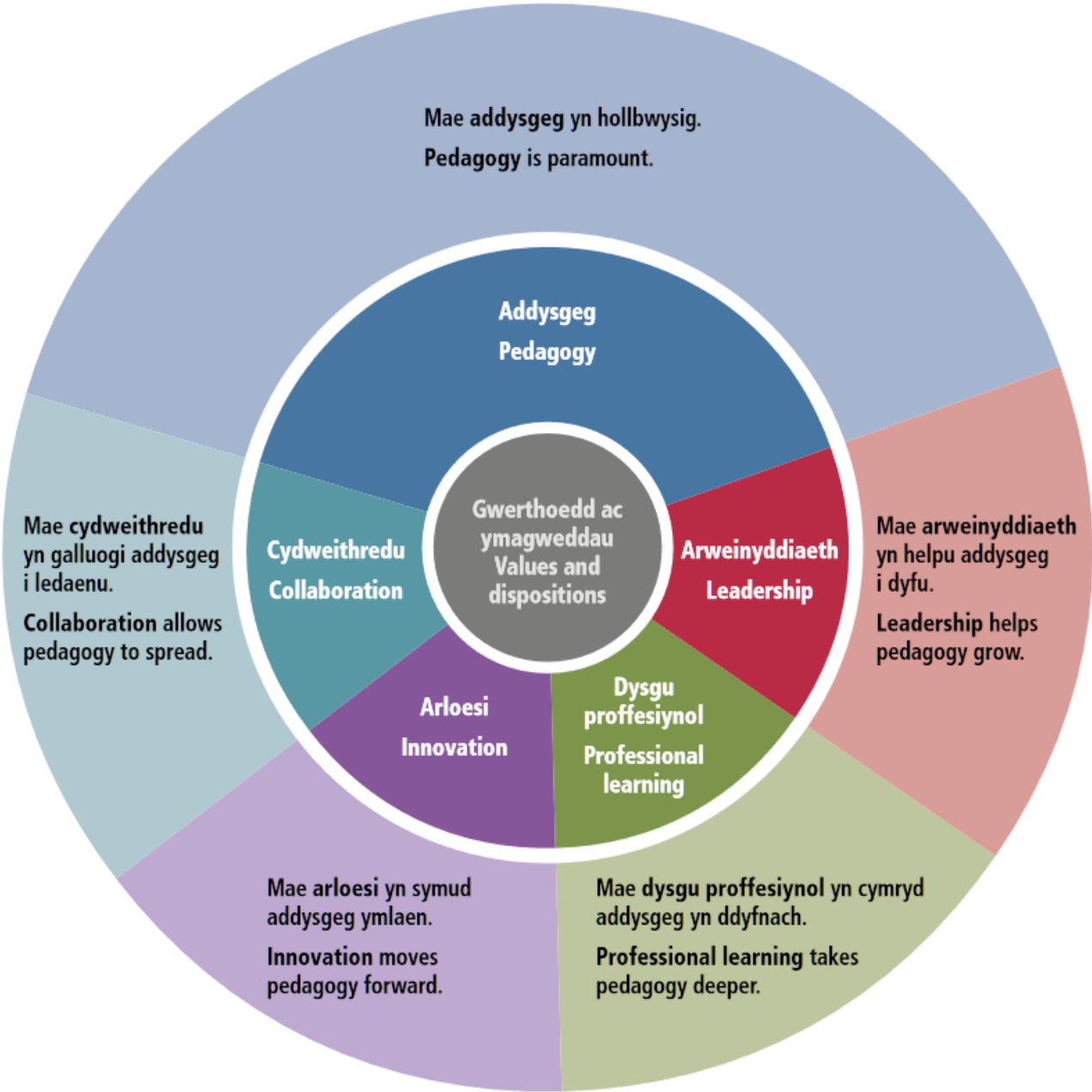
1.5 The standards were published in September 2017 and Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) commencing induction from that date are required to work to the standards. NQTs who commenced their induction before this date had completed their induction using the same standards with which they started their training. All other serving teachers and leaders moved to the standards from September 2018.

1.6 The standards comprise three inter-connected sections:

- Professional standards for teaching and leadership
- Professional standards for formal leadership
- Professional standards for assisting teaching.

- 1.7 The standards are accompanied by overarching values and dispositions that are intended to support practitioners ‘to be the best you can be’:
- Welsh language and culture
 - Professional entitlement
 - The system role
 - The professional learner
 - Literacy, numeracy and digital competence
 - Rights of learners.
- 1.8 All three sets of standards are based on five essential elements of effective teaching and leadership: pedagogy; leadership; professional learning; innovation; collaboration.
- 1.9 Each standard is divided into elements which contain descriptors that exemplify how the standards could be applied, depending on where an individual is in their career and role.
- Standards for teaching and leadership - descriptors describe expectations that should be met for (1) the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and (2) the successful completion of statutory induction, respectively. The third level of descriptors exemplify sustained highly-effective practice and provide a focus for career-long professional learning.
 - Standards for formal leadership - the descriptors show the expectations of (1) a formal leadership role and (2) highly effective practice in a formal leadership role.
 - Standards for assisting teaching – the descriptors describe effective practice as a Teaching Assistant (TA) and highly-effective practice as a TA. TAs seeking Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status should be demonstrating sustained highly-effective practice in the relevant descriptors before they undertake the HLTA scheme and if successful, achieve HLTA status.
- 1.10 Figure 1 below provides an overview of the standards and five essential elements of effective teaching and leadership.

Figure 1. Overview of the standards and five essential elements of effective teaching and leadership



Source: Welsh Government, 2018

Background and context

1.11 The Welsh Government is committed to developing a high-quality education profession as set out in its plan for the education sector up until 2021,

‘Education in Wales: Our National Mission Action Plan 2017-21’.¹ In order to achieve this aim, ‘Our National Mission’ states that the Welsh Government will ‘support teachers in Wales to be lifelong professional learners that reflect on and enhance their own practice to motivate and inspire children and young people’.² It also sets out the Welsh Government’s plans to reform curriculum and examination systems, to improve training for teachers, to establish a National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) and to revise the professional standards for teaching and leadership. ‘Our National Mission’ also sets out the objective of developing, consulting upon and launching ‘new professional standards for teachers and others in the education workforce that will focus on the essential elements of successful teaching’. It also commits to developing standards for ‘support staff that can enable them to improve their skills, commit to professional learning and facilitate clearer pathways to the role of higher-level teaching assistant’.³

- 1.12 The standards were developed following the publication of a series of reviews which informed the Welsh Government’s approach to professional learning in the education workforce.
- 1.13 A ‘Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales’ recognised that a review of Practising Teacher Standards was proposed by the Welsh Government, and made the case that any future standards should be based upon a single framework which could be applied to practitioners gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) on completion of their Initial Teacher Education (ITE); during induction for NQTs and other new teachers working in the ‘first three to five years of teaching’. The report stressed the importance that any future standards should be ‘aligned so that they provide a clear path to guide teachers’ early career progression’.⁴

¹ Welsh Government (2020) [Education in Wales: Our national mission. Update October 2020](#).

² Ibid. p.25

³ Ibid. p.25

⁴ Professor Ralph Tabberer (2013) [A Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales](#) p.35

- 1.14 Professor Graham Donaldson's Review, 'Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' considered the fundamental purposes of education and recommended curriculum and assessment arrangements that can best fulfil those purposes.⁵ The Review highlighted the need to create 'a curriculum which supports and enables world-class teaching and learning in the twenty-first century'. The Review triggered a major programme of curriculum reform in Wales, establishing a new Curriculum for Wales for implementation from 2022 onwards. 'Successful Futures' also recommended the development of initial and career-long professional learning programmes that build teachers' capacity to support the full range of curriculum purposes.
- 1.15 'Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers' acknowledged that Welsh Government-led educational reform, implemented following recommendations set out in the Donaldson Review, would 'significantly raise the bar' in terms of what would be expected of teachers.⁶ The Furlong Review published in 2015 noted that 'Wales will need a different type of teacher professional; one who has significantly more responsibility, one who understands the 'why' and the 'how' of teaching as well as the 'what' [which will] have major implications for both initial teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD)'.⁷
- 1.16 The 'Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales' report found that whilst most schools were taking steps towards developing as learning organisations, a 'considerable proportion' were 'still far removed from realising this objective'.⁸ The report concluded that the current approach relied on 'a large number of relatively discrete and static teacher and leadership standards'. It recommended simplifying professional standards for teachers in Wales within a single framework to cover all career stages and all staff. It stated that 'Wales should consider simplifying and reducing

⁵ Donaldson (2015) Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales

⁶ Professor John Furlong (2015) Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers

⁷ Ibid. p.38

⁸ OECD (2018) Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales

the number of professional teacher and leadership standards and base them on a vision of the Welsh professional teacher and leader [and that] ‘standards cover all professional staff, including the support staff’ as well as ‘should provide clarity and guidance on the professional expectations at all career stages’.⁹

- 1.17 The Welsh Government consulted on draft professional standards for teaching and leadership between March and May 2017.¹⁰ Respondents to the consultation felt the standards were appropriately ambitious and were aligned with other reforms across the education landscape. The majority of respondents welcomed the increased autonomy for practitioners. Some respondents expressed concern that teacher workload could present a barrier to achieving the Welsh Government’s vision for teaching and leadership. In responses to this, the Welsh Government noted that the proposal contained fewer standards than under (then) existing arrangements and that careful consideration was being given to ensuring new standards would not increase workload. Most respondents agreed that the structure of the professional standards (the values and dispositions, the five dimensions and their elements) sets out an appropriate shared purpose for all school teachers and leaders. Some felt the structure and the content of the standards were complex and questioned the relationship between the components of the model. The majority of respondents agreed the descriptors were appropriate, supporting career-long professional learning and continuous professional dialogue.
- 1.18 The Welsh Government consulted on the draft professional standards for assisting teaching in 2019.¹¹ These standards were for all teaching assistants (TAs) and higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs) who work with learners. Responses to the consultation highlighted the benefits of introducing professional standards for TAs and HLTAs, including

⁹ Ibid. p.108

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2017b). Consultation - summary of responses: New professional standards for teaching and leadership.

¹¹ Welsh Government (2019b). Consultation - summary of response: Draft professional standards for assisting teaching.

recognising the professional status and value of those who assist teaching. Respondents indicated that standards could help clarify the roles of TAs and HLTAs and provide a shared focus for those who assist teaching (along with teachers and leaders) on the same five standards: pedagogy, collaboration, professional learning, leadership and innovation. Consultation responses noted concerns about the time and training required to introduce the standards and the possibility that standards may alter perceptions of the roles of TAs and HLTAs. In its response, the Welsh Government indicated that standards were being introduced in a phased way and in partnership with national and regional stakeholders. It was also noted that standards are likely to be most effective when they are used as a means of enabling rather than measuring performance.

- 1.19 'Investing in excellence: Our national workforce development plan 2019–21' highlights the standards as a key component of 'retention and career progression' alongside 'performance management', 'professional learning and the national networks' and 'leadership including succession planning'.¹² This plan sets out the requirements for NQTs to 'reflect on their practice and gather evidence to show they are meeting the required professional standards and relevant descriptors' during their induction year. The plan also notes that the Welsh Government will develop professional standards for regional Challenge Advisers and those supporting school improvement. It includes the following success criterion relating to the standards: 'All practitioners reflecting on professional standards to inform their professional development reviews'.¹³
- 1.20 The standards are one of eight elements within the National Approach for Professional Learning. The national approach was launched in 2018, aiming to create a professional learning vision fit for the evolving education system in Wales. Other elements include maximising the use of collaborative networks, involvement in Schools as Learning Organisations, accreditation /

¹² Welsh Government (2019c). Investing in excellence: Our national workforce development plan 2019–21.

¹³ Ibid p.35.

recognition models and provision of a professional learning blend to ensure access and flexibility. Within this context, the standards are intended to underpin the curriculum for professional learning.¹⁴

1.21 As part of the National Approach to Professional Learning, and to support the development of the Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government is working with regional consortia and higher education institution (HEI) partners to develop the National Professional Enquiry Project. Participating schools are supported to lead enquiries in their own setting to explore professional learning requirements for the Curriculum for Wales. A piloting and early development phase was carried out in 2018-19, in which schools worked in national enquiry groups focusing on themes within the overarching areas of ‘planning for a purpose-driven curriculum’, ‘pedagogy and how learning works’, ‘project-based learning’ and ‘implications for leadership and management’. Consolidation and enrichment activities were initially planned for 2019-20 and expansion and further development in 2020-21.¹⁵

1.22 To help guide schools through the structural and professional learning aspects of preparing for Curriculum for Wales, the Professional Learning Journey has been developed.¹⁶ Published in May 2020, it directly incorporates the National Approach to Professional Learning, Schools as Learning Organisations and the cross-regional support programme developed by consortia. Its intention is to make these models and approaches easier to access, navigate and use in planning. The element of the professional learning journey which refers specifically to the standards indicates that practitioners may wish to consider: creating continuous learning opportunities for staff; developing team learning and collaboration; and creating systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge for learning.

¹⁴ National Approach to Professional Learning, available online on Hwb [National approach to professional learning - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#) [accessed 17.5.21]

¹⁵ National Professional enquiry project, available online on Hwb [National professional enquiry project - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#) [accessed 17.5.21]

¹⁶ Professional Learning Journey, available online on Hwb [Professional Learning Journey - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#) [accessed 17.5.21]

1.23 Estyn has sought to further support consistent levels of high-quality school improvement work through the development of a National Evaluation and Improvement Resource. This resource is intended to support and strengthen the self-evaluation process within schools. An update published in October 2020 set out progress and plans for developing the resource (with the final timeline for rollout to be decided). The resource will focus on five prompts: teaching; leadership; vision; well-being; curriculum; and blended learning. The teaching and leadership prompts align with the standards and include a dialogue prompt specifically referencing the standards:

‘To what extent do all teachers use the Professional standards for teaching and leadership to guide their professional learning?’¹⁷

1.24 The OECD’s October 2020 report on ‘Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales’ highlighted the central role professional learning should play in the successful implementation of the new curriculum.¹⁸ More specifically, the report also discussed the work undertaken by the Welsh Government to align professional standards with the wider curriculum and professional learning reform process. It notes that ‘the standards start to encourage more agency on the part of teachers, and more “co-agency” on the part of setting leaders and teachers, which is in line with current reflections internationally’. During interviews, OECD discovered that: most stakeholders have received the standards well; that the standards encourage innovation, collaboration, and authentic learning and enquiry; but that middle tier stakeholders and the Welsh Government have a key role to play in offering further clarity and guidance on how the standards can be enacted.

1.25 In November 2020, the Welsh Government published an independent review of statutory induction of teachers, undertaken by Professor Mick Waters.¹⁹ The report was critical of much of the current provision, noting

¹⁷ Estyn (2020) The National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR) update and guidance v1.3, appendix 1.

¹⁸ OECD (2020), Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales

¹⁹ Waters (2020) Learning to be a teacher for Wales: the induction of teachers into the profession.

that 'rarely can a review of an aspect of schooling have met such a wave of unanimity' and expressions of frustrations with current processes. This practitioner frustration extends to much of the existing professional learning structures. The report makes numerous suggestions on improving professional learning during the induction of teachers, including: the need for regular review by Estyn; a national programme for professional learning developed by consortia focused on effective growth of the standards; and differentiated learning provision provided by consortia to complement school-level learning opportunities, with an emphasis upon exercising professional collaboration, innovation and leadership. The report makes it clear that:

'The five professional standards for teaching and leadership should guide the experience and professional learning of the enrolled teacher from the beginning of ITE through to the end of induction and beyond and descriptors used to provide evidence of suitability for entry to the register of teachers for Wales.'²⁰

- 1.26 In 2020-21, the Education Workforce Council (EWC) was funded to review how practitioners engage with the standards and to develop new resources to aid practitioners' engagement with the standards.²¹ While an initial review undertaken by EWC as part of this work identified pockets of good practice in terms of practitioner engagement, it also found that patterns of engagement vary significantly across the workforce, with practitioners who have a statutory obligation to engage with the standards (such as NQTs) more likely to do so. The review also highlighted a need to educate practitioners further on how the standards can be used and to provide further resources to support engagement. The review identified three groups of practitioners which should be prioritised within the second phase of EWC's work, namely: post-induction teachers; headteachers and senior leaders; and teaching assistants. The report noted that any resources produced would be:

²⁰ Ibid p. 48.

²¹ Education Workforce Council (2021), Professional Standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching in Wales.

‘likely to include some form of exemplification to help practitioners to interpret the standards, case studies providing relatable examples of how they may be used to improve practitioners practice and self-evaluation tools that allow practitioners to measure and reflect upon their progress.’²²

- 1.27 Several policy initiatives have been launched by the Welsh Government in recent years that have introduced changes to the professional learning landscape in Wales and have provided platforms for professional collaboration. The National Network, launched in late 2021, brings together practitioners, academic experts, regional consortia, Estyn, policy makers and other organisations to identify and address barriers to, and opportunities for, the implementation of CfW. It builds on professional learning at the regional level and provides opportunities for conversation, co-construction, joint enquiry and problem-solving activity.
- 1.28 The National Pedagogy Project was launched by the Welsh Government to facilitate conversation, collaboration and enquiry in order to support exploration and reflection on the pedagogical principles. It also aims to shape the ongoing vision for learning as the Curriculum for Wales is realised. ‘Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning’ provides a digital space to share practice and support collaboration within and across our schools to explore pedagogy and practice.
- 1.29 The professional standards feature as a key component of the National Professional Learning Entitlement (NPLE). The vision builds on the National approach to professional learning (NAPL) and sets out a commitment to equity of access to quality professional learning for all education professionals. The NPLE sets out the expectation that all practitioners should be driven by the overarching set of values and dispositions included in the professional standards as well as the five professional standards themselves. Furthermore it states that:
- use of the professional standards should inform performance management and school improvement arrangements and lead to the

²² Ibid p. 23.

development of an individual professional learning journey for every practitioner, including teachers and teaching assistants, leaders and system leaders.

- all education professionals are entitled to work in a school or setting, or organisation that uses professional standards in all aspects of professional development.
- practitioners should regularly consider their practice in terms of the professional standards and instigating improvement by seeking appropriate professional learning.
- education system leaders or advisors, including education consortia, local authorities and diocesan authorities should support schools or settings to develop a culture that promotes and supports professional learning in accordance with the relevant professional standards and the principles of the schools as learning organisations model.
- education system leaders or advisors, including education consortia, local authorities and diocesan authorities should ensure they are operating as professional learners themselves, modelling making use of relevant professional standards and engaging in their own professional learning journeys.

1.30 Roll-out of Curriculum for Wales began in September 2022 in all primary schools in Wales. Secondary schools were given the choice to begin implementation for Year 7 learners from September 2022 and extend their roll-out on a year-by-year basis from thereon, or to roll-out in Years 7 and 8 from September 2023. In preparation for roll-out schools were required to design their curriculum. Key to the successful realisation of the new curriculum arrangements is ensuring that schools, working with partners, are able to access the practical support to develop the pedagogical, curriculum design and leadership skills needed.

1.31 **Error! Reference source not found.** provides an overview of the series of reviews and initiatives outlined above and other key developments and milestones that are relevant to the standards. A diagrammatic summary of these is presented in **Error! Reference source not found..**

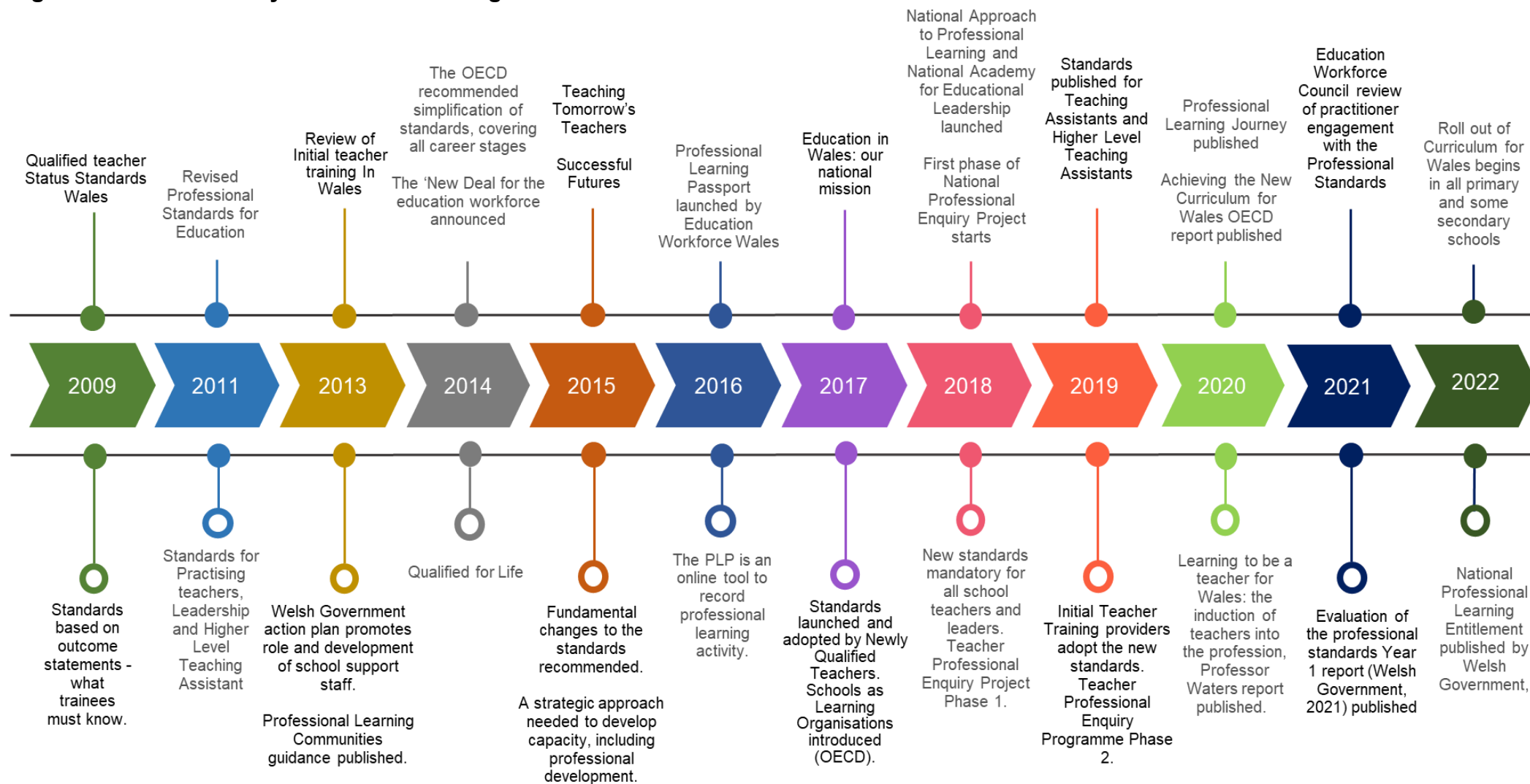
Table 1. Key developments relevant to the standards

Date	Key development
2009	Qualified Teacher Status Standards Wales – replaced 2006 standards and were based on outcome statements, set out what trainees must know – Professional values and practice; Knowledge and understanding; Teaching.
2011	Revised professional standards for education practitioners in Wales Standards for – Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Practising teachers and Leadership. The standards focused on – Professional values and attributes; Knowledge and understanding; Skills.
2013	Review of Initial Teacher Training in Wales 15 recommendations proposed to raise the quality in the sector as initial teacher training in Wales was found to need improvement in many areas. The Welsh Government responded to the recommendations including ‘an integrated system of professional standards’.
2013	Professional learning communities an overview of the national model for professional learning communities
2013	Action plan to promote the role and development of support staff in schools in Wales highlighted commitment for all school support staff to have access to training, with qualifications fit for purpose, including professional standards providing national consistency.
2014	Qualified for Life: An Education Improvement Plan for Learners aged 3-19 in Wales – Strategic Objective 1 - An excellent professional workforce with strong pedagogy based on an understanding of what works, with the strengthening of the standards and revision of leadership standards noted, and assurance that the standards will remain fit for purpose.
2014	Improving schools in Wales (OECD) – recommended standards simplified and based on Wales’ vision of the practitioner and leader, cover all career stages and include learning support staff.
June 2014	The ‘New deal for the education workforce’ announced, with further detail published March 2015 . Career-long development pathways to be established and renewed professional standards.
2015	Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers recommended a ‘fundamental re-conceptualisation’ of the standards for ITE so that the standards better reflect the required skills for entrants to the profession and the need to integrate ITE with career-long professional learning
2015	Successful Futures noted that the effective change strategy required needs to be supported by a strategic approach to developing capacity, including appropriate ITE and continuing professional development.
Nov 2015	Establishment of Pioneer Schools Network , including professional learning (previously called ‘new deal’) pioneers

Oct 2016	Education Workforce Council launched the Professional Learning Passport
2017	The Welsh Education Reform Journey (OECD) leadership acknowledged as a prime driver for improvement, with alignment between leadership standards and the new teaching standards recommended and linking the standards to Initial teacher training programmes, with all career stages covered.
June 2017	Consultation summary of responses on the new professional standards for teaching and leadership.
Sept 2017	Education in Wales: our national mission: action plan 2017-21 includes 'developing a high-quality teaching profession' 'new professional standards for teachers and others in the education workforce that will focus on the essential elements of successful teaching'.
Sept 2017	Professional standards for teaching and leadership launched and adopted by NQTs during induction.
Nov 2017	Schools as Learning Organisations introduced in Wales.
2018	Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales (OECD) supports Wales and assesses the extent to which schools have developed as learning organisations
2018	National Approach to Professional Learning launched with elements for schools, regions and the nation presented.
2018	First phase of National Professional Enquiry Project starts.
May 2018	National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) launched, aiming to ensure all practitioners are able to engage with professional learning.
Sept 2018	New standards form part of the statutory requirements for appraisal of all school teachers and leaders, and Leadership standards used to form basis of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)
Nov 2018	Draft standards published for TAs and HLTAs for consultation. National professional enquiry project Phase 1 – piloting and early development launched
Feb 2019	Investing in an excellent workforce reiterated the establishment of new standards to underpin the development of the teaching profession.
May 2019	Consultation summary of responses for draft professional standards for assisting teaching published.
Sept 2019	ITE provision adopts standards. Professional standards for assisting teaching available for all TAs and HLTAs.

Nov 2019	<p>Investing in excellence: Our national workforce development plan 2019–21 includes the development of an Early Career Support Package, statutory induction is emphasised, and the plan to develop professional standards for regional Challenge Advisors.</p> <p>Teacher Professional Enquiry Programme Phase 2: Consolidation and Enrichment launched.</p>
May 2020	<p>Professional Learning Journey published</p>
October 2020	<p>Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales OECD report published.</p>
November 2020	<p>Learning to be a teacher for Wales: the induction of teachers into the profession. An independent report by Professor Mick Waters.</p>
March 2021	<p>Education Workforce Council (2021), review of professional standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching in Wales</p>
September 2021	<p>Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act begins to take effect in Wales.</p>
September 2022	<p>Roll out of Curriculum for Wales begins in all primary and some secondary schools in Wales.</p>
September 2022	<p>National Professional Learning Entitlement published by the Welsh Government, setting out that professional standards ‘should inform performance management and school improvement arrangements and lead to the development of an individual professional learning journey for every practitioner.’</p>

Figure 2. Timeline of key milestones relating to the standards



Who the standards apply to: the education workforce in the maintained sector

1.32 School teachers and learning support workers (LSWs) are required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) and pay an annual fee to remain registered. EWC publish an annual 'Statistics Digest' based on the data held in the Register of Education Practitioners. Data from the annual education workforce statistics for Wales 2022²³ (EWC, 2022) shows that:

- there were 82,159 individual registrants (13 per cent of these were registered in multiple registration categories, e.g., teacher and school LSW)
- 35,256 registrants were eligible to practice as school teachers
- 42,585 registrants were eligible to practice as school LSWs
- over three quarters of school teachers (76 per cent) and the majority of school LSWs (86 per cent) were female
- the majority of school teachers (92 per cent) and LSWs (69 per cent) declared their ethnicity as White
- a third (33 per cent) of school teachers declared themselves as Welsh speakers, and just over a quarter of school teachers were able to work through the medium of Welsh (27 per cent).

²³ Annual education workforce statistics for Wales 2022 [Workforce Statistics \(ewc.wales\)](https://www.ewc.wales/workforce-statistics)

2. Methodology

- 2.1 This section provides detail on the methodology adopted during the evaluation. This includes the rationale for the approach, detail of the fieldwork conducted, challenges encountered and limitations of the methodology.
- 2.2 The evaluation methodology comprised longitudinal qualitative research with stakeholders and practitioners alongside a review of available data on the implementation of the standards.
- 2.3 A total of 18 settings and 30 stakeholders were engaged in two waves of research activity (referred to in this report as Year 1 and Year 2 fieldwork):
- Year 1 fieldwork took place between October 2020 and April 2021
 - Year 2 fieldwork took place between May and September 2022.

A more detailed breakdown of the practitioners and stakeholders engaged in each wave of fieldwork is set out below. Case studies based on the settings engaged are presented in Annex B.

Overview of, and rationale for, the evaluation's methodology

- 2.4 Our approach was based on a process model which examined the logical steps that are required for the standards to be implemented effectively. This involved examining:
- levels of **awareness and understanding** of the standards among education practitioners and stakeholders.
 - how practitioners and stakeholders have **used or responded to the standards** on a day-to-day basis, for example in their setting or departmental plans and professional learning.

- the **effectiveness of implementation** of the standards, including factors and conditions enabling and impeding effective implementation.²⁴
- the **support** provided to facilitate implementation, and whether this is sufficient.
- the **impacts** emerging or anticipated as a result of the implementation of the standards.

2.5 The evaluation adopted a primarily qualitative approach to gathering data. The rationale for this was to enable the evaluation to gather rich, in-depth evidence to help understand practitioners' and stakeholders' awareness of the standards and their experiences of using them. A longitudinal approach was adopted to provide an opportunity for the evaluation fieldwork to consider how practitioners and settings awareness, understanding and use of the standards was changing over time. The evaluation has not sought to gather generalisable, statistically reliable data from settings on the standards, although some secondary quantitative evidence of awareness and engagement is included in Section 4 of this report.

2.6 Stakeholders were asked during interviews what information they collated on the use of the standards. Although stakeholders were not able to provide quantitative data on the use of the standards by settings and practitioners, Regional Education Consortia (RECs) and EWC provided data on participation in professional learning events relating to the standards. Specifically, they provided data on the number of settings participating in training events on the 'induction profile'; this is one of the key elements of the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) and is structured around the standards. Some data on practitioners' engagement with the standards through the PLP and on the training arranged by RECs relating to the use of the induction profile was also provided by EWC. This data is presented in Section 4 of this report.

²⁴ Findings relating to effectiveness of implementation are integrated with findings on how the standards are used in Section 4.

Fieldwork

- 2.7 During the project's scoping phase (January-April 2020) fieldwork was undertaken with a total of 22 individuals from national and regional stakeholder organisations. These included representatives of the Welsh Government, Estyn, Education Workforce Council (EWC), NAEL, ITE Providers and Regional Education Consortia (RECs). These interviews helped inform the development of the research tools (See Annex A of the Year 1 report) for Year 1 fieldwork, and these were refined for the Year 2 fieldwork (See Annex A of this report). Scoping interviewees were re-interviewed in the Year 2 stakeholder fieldwork of the evaluation.
- 2.8 Following the scoping phase, fieldwork with practitioners and stakeholders comprised the following:
- Year 1 (October 2020-April 2021): a total of 83 practitioners were interviewed across 20 settings, with a total of 49 stakeholders also interviewed (not including the 22 scoping phase interviewees referenced above).
 - Year 2 (May-July 2022): A total of 44 practitioners took part across 18 settings (two of the 20 settings engaged in Year 1 were unable to take part). A total of 40 out of the 44 practitioners took part in both waves of the research. A total of 30 stakeholders were interviewed in Year 2.²⁵
- 2.9 Interviews were conducted remotely, either by phone or virtual platform. Most interviews were conducted individually, with some undertaken in pairs or small groups, based on the preferences of the interviewees.

²⁵ All of these 30 interviewees were from 'national' or 'regional' stakeholder organisations engaged during Year 1. Two of these 30 interviewees were individuals who did not participate in Year 1 interviews but represented organisations who were engaged.

Fieldwork with settings

- 2.10 During the scoping phase, the evaluation team sought stakeholders' views on how to ensure that settings who had engaged with the standards in varying ways could be identified and recruited. It was agreed that, in the absence of quantitative data on levels of engagement with the standards, that a purposive approach would be required to identifying settings, drawing on qualitative evidence from stakeholders.
- 2.11 Following the scoping phase, the evaluation team requested lists of 12 settings from each REC – six who were considered to have engaged with the standards 'in depth' and six who were considered to be at an 'earlier stage of engagement' with the standards. A briefing note explaining these categories was shared with RECs.

<p>Group A: Engaged in depth with the standards</p> <p>Settings that are considered to be engaging in depth with the standards. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of engagement with regional programmes aimed at supporting the use of the standards • Embedding the standards within their professional learning • Using the language of the standards on a daily basis • Teachers articulating their professional learning needs through the standards • Teachers and leaders using the standards to self-evaluate and reflect on their practice. 	<p>Group B: Earlier stage of engagement with the standards</p> <p>Settings that are considered to be at an earlier stage in their engagement with the standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be some isolated examples of the characteristics in Group A, however the use of the standards is less systematic across the setting • Lower levels of engagement with regional programmes aimed at supporting the use of the standards • Also, there are comparatively lower levels of knowledge and understanding of the standards across the setting.
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- 2.12 The evaluation team selected 20 settings from the 'long lists' provided by RECs (10 from group A and 10 from group B above), and invited settings to participate by contacting the headteacher. If a setting was unable to participate in the evaluation, or did not respond to the invitation, a replacement setting was selected which had similar characteristics (i.e. region, sector, type, medium) to the setting originally chosen. These

replacement settings were initially selected from the long lists and then, if there was no suitable alternative on these lists, by selecting at random from lists of settings which had similar characteristics.

- 2.13 A breakdown of the 18 settings that participated in both waves of fieldwork is shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** below. Geographically, a relatively even spread of settings from each region took part, with five settings participating from two of the regions and four settings from the other two regions.²⁶
- 2.14 In Year 1, settings were asked if 8-10 practitioners from a variety of roles could participate in interviews, though this was not possible in all settings. At least one senior leader was interviewed in each of the 20 settings. In 14 of the 20 settings, staff from a variety of roles were interviewed; in six settings it was only possible to interview the headteacher or a senior leader.²⁷
- 2.15 During the Year 2 fieldwork, settings were asked if practitioners who took part in Year 1 could be re-interviewed. In settings where only senior leaders were interviewed in Year 1, interviews with some practitioners were also requested. At least one senior leader was interviewed in 13 of the 18 settings which were re-engaged.
- In nine of the 18 settings, staff from a variety of roles were interviewed
 - In four of the 18 settings it was only possible to interview the headteacher or a senior leader.²⁸
 - In five of the 18 settings, senior leaders indicated they and their staff would be unable to participate in fieldwork

²⁶ An equal split had been intended, but was not possible for practical reasons relating to the recruitment of the sample.

²⁷ In these settings, senior leaders had initially intended for other staff to participate, but this was not possible to arrange during the fieldwork period.

²⁸ In these settings, senior leaders had initially intended for other staff to participate, but this was not possible to arrange during the fieldwork period.

- In each of these, senior leaders reported little had changed in terms of their settings' awareness and use of the standards since Year 1.
- In these settings, case studies based on the Year 1 fieldwork were developed and shared with senior leaders so that they could review them and verify that these reflected the current situation in their setting; these case studies have been included in Annex B.

A breakdown of practitioners' roles is also shown in **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.**below.

Table 2. Number / type of settings and number / role of practitioners participating in Year 2

Type of setting	Total number of settings	Total number of practitioners interviewed	Type of role of practitioner				
			Senior leaders	Middle leaders	Teachers	TAs	NQTs
Welsh-medium primary	2	5	2	0	1	1	1
English-medium primary	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Dual stream primary	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Welsh-medium secondary	4	5	4	1	0	0	0
Bilingual secondary	1	7	2	2	1	1	1
English-medium secondary	2	9	3	3	3	0	0
Middle school*	2	6	4	2	0	0	0
Special school	2	4	3	0	0	1	0
Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	2	5	2	1	1	1	N/A
Total	18	44	23	9	6	4	2

*Both middle schools in the sample were English-medium schools

2.16 **Error! Reference source not found.** shows that around half the interviewees in Year 2 were senior leaders, slightly higher than was the case in Year 1 (where around 40 per cent of interviewees were senior leaders). Around a quarter were middle leaders and around a quarter were either teachers or TAs, slightly lower than was the case in Year 1 (where

around 40 per cent were teachers or TAs).²⁹ It should be noted that all middle leaders interviewed were also practising teachers. As in Year 1, there were challenges in engaging settings due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with several planned interviews being unable to take place during July 2022.

Fieldwork with stakeholders

2.17 A total of 30 stakeholders were interviewed during Year 2 of the evaluation.³⁰ These were all individuals from ‘national’ and ‘regional’ stakeholder organisations engaged during Year 1 of the evaluation. The 30 stakeholders interviewed during Year 1 included representatives of the Welsh Government, Estyn, EWC, RECs, NAEL, local authorities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and stakeholders involved in school governance.

Table 3. Stakeholders interviewed during Year 2 of the evaluation

Type of stakeholder organisation	Number of interviewees
REC and local authority representatives	11
Welsh Government	6
HEI representatives	5
Others*	8
Total	30

*Includes EWC, Estyn, NAEL and other stakeholders involved in school governance.

Analysis

2.18 A framework approach has been taken to analyse the fieldwork data. This allows structured analysis of the qualitative interview data against the themes set out in the research tools (see Annex A) as well as enabling us to

²⁹ A full breakdown of the Year 1 sample is presented in the Year 1 evaluation report.

³⁰ 71 stakeholders were interviewed during Year 1 of the evaluation, largely representing the same types of organisations as those included in Year 2. A full breakdown of these stakeholders is included in the Year 1 report.

consider issues that emerged from the data itself which may not have been previously considered. Evidence was initially reviewed during a briefing session which involved the researchers who conducted the fieldwork. This enabled the researchers to reach agreement on the key themes emerging from the evidence, and informed the subsequent analysis. In Sections 3-6, a summary of the Year 1 findings is presented first, followed by Year 2 findings.

Methodological challenges and limitations

- 2.19 In analysing the findings presented in this report, it is important to bear in mind some of the challenges encountered and the limitations of the method. Both Year 1 and 2 fieldwork took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and its progress was significantly disrupted by the challenges and frequent changes which affected the education sector. Many settings indicated they were unable to participate in the fieldwork, often because of time pressures, uncertainty and day-to-day challenges related to COVID-19.³¹ In addition, the pandemic clearly limited settings' and practitioners' ability to engage with the standards during 2020 and 2021; practitioners frequently indicated they had 'paused' much of their planned activity related to the standards. The longitudinal nature of the evaluation helped mitigate some of these challenges, with more activity relating to the standards evident in many settings in Year 2.
- 2.20 A lack of quantitative data for identifying settings which are at different stages of engaging with the standards was highlighted during the scoping phase. This presented challenges in identifying and selecting settings to participate during Year 1 based on evidence of their engagement with the standards.
- 2.21 It is important to acknowledge the risk of selection bias among the sample of settings which engaged in the evaluation. Settings that have more fully

³¹ This was particularly the case during Year 1 for special schools, which remained open during much of the 'lockdown' periods in 2020 and 2021.

embedded the standards in their professional learning activities may have been more likely to agree to take part in the fieldwork.

- 2.22 The evaluation sought to mitigate this risk by requesting ‘long lists’ of settings from each REC, including settings who were considered to have engaged ‘in depth’ with the standards and those ‘at an earlier stage of their engagement’. However, fewer of the settings which were considered to be at an earlier stage of engagement with the standards agreed to participate in the evaluation. Settings that were unable to participate were replaced in the sample by settings with similar characteristics that were selected at random. There is a risk that, among settings selected at random, those who agreed to participate might have engaged in more depth with the standards than the settings they replaced in the sample. This is highlighted to a degree by the fact that settings which were considered to be at an earlier stage of engagement with the standards were less likely to agree to participate in the evaluation.
- 2.23 There is also a risk of selection bias among the sample of practitioners engaged. Although the evaluation team requested interviews with a range of practitioners in different roles in each setting, senior leaders may have been more likely to select staff they considered to have engaged in more depth with the standards. Additionally, in some settings senior leaders expressed their willingness for staff to participate in the evaluation and took part in interviews themselves, but were subsequently unable to provide details for other practitioners in the setting.³²

³² Senior leaders in these schools initially agreed to provide details for staff but did not respond to follow-up requests for details and arrangements for interviews.

3. Findings: awareness and understanding of the standards

3.1 This section outlines the findings of the final evaluation in relation to awareness and understanding of the standards amongst practitioners and stakeholders. It first summarises the findings from Year 1 of the evaluation, before considering how awareness and understanding has changed in Year 2.

Summary of Year 1 evaluation findings

3.1 The Year 1 evaluation found that:

- a range of information, guidance and self-evaluation tools was available from different sources (e.g. online documentation provided by the Welsh Government, guidance developed by settings, presentations by senior leaders and stakeholders, the PLP hosted by EWC) to inform practitioners about the standards, and these were widely accessed and used. Practitioners also relied heavily on setting-level information and resources when engaging with the standards
- setting leaders were performing a key role in raising awareness and enhancing understanding of the standards among staff, and settings held In-service Education and Training (INSET) sessions and staff meetings on the standards
- setting leaders and practitioners who contributed to the evaluation were very familiar with the standards, although feedback from stakeholders suggested that levels of awareness and understanding were more varied than the study sample
- practitioners who were most familiar with the standards were NQTs, ITE students, NQT induction mentors and external verifiers. Support staff and experienced, long-standing class teachers were the least familiar with them
- overall, practitioners regarded the standards more positively than the previous standards and considered them to be more manageable, allowing them to

build upon their strengths as practitioners. Stakeholders felt they provided a more holistic, developmental and aspirational approach than the previous standards

- engaging with the standards had been daunting for some practitioners, particularly teaching assistants, due to the use of unfamiliar terminology and language, however some practitioners were said to have built confidence with the terminology over time
- the standards were considered to be very well aligned with other key policy developments, particularly Curriculum for Wales, but their promotion and implementation had been overshadowed by these other strategic developments
- applying the standards across ITE provision when awarding QTS created challenges for providers, as they were considered to be too broad to be used as an effective pass or fail mechanism when determining a QTS award to a student.

Findings from the Year 2 fieldwork

- 3.2 We first consider the views of practitioners (including setting leaders, teachers and support staff) before setting out the views of stakeholders gathered over the course of the final evaluation fieldwork.

Views of practitioners

Information and guidance on the standards

- 3.3 Setting leaders and practitioners continued to draw upon both external and internal information and resources in relation to the standards. Whilst practitioners did not cite the use of any new, specific resources, some noted that they were accessing additional resources which were embedded within professional development programmes being delivered by RECs. It continued to be the case that very little use was being made by practitioners of the Professional Learning Passport (PLP),

other than NQTs and mentors who are required to use it as part of their induction and assessment approach.

- 3.4 Setting-led discussions (e.g. during staff meetings) as well as informal professional discussions between practitioners continued to be important in improving understanding of the standards amongst practitioners, and in facilitating a more common interpretation of their meaning.

Role of setting leaders in informing practitioners about the standards

- 3.5 Setting senior leaders continued to play an important role in raising awareness and enhancing understanding of the standards amongst practitioners. Awareness-raising approaches appeared to be more embedded in settings' practices than was the case during the Year 1 fieldwork. Setting-level approaches had progressed from the general introductions and overview presentations reported by practitioners during Year 1 (e.g. during INSET sessions and staff meetings). In Year 2, settings tended to report that awareness-raising activity was embedded within performance management processes, professional learning activities and informal professional dialogues which were taking place more naturally across settings.

Awareness and understanding of the standards

- 3.6 A key finding from the Year 2 fieldwork is that relatively little has changed in terms of practitioner awareness of the standards. Settings reported that this was mostly attributable to them prioritising other developments rather than extending awareness of the standards. Practitioners reported that settings had operated within very challenging conditions over the last year or so, and have had to focus their attention on supporting the wellbeing of practitioners and addressing the impact of pandemic lockdowns on learner behaviour, social development and readiness to learn in class. In addition, it was reported that settings have had to focus upon the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and whilst practitioners recognised that there is a clear alignment between the new curriculum and the standards, they had yet to be fully integrated with each other. One senior leader observed that:

‘We’ve been so busy preparing for the curriculum that we’ve not really considered how the standards refer to it.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium primary)**

- 3.7 Despite this, some practitioners reflected that curriculum reform had made them focus more on pedagogical principles over the last year or so, and therefore there was an increased understanding of this element of the standards by the time of conducting the Year 2 fieldwork.
- 3.8 During Year 2 fieldwork, it continued to be the case that NQTs and ITE students were the practitioners most familiar with the standards. Senior and middle leaders as well as NQT mentors and external verifiers also reported they were very well-acquainted with the standards descriptors. It became more evident during the Year 2 fieldwork that practitioners who wished to progress to formal leadership roles in their career tended to be more engaged with the standards as well.
- 3.9 There continued to be a risk that practitioners become less aware and engaged with the standards after completing their induction year, unless this was reinforced by senior leaders and processes within their setting. Practitioners who were not engaged in accredited or endorsed professional learning generally reported lower levels of awareness and understanding of the standards. One teacher, an NQT when interviewed during the Year 1 fieldwork, observed that they had not used the standards as much since completing their induction year, although their setting did still require them to use the standards as part of their continuous professional development.
- 3.10 Awareness of and familiarity with the standards amongst support staff and long-standing class teachers continues to be lower than amongst other practitioners. The evidence gathered during the Year 2 fieldwork suggests that many support staff are still not aware that the standards exist or choose not to engage with them, although those who wish to develop their career are more inclined to embrace them:

‘The standards are not very high on the average TA’s radar, compared with other things. Lots still don’t really know they exist. Some LSAs [Learning Support Assistants] want to progress in their career so the standards are there to guide them’. **(TA, English-medium secondary school)**

3.11 A few settings had continued to engage TAs in their activity relating to the standards. However, in most settings TAs' engagement with the standards was limited; Year 2 fieldwork did not find examples of TAs engaging in standards-related activity who were not already doing so during Year 1. This would suggest that settings who were 'early adopters' of the standards have already introduced them to support staff, and without further external encouragement and support, other settings are unlikely to extend the standards beyond teachers and senior leaders, to support staff.

3.12 Despite other pressures and priorities reported by schools, the evidence gathered during the Year 2 fieldwork did suggest that some of the settings in the sample had increased their focus upon the standards over the course of the year. Practitioners at these schools provided examples of how this had led to an increase in awareness and understanding of the standards in their setting:

- Senior leaders at one school observed that awareness had increased among practitioners as they had re-focused their efforts on integrating the standards into performance management processes during 2022, having lost some of their early momentum during the pandemic.
- At another setting, awareness of the standards was reported to have increased because senior leaders had participated in leadership training which was heavily focused on the standards. This had subsequently led to the standards being used in planning a setting-wide approach to professional learning and the development of the Curriculum for Wales.
- A third setting commented that the standards now received greater prominence across the setting than previously, because they had now used them as a framework for two 'cycles' of performance review. One middle leader observed that this was beginning to inform strategic discussions:

'They [the standards] have moved up in prominence. There are now direct conversations about them at SLT level.' **(Middle leader, English-medium middle school)**

- One setting reported that awareness had grown through the increasing prominence and visibility of the standards in external professional learning courses. This school was planning on expanding the use of the standards across the school to support the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

‘When you go on training now, you can zoom out and you see the fit – you get the ‘wow factor’. You can see how the curriculum reforms, professional learning are like a jigsaw – everything fits nicely together’.

(Senior leader, Welsh-medium primary school)

- Two settings observed that they had increased awareness of the standards by referencing them in job descriptions. In both settings, job descriptions were now aligned to the standards and terminology such as leadership and pedagogy were being used throughout them.
 - In addition, one setting observed that this meant their job interview questions were increasingly being naturally shaped by the terminology set out in the standards.

Improved understanding as a result of professional development learning provision

3.13 The Year 2 fieldwork found that awareness and understanding of the standards had increased amongst those practitioners who were engaged in professional development programmes, primarily senior and middle leaders. Feedback gleaned from these interviewees suggests that practitioners who had engaged with professional learning courses, such as those being delivered by RECs, were regularly reminded to consider the standards as they form the ‘backbone’ of any programme of learning. Senior leaders at two schools reported that they and their staff were using the standards more regularly due to the fact that senior leaders were enrolled in the National Senior Leader Development Programme (NSLDP), which places an emphasis on the standards. One senior leader observed that:

‘With every part of the task [part of the NSLDP], we mapped it against the standards. It was a useful process because I hadn’t used the standards in work before – work is so busy with planning and assessment; the standards haven’t been an obvious part of my role.’ **[Senior leader, Special School]**

- 3.14 Similarly, middle leaders at another school reported that they had a better understanding of the standards as they had to demonstrate how they were using them as part of their Middle Leaders' Professional Learning.

Comparison with previous standards

- 3.15 As was reported in Year 1, setting leaders and practitioners from across all types of educational settings continued to express a preference for the current standards compared to the previous ones. The current standards were considered to be more manageable and allow practitioners to build on their strengths and target areas for development.

Wording and terminology

- 3.16 The evidence gathered during Year 2 fieldwork suggests that practitioners who have engaged with the standards as part of settings' processes have become more accustomed to the standards' wording and terminology over time. As such, fewer issues were raised over the course of the fieldwork about the language of the standards, and practitioners who were regular users of them appeared to be comfortable and confident in their use. However, senior leaders and practitioners continued to report that support staff had lower levels of awareness and understanding of the standards and were consequently less confident in their use.

Views on strategic fit with other policy developments

- 3.17 As reported in Year 1, setting leaders and practitioners continued to believe that the standards were well aligned with other key policy developments, particularly the focus on pedagogy in the Curriculum for Wales. Interviewees commented that that the standards had not perhaps received the same degree of their attention as the Curriculum for Wales over the last year, given the need to implement it from 2022 onwards. Some practitioners also felt that the language used in some of the descriptors could be refined to ensure consistency with other developments since

their publication (e.g. curriculum guidance documents). Some senior leaders suggested that additional guidance could be provided to clarify the links between the standards and the curriculum and help ensure settings integrated the standards with their own curriculum.

‘In ‘Talk Pedagogy’, we talk about the 12 Pedagogical Principles. Then in the standards we have 17 descriptors of pedagogy. We could make the links between the standards and the principles more transparent.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

Views of stakeholders

- 3.18 Stakeholders did not consider that much had changed in terms of awareness of the standards since the Year 1 fieldwork. Stakeholders continued to report that they could identify well-informed cohorts, namely ITE students, NQTs, mentors, external verifiers, setting leaders and those pursuing leadership pathways within the profession. Experienced classroom teachers and TAs were considered to be the least engaged. One stakeholder summed these opinions up by stating:

‘In honesty, I don’t think a tremendous amount has changed since we last spoke.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 3.19 Stakeholders commented that the standards had not been at the forefront of most senior leaders’ minds over the last year or so. One stakeholder described awareness of the standards as being ‘sporadic’ and observed that only very occasional mention is made of them during their sector meetings with headteachers. Stakeholders mentioned two factors which they felt accounted for this. Firstly, stakeholders observed that settings and practitioners have been required to prioritise other developments over the last year, including the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act and post-16 developments. Secondly, it was thought that the standards had taken a back seat in light of other pressures and disruptions related to the pandemic. There was much suggestion that schools had been

‘firefighting’ over the last year or so which had made it difficult for them to return to normality.

- 3.20 Some degree of concern was expressed by stakeholders about the lack of widespread awareness across the sector. One stakeholder argued that unless the standards become mandatory for support staff, levels of engagement would be unlikely to change for this cohort. Another stakeholder expressed concern that engagement with the standards appears to drop after induction:

‘During induction people say, yeah ok I’ll use them because they have a reason to do so. After induction, people ask why should I use it? We need to give them a reason.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 3.21 Stakeholder organisations, notably RECs and ITE providers, continue to play an important role in supporting practitioners to engage with the standards. The fieldwork revealed that professional learning provision, including leadership programmes, now have the standards explicitly embedded within them. In some cases, programmes have been restructured so that individual modules are aligned to individual standards to allow for deeper analysis. One stakeholder representative argued that the standards now frame their thinking when designing new programmes. The standards have also been embedded into NAEL programmes.

- 3.22 Although stakeholders reported that awareness of the standards had not changed significantly during Year 2 of the evaluation, some evidence of increased understanding was reported. Stakeholders observed that professional learning participants now have a better grasp of the standards, as trainers and facilitators receive fewer basic questions about what the standards are. Stakeholders argued that those who engage in professional development programmes delivered by educational consortia have much better awareness and understanding of the standards than those who do not. One stakeholder observed that these practitioners have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the standards over time.

‘People seem to be more aware of standards when they’re discussed in professional learning courses. Previously, I’d mention the standards and then get lots of questions about what they are.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

Summary of final evaluation findings: awareness and understanding

3.23 The key findings from the final evaluation are that:

- awareness-raising approaches have become more embedded into existing school practices, and are incorporated into existing approaches, including informal professional dialogues and professional learning activities
- relatively little has changed across the sector in terms of school practitioners' overall awareness of the standards, due to other pressures and priorities faced by schools. However, several of the schools who contributed to the Year 2 evaluation fieldwork did report increased understanding as a result of deeper engagement with the standards within their own setting
- the standards have become embedded into some professional development programmes and these have played an important role in enhancing practitioners' understanding of them
- the same cohorts of practitioners remained most familiar with the standards, with those engaged in professional development programmes being the most likely to have improved their understanding of them over the past year
- without further encouragement, and possibly greater regulation, schools who have not already done so are unlikely to extend the standards to support staff
- whilst the standards are considered to be well-aligned with the Curriculum for Wales, the two initiatives do not appear to be fully integrated with each other as yet, and schools have prioritised the implementation of the curriculum over the past year.

4. Use of the standards

4.1 This section outlines the findings of the final evaluation in relation to use of the standards. It begins by summarising the findings from the Year 1 evaluation report, then sets out secondary data from the EWC on engagement with the PLP before presenting findings from the Year 2 fieldwork with practitioners, senior leaders and stakeholders.

Summary of Year 1 evaluation findings

4.2 The Year 1 evaluation report found that:

- The extent to which the standards were used by practitioners varied within and between settings. Findings suggested this depended on several factors including:
 - the emphasis placed on the standards by senior leaders including whether they were embedded in performance management processes and whether practitioners are allocated time to reflect on them
 - whether practitioners were engaged in ITE or induction processes or following formal leadership courses.
- Settings that had embedded the standards in their school and staff development processes valued them and considered them to be beneficial.
- Use of the standards was limited in some settings, with some initial awareness-raising activity reported but less evidence of embedding them in professional learning and performance management activity.
- The standards were being used less often by some practitioners, specifically TAs (although the professional standards for assisting teaching (PSATs) were valued by interviewees), and more experienced teachers who had not followed formal leadership courses.
- Some settings had embedded the standards in their professional learning and development activity; however, most considered themselves as being at an 'early stage' of implementation.

- COVID-19 had delayed or limited planned activity relating to the standards. However, settings considered that much progress had been made in terms of professional development against some of the standards, particularly innovation.
- The standards were valued as an effective developmental tool for setting out the expectations for practitioners as professionals. There were split views as to their use in more formal structures such as job descriptions.
- The standards were valued by practitioners in PRUs as a framework that provided greater status for professionals in the sector.

Data on engagement with the standards in Year 2

- 4.3 Limited data is available on practitioners' levels of engagement with the standards. Some data on engagement with the standards is collected via the Professional Learning Passport (PLP), while some data is collected on engagement in training delivered by stakeholders. An overview of this data is provided below.³³

Training

- 4.4 RECs have delivered briefing events and training to practitioners relating to the standards. These have focused on raising the profile of the standards as well as training practitioners and others to engage with the standards as part of their professional development. In some cases, discrete briefings or programmes relating to the standards have been delivered.³⁴ Additionally, courses delivered by the RECs have been structured to include engagement with the standards.
- 4.5 EWC deliver demonstrations of the Professional Learning Passport to schools. These demonstrations are requested by schools and arranged via RECs. PLP

³³ At national level, data was gathered on engagement with the previous standards via the National Education Workforce Survey (EWC, 2017), however the most recent iteration of this survey (EWC, 2021) did not include questions on use of the current Standards. Data from the 2017 survey is analysed in the Year 1 report of this evaluation. Reports for both surveys are available here: [National education workforce survey \(ewc.wales\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91442/national_education_workforce_survey_2017.pdf)

³⁴ For example, CSC delivered professional learning as an explicit programme in relation to the standards to 139 practitioners in a third (35 per cent) of schools during 2018/19.

demonstrations were delivered to a total of 51 organisations, including 45 schools in 2019/20 and to 10 organisations, including 9 schools, in 2020/21.³⁵ Demonstration sessions have also been delivered to other organisations including teaching unions and ITE providers, with information on the PLP also provided to organisations through EWC attending market places at national conferences. Additionally, demonstrations of the induction profile, a key element of the PLP, were delivered by RECs to 39 groups of practitioners (e.g. NQTs and external verifiers) in 2019/20 and 43 such groups in 2020/21. While the standards are not the focus of these demonstration sessions, the PLP has been designed to enable practitioners to engage with the standards.

Professional Learning Passport (PLP)

- 4.6 EWC offer an online professional learning passport (PLP) for registered practitioners to reflect on their practice and record their professional learning. The PLP is funded by the Welsh Government, and registrants can access it using their account online or via the 'PebblePocket' app. Each user's PLP includes professional learning templates and a 'standards workbook' in which practitioners can map their professional learning experiences and upload evidence against each of the standards. Since September 2021, teachers studying the new National MA Education (Wales) have had to use the PLP to access learning materials. It is important to acknowledge that use of the PLP does not necessarily reflect levels of engagement with the standards. Practitioners can log in to the platform to record evidence of their professional learning without mapping it to the standards. Some practitioners engage with the standards using an alternative online platform used by their setting (e.g. Xlence, Teaching Continua). However, data on the use of the PLP, does provide useful insights into practitioners' behaviours in recording their development.

³⁵ Although EWC offered schools virtual sessions during the 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of sessions delivered was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020/21.

Teachers and LSWs using the PLP

- 4.7 EWC hold data on the number of registered school teachers, leaders and LSWs using the PLP.³⁶ The PLP data used in this report only relates to practitioners registered with EWC in the category of ‘school teacher’ (including senior leaders and NQTs) and/or LSW. This data is analysed below includes:
- the total number of registrants who have created their own PLP
 - the total number of registrants who have logged in to their PLP during the last three, six or twelve months
 - the cumulative total number of assets created or uploaded (evidence of their professional development) to their PLP by users.
- 4.8 The most recent data for September 2022 shows that, since its inception in 2017, 31,101 practitioners had created their own PLP. This number comprised:
- 14,017 teachers
 - 1,408 senior leaders³⁷
 - 2,412 NQTs
 - 13,264 LSWs.
- 4.9 The total number of practitioners who have created their own PLP has grown steadily since 2017, when 4,876 teachers had done so. By aggregating the data for teachers, senior leaders and NQTs who have created their own PLP, and comparing this with the total number of practitioners registered in Wales (using Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales), it is possible to estimate the percentages of teachers who have created their own PLP in March of each year

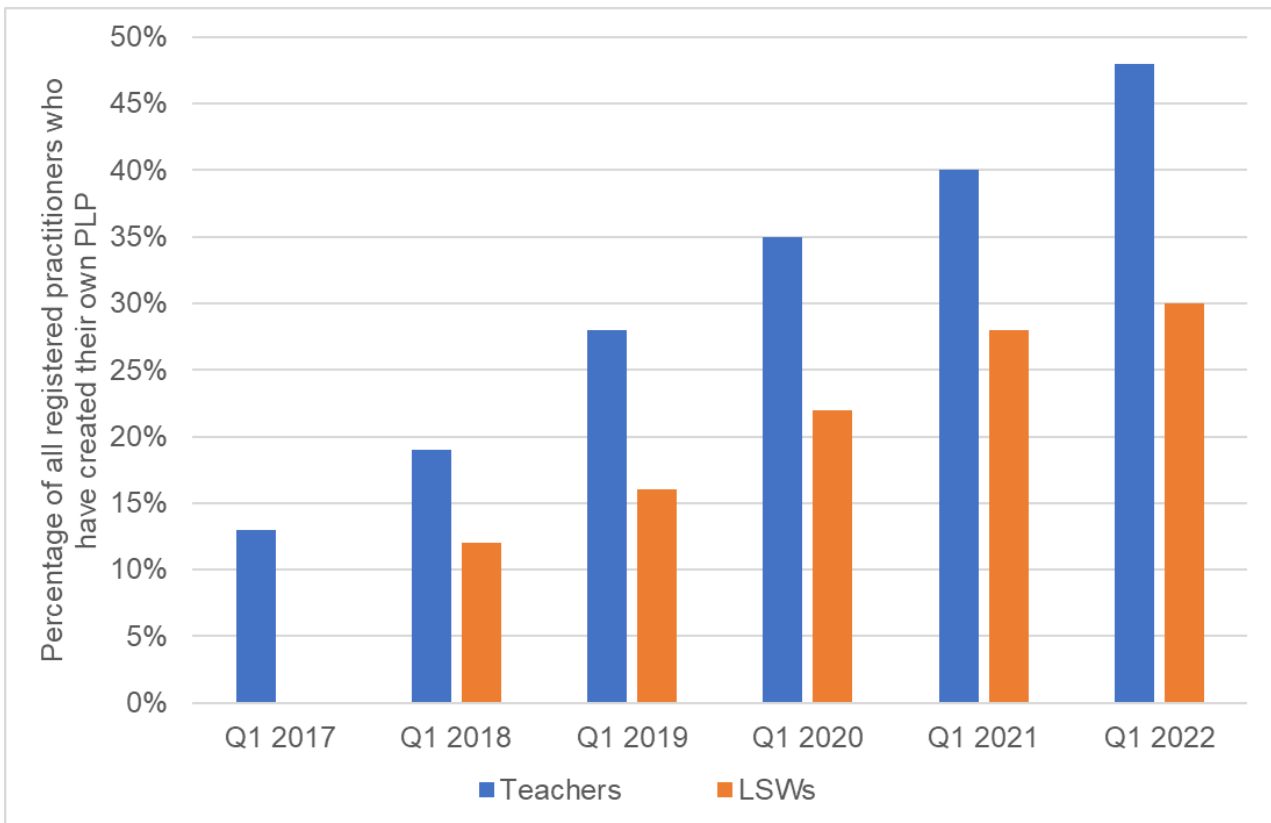
³⁶ Other practitioners have access to the PLP (e.g. ITE students, Further Education practitioners). However, the data used in this report does not include these practitioners, unless they are also registered as a teacher or LSW (practitioners can register with EWC in more than one category). For example, practitioners registered as both a teacher and as an FE lecturer (there were 51 of these in September 2022 PLP data) are included as well as LSWs who are also studying ITE courses (there were 24 of these in September 2022 PLP data). Data also includes practising teachers studying for Master’s in Education courses (estimated at around 200-250 in 2022/23).

³⁷ Senior leaders include head teachers, deputy head teachers and assistant head teachers.

between 2017 and 2022.³⁸ This is shown below, alongside the estimated percentage of LSWs who have created their own PLP. This data shows that:

- around half (48 per cent) of all registered teachers had created their own PLP by March 2022³⁹
 - this represents an increase of 35 percentage points compared with 2017 (when the PLP started to be used as part of teacher induction)
- just under a third of LSWs (30 per cent) had created their own PLP by March 2022, compared with none in 2017 and 12 per cent in 2018.

Figure 3. Percentage of teachers and LSWs who have created their own PLP



Note: Q = end of quarter. Q1 refers to the twelve-month period up to the end of March in each year shown.

Source: EWC

³⁸ See [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales](#) (EWC, 2022). Data is collected in March each year.

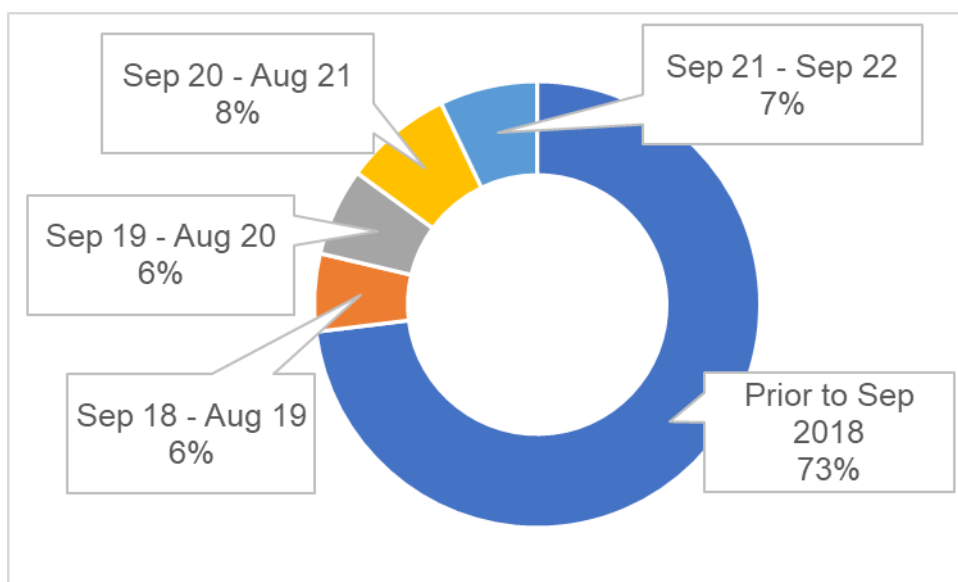
³⁹ Using the most recent quarterly figure for those who have created their own PLP (September 2022) and comparing this to March 2022 workforce figures suggests the percentage of teachers is now around 51 per cent and LSWs 31 per cent.

4.10 It is possible to examine the PLP records and some of the characteristics of those who have created accounts. Data for September 2022 shows that, of those teachers, senior leaders and NQTs who have created their own PLP:

- around three-quarters (73 per cent) achieved QTS prior to September 2018
 - this grouping would include teachers who completed their induction year during 2017/18, or earlier
- 27 per cent achieved QTS from September 2018 onwards, including the current cohort of NQTs.

The proportion of more experienced practitioners (i.e. those who have been registered for a longer period of time) who have created PLPs will continue to increase over time, because teachers who have to create one during their induction period make up an increasing proportion of those who have created their own PLP.

Figure 4. Percentage of teachers (including senior leaders and NQTs) who have created their own PLP according to when they achieved QTS



Base: 17,837 registered teachers, NQTs and senior leaders

Source: EWC

4.11 The percentage of practitioners who have created their own PLP who are current NQTs has fallen over time, from 31 per cent in March 2017 to 8 per cent in March

2022. This reflects an increase over time in the cumulative number of practitioners who have completed their induction and have also created their own PLP, therefore the proportion of PLP users who are current NQTs has declined over the same period.

Logins of PLP users

4.12 Practitioners who log in to the PLP can undertake a number of activities:

- access guidance on how to use their PLP
- access professional learning templates, or create their own, to reflect on their experiences
- view their own 'professional standards workbook' and map their professional learning experiences against the standards descriptors
- upload evidence of their professional learning experiences
- access a database of education journals.

Around half of the 31,101 practitioners who have created their own PLP (49 per cent) logged in to the platform during the twelve months to September 2022; this percentage was highest among NQTs (92 per cent) compared with around half of senior leaders and LSWs (both 52 per cent) and 39 per cent of teachers. These percentages have remained broadly similar to those reported in the Year 1 evaluation report.

4.13 Just under a quarter of practitioners who have created their own PLP (24 per cent) had logged in between 1st July and 30th September 2022; again, this percentage was highest among NQTs (76 per cent) and lower among senior leaders and LSWs (both 24 per cent) as well as teachers (16 per cent).

Assets uploaded onto the PLP

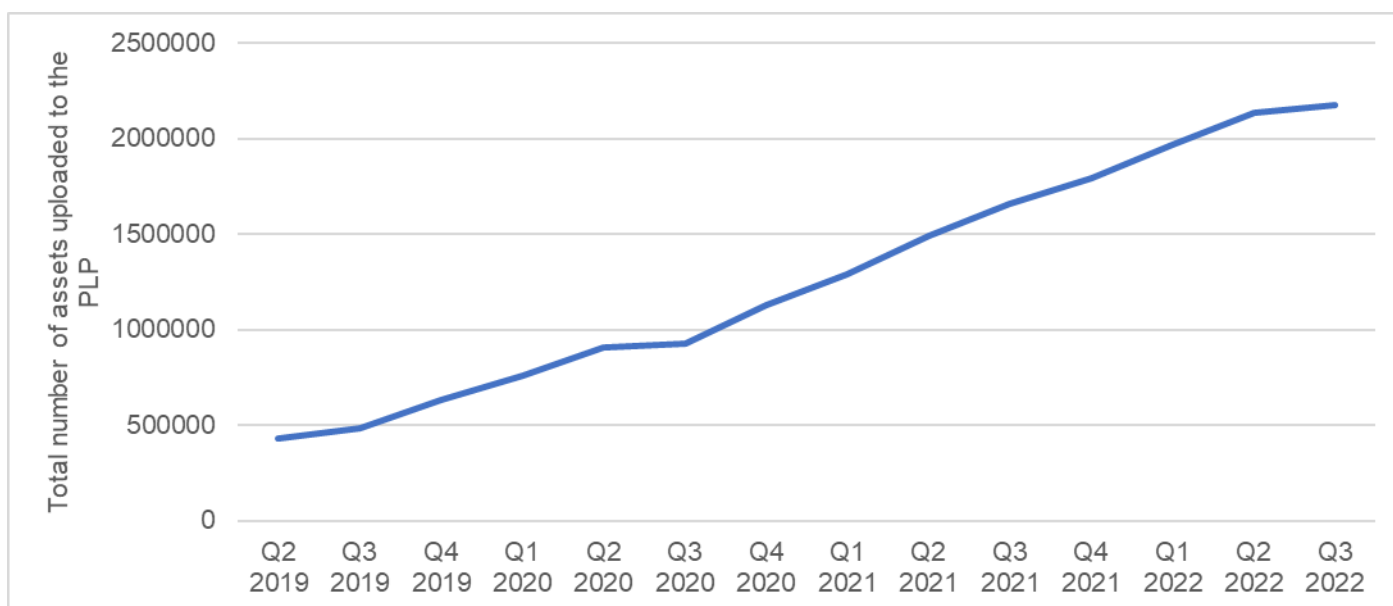
4.14 Practitioners who have created their own PLP can upload evidence of their professional development (referred to as 'assets') to the platform and map this against the standards. Assets can include evidence of practitioners' experiences

and their reflections on teaching and learning, for example, on what went well, what didn't work so well, what they learnt, what changes they might make next time. These can be uploaded in different formats such as Word documents, scanned certificates for professional learning completed or evidence to include in their induction profile. A range of templates for practitioners to record and upload evidence are available on the PLP site.

4.15 The chart below shows the cumulative number of assets uploaded to or created in the PLP by NQTs, teachers, senior leaders and LSWs.⁴⁰ Data showing the number of assets uploaded by practitioners in different roles and sectors is unavailable. The asset data from EWC shows that, between the second quarter (Q2) of 2019 and the third quarter (Q3) of 2022, the cumulative number of assets uploaded onto the PLP has increased fourfold from 429,541 assets in June 2019, to 2,172,336 assets in September 2022. Additionally, the number of assets uploaded per registrant who had created their own PLP has increased from 37 in the period March 2020 to 70 in September 2022.

⁴⁰ Data does not include ITE students (apart from LSWs following ITE courses) but does include a small number of teachers and LSWs who are also registered as FE lecturers (51 in Q3 2022) and FE LSWs (27 in Q3 2022).

Figure 5. Cumulative total assets uploaded or created 2019-22 by practitioners who have created their own PLP



Note: Figures include assets uploaded or created by: NQTs, teachers, senior leaders, LSWs (including LSWs who are also studying ITE courses; there were 24 of these in Q3 2022 data); and practising teachers studying for Master’s in Education courses (estimated at around 200-250 in 2022/23). Q = Quarter (i.e. three months). In each year shown Q1 refers to the total number of assets at the end of March, Q2 at the end of June, Q3 at the end of September, Q4 at the end of December

Source: EWC

Use of the PLP by education sector

- 4.16 EWC holds data on the education sector in which practitioners who have created their own PLP are employed (if registrants have inputted their employer when registering).
- 4.17 Data for 2022 on teachers who have created their own PLP shows that 43 per cent work in primary schools; this is slightly higher than the percentage of all registered school teachers who are employed in the primary sector (38 per cent).⁴¹ The data shows that 35 per cent of teachers who have created their own PLP were employed in secondary schools, a little higher than the percentage of all teachers employed in the secondary sector (32 per cent). The percentage of practitioners employed in

⁴¹ Based on [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales 2022](#).

other sectors who have created their own PLP was also broadly representative of all practitioners; this therefore illustrates that the profile of teachers using the PLP by sector of employment is fairly similar to that of the workforce as a whole.⁴²

- 4.18 Data on LSWs shows that a third (32 per cent) who have created their own PLP were employed in primary schools; this is slightly lower than the percentage of all registered LSWs who are employed in the primary sector (36 per cent). The data shows that 12 per cent of LSWs who have create their own PLP are employed in secondary schools, equal to the percentage of all registered LSWs who are employed in the primary sector (12 per cent).⁴³
- 4.19 Among NQTs who had created their own PLP, 29 per cent were employed in the primary sector (compared with 28 per cent of all NQTs) and 32 per cent in the secondary sector (compared with 30 per cent of all NQTs employed in the sector).⁴⁴
- 4.20 The data shows that 68 per cent of senior leaders who have created their own PLP were employed in the primary sector, with 24 per cent in the secondary sector.⁴⁵
- 4.21 Take-up of the PLP by sector, as signified by the percentage of all registered teachers who have created their own PLP, has grown across most sectors of employment (types of school/setting). Data for September 2022 shows that just over half of registered primary school teachers (55 per cent) and special school teachers (54 per cent) have created their own PLP, compared with 48 per cent in middle schools, 45 per cent of secondary teachers and 32 per cent of PRU teachers. In each of these sectors, apart from middle schools, the percentage of teachers who have created their own PLP has grown since the Year 1 evaluation report.⁴⁶

⁴² 4 per cent of those who had created a PLP were employed in middle schools, 3 per cent in special schools and 1 per cent in independent schools. Information on sector of employment was not held for 9 per cent of those who had created a PLP.

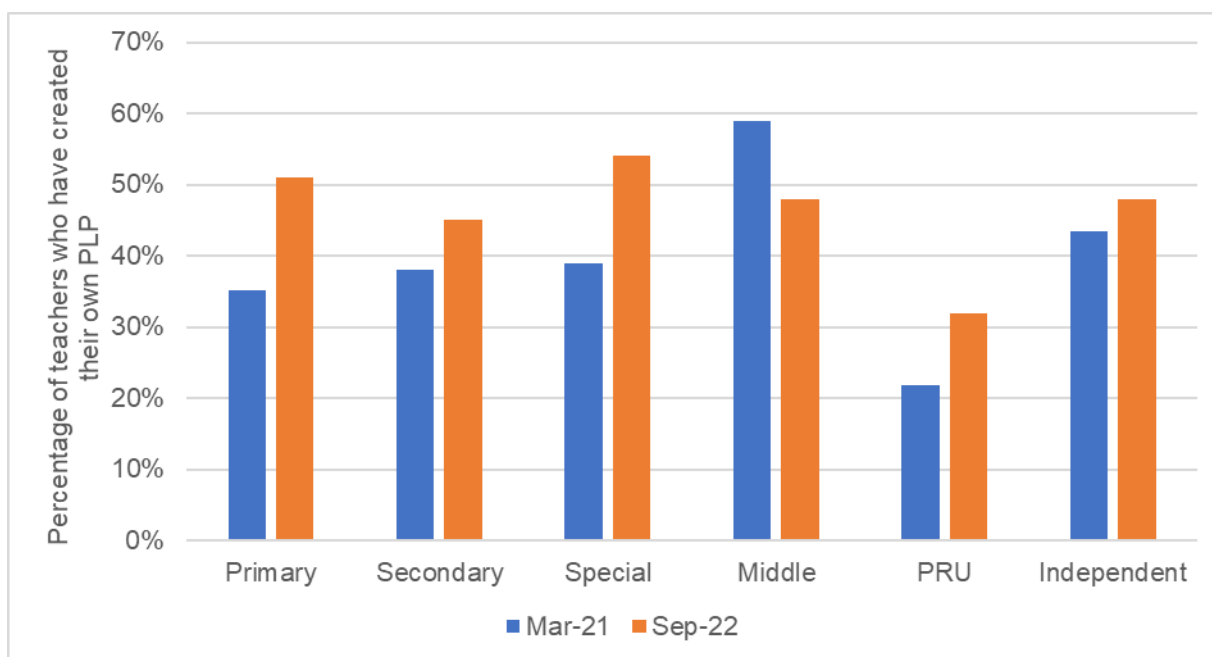
⁴³ Based on [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales 2022](#). Information on sector of employment was not held for 9 per cent of LSWs who had created a PLP.

⁴⁴ Based on [Data Insights: Registered Newly Qualified School Teachers](#) (EWC 2022)

⁴⁵ Data on the number of senior leaders is not published, though the number of schools is. Data for 2021/22 show that 83 per cent of all schools in Wales were primary schools and 12 per cent were secondary schools.

⁴⁶ The fall in the percentage of middle school teachers who have created their own PLP is mainly because of an increase in the overall number of middle school teachers between 2021 and 2022.

Figure 6. Percentage of all registered teachers who have created their own PLP by sector of employment (type of school / setting) 2021-22



Source: EWC

Welsh language ability among PLP users

4.22 The data shows that a third (33 per cent) of school teachers who have created their own PLP had declared on registration that they were Welsh speakers. This is in line with the percentage of all registered teachers who reported that they were Welsh speakers in 2022 (33 per cent). Over a quarter (26 per cent) of teachers who had created their own PLP were employed in Welsh-medium schools, similar to the 27 per cent of all teachers who reported that they could teach through the medium of Welsh in 2022.⁴⁷ The data therefore shows that teachers who have created their own PLP are broadly representative of all teachers in terms of Welsh language ability and the percentage employment in Welsh-medium schools.

4.23 The data shows that 25 per cent of the LSWs who have created their own PLP in September 2022 were Welsh speakers, an increase of 7 percentage points from March 2021. This is higher than the percentage of all registered LSWs who reported that they were Welsh speakers in 2022 (20 per cent). Additionally, 20 per cent of

⁴⁷ See EWC Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales 2022.

LSWs who have created their own PLP in September 2022 were working in Welsh-medium schools, an increase of 6 percentage points on 2021.⁴⁸ This is slightly higher than the percentage of all LSWs who noted that they could work through the medium of Welsh in 2022 (17 per cent).⁴⁹ This suggests that there has been growth in the number of Welsh-speaking LSWs and LSWs working at Welsh-medium schools creating their own PLP between 2021 and 2022.

Findings from the Year 2 fieldwork

- 4.24 The findings from the Year 2 fieldwork are set out below. We first consider the views of practitioners (including setting leaders, classroom teachers and support staff in schools and PRUs) before turning to consider the views of stakeholders gathered over the course of the final evaluation fieldwork.

How settings report they have used the standards

- 4.25 The standards continued to be used in a variety of contexts by practitioners and stakeholders. As was the case in Year 1 of the evaluation, interviewees in each setting reported that they had used the standards in some way, although the extent of use varied significantly. The table below presents the range of ways in which the standards were used, and how prevalent this type of use was among the sample of settings engaged as part of the evaluation.

⁴⁸ EWC do not publish data on the number of school teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh, only the number who have the ability to do so.

⁴⁹ See EWC Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales 2021.

Table 4. Prevalence of different uses of the standards, as reported by settings engaged in the evaluation

Type of activity relating to the standards	Description of activity relating to the standards
All settings engaged during the evaluation were using the standards in the following ways...	
1. Senior leaders disseminating information to staff to raise awareness and understanding of the standards	Presentations on the standards by senior leaders or external partners (e.g. RECs, other schools) to staff. Distributing information about the standards to staff, including the Welsh Government information and settings' own guidance documentation.
2. As part of ITE and induction processes (where ITE students or NQTs were working in settings)	NQTs and ITE students collating evidence of their own practice and progress and logging this in the PLP Mentors reviewing the progress of NQTs against the standards and the evidence collated. NQTs and ITE students and being assessed against the standards.
Most settings engaged during the evaluation were using the standards in the following ways...	
3. As part of their own professional learning	Practitioners with (or aspiring to) formal leadership responsibility taking part in formal professional learning structured around the standards. Practitioners reflecting on how their professional learning relates to the standards during or at the end of professional learning sessions.
4. As part of practitioner performance management or development processes	The standards and the language and terminology of the descriptors being referenced in performance management discussions (e.g. staff asked questions about their development against the standards). Practitioners and line managers being able to 'decode' the standards in the context of a practitioner's role.
5. In self-evaluation and critical reflection	The standards being used as a framework for practitioners' own process of self-reflection. The standards being used as a framework for senior leaders to encourage staff to think about and take greater ownership of their own professional development.
Some settings engaged during the evaluation were using the standards in the following ways...	
6. Using online platforms or other monitoring processes to carry out performance management, self-evaluation and/or record	The standards and descriptors being embedded in self-assessment tools hosted online (e.g. electronic questionnaires) or on other tools such as spreadsheet-based questionnaires.

Type of activity relating to the standards	Description of activity relating to the standards
staff development against the standards	<p>Practitioners trained to use these tools as part of performance management. The tools generate a profile or breakdown of staff self-reflections on confidence or progress against the standards.</p> <p>Practitioners completing self-assessments against each of the standards prior to taking part in a performance management discussion with their line manager.</p>
7. In planning the professional learning activities of staff	Senior leaders using the standards as a framework to decide on goals or themes for whole-setting professional learning activity (e.g. INSET sessions) as well as for individual practitioners.
8. Collaboratively within the school	<p>As a structure for conducting collaborative professional inquiry activity or other 'professional groups' focused on staff development.</p> <p>Informal conversations with other practitioners in the school about professional development or professional learning.</p>
A few settings engaged during the evaluation were using the standards in the following ways...	
9. As part of recruitment processes (job descriptions, interviews)	<p>The standards embedded in job descriptions and person specifications within settings.</p> <p>Job description and person specifications which reference the standards being used.</p>
10. Collating aggregated data based on staff self-evaluation	<p>Senior leaders developing systems for aggregating the data from practitioner self-evaluations to provide a setting-wide picture of their workforce's professional development. Online platforms and spreadsheet-based tools were being used to do this.</p> <p>Senior leaders using this data alongside other school-level data (e.g. from classroom observations, learning walks, peer review) to plan professional learning activity.</p>
11. In collaboration with other schools.	The standards being used as a common language for practitioners in different settings to discuss professional learning and development.

Varying use of the standards

4.26 The variation in the nature of use of the standards, including the frequency and depth of engagement, appeared to be driven mainly by two factors. Firstly, at setting level, the emphasis placed on them by senior leaders. Secondly, at individual level,

whether practitioners were engaged in professional learning activity that required them to engage with the standards. Both factors are explored below.

4.27 At setting level, the emphasis placed on them by senior leaders appeared to influence use by practitioners, including the extent to which senior leaders:

- actively encouraged or required staff to use them as part of school processes (e.g. referring to them in job descriptions or in the structure or questions used as part of performance management discussions)
- had developed or adopted tools to encourage use of the standards (e.g. self-reflection questionnaires)
- were allocating time for staff to do this (e.g. for self-reflection at the end of professional learning sessions).

Practitioners who were actively encouraged to engage with the standards, whose settings had developed self-assessment tools structured around the descriptors, and who were allocated time to use these were more likely to report that they had used the standards. Depth of use of the standards was also more apparent in settings where these processes had been in place for a number of years.

Practitioners in these types of settings were also more likely to note that they found the standards beneficial in their professional development, for example through setting goals, self-reflection and providing a reference point against which to review their own development.

4.28 At individual level, use of the standards was higher among practitioners who were or had recently engaged in professional learning that required using them to engage with the standards, for example ITE, induction processes and other formal professional learning (e.g. leadership courses). Senior and middle leaders, induction mentors and NQTs were therefore more likely to be actively using the standards than other practitioners.

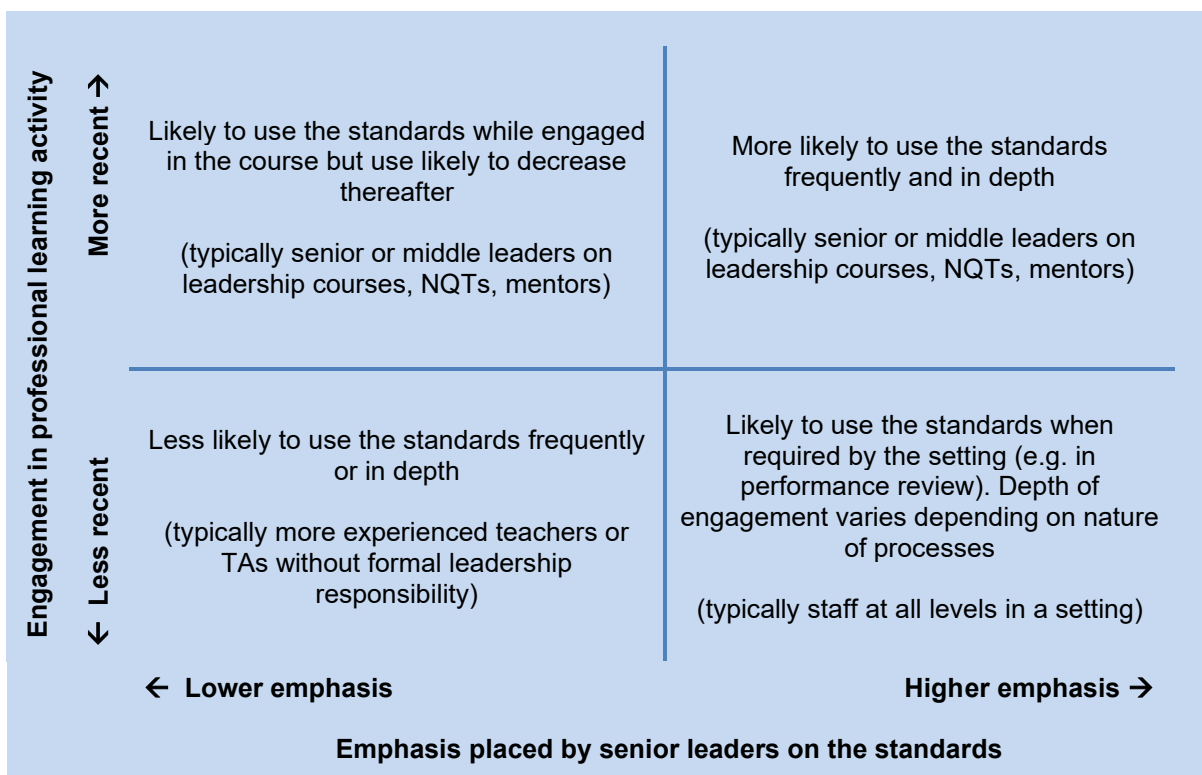
4.29 In Year 2 of this evaluation, use of the standards had increased in several settings, although some settings reported that their use of the standards had remained relatively unchanged. The factors noted in Section 4.22-4.24 above, namely the emphasis placed on the standards by senior leaders and participation in

professional learning, appeared to influence whether or not use of the standards had increased.

- 4.30 Settings which were making more use of the standards during Year 2 of the evaluation, had further embedded the standards in their activities and systems including performance management, professional development and professional learning. In a few settings, practitioners reported that using the standards in these processes had, over time, led to practitioners increasingly using the language and terminology of the standards more 'organically' when sharing their reflections and experiences with colleagues. For example, some senior leaders felt the standards were beginning to 'permeate' dialogue during staff meetings or as part of informal professional discussions.
- 4.31 Across all settings engaged, the standards continued to be valued as a framework setting out the expectations for practitioners. Senior leaders and practitioners considered them to be a useful developmental tool which provided a common language for reflecting on and discussing their own, and colleagues' development. Practitioners in PRUs particularly valued them as providing a consistent framework which provided them with greater status and a common language for discussions about professional development with their peers in schools.
- 4.32 In a few schools, senior leaders had started to embed processes for gathering aggregate, whole-setting data on the professional development of their workforce. In these schools, standards and descriptors were being used as a framework for tools such as electronic self-assessment questionnaires (some hosted online, others offline). These senior leaders reported that this type of data was helpful in identifying professional development needs, and could be used alongside other quality assurance data, such as findings from classroom observations, peer review or learning walks to help plan professional learning to address these needs. Across all the settings engaged, senior leaders' views on the value of using the standards in this more 'structured' or 'quantitative' way varied; some preferred a more qualitative, dialogue-based approach, and others valued them as a framework for gathering setting-wide or whole-faculty data on professional development.

- 4.33 In some settings, use of the standards had not changed significantly between the Year 1 and Year 2 fieldwork. Senior leaders mainly attributed this to external factors, such as the impact of the pandemic and other work-related priorities. Many senior leaders commented that their focus had been on prioritising the implementation of other reforms, including curriculum design and the ALN transformation programme, and that this had also delayed or limited their planned activity relating to the standards.
- 4.34 In a few settings, limited use of the standards continued to be reported. In these settings, practitioners reported that activity had been focused on:
- initial awareness-raising activity, such as senior leaders giving presentations on the standards during staff meetings, or sharing written information with staff.
 - NQTs and mentors gathering evidence against the standards as part of induction processes.
 - senior leaders considering the standards at a strategic level when reviewing teaching and learning data and planning professional learning activity.
- 4.35 Figure 7 below seeks to depict the influence of senior leadership, and participation in professional learning, on practitioners' likelihood of using the standards. It depicts reported patterns of use of the standards based on settings and practitioners engaged during this evaluation, namely that:
- practitioners are more likely to use the standards in schools where senior leadership place a greater emphasis on them (see Section 4.23), and vice versa (horizontal axis).
 - practitioners are more likely to use the standards if they have been engaged in formal professional learning that is structured around the standards (see Section 4.24), and vice versa (vertical axis).

Figure 7. Reported influence of setting leadership and professional learning participation on likelihood of using the standards.



4.36 The case studies set out in Annex B include a range of examples of how practitioners and settings reported they had used the standards on a day-to-day basis. These have been reviewed to develop three ‘typologies of use’ which illustrate the different ways in which settings are typically engaging with the standards. It is important to emphasise that:

- some of the settings engaged in the evaluation demonstrate characteristics described in more than one of the typologies. Therefore, settings do not always fit ‘neatly’ within one typology
- practice within settings can vary according to the focus placed on the standards by individual faculties, middle leaders and practitioners.

However, the typologies do provide a summary of the type of engagement and use of the standards which has been reported by settings, and is described more fully in the case studies.

Typologies of use of the standards in settings

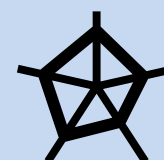
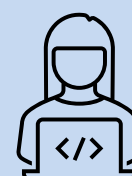
Typology 1: used as a holistic framework for discussing professional development

- Initial setting-wide awareness-raising activity undertaken (e.g. presentations by senior leaders).
- Settings embed and regularly use the language and terminology of the standards in a holistic way as part of their school-wide processes for:
 - performance management (e.g. questions as part of performance review discussions refer to the standards)
 - professional development and learning activity (e.g. standards referenced during and reflected upon after professional learning activity).
- Focus on using the standards at an individual level in a qualitative way, which promotes school-wide engagement with the standards.
- Also used to inform/guide senior leaders in planning setting-wide activity. Aggregated quantitative data not typically gathered.



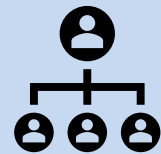
Typology 2: used in dialogue and data-driven approaches to professional development

- Initial setting-wide awareness-raising activity undertaken (e.g. presentations by senior leaders).
- Settings have embedded the language and terminology of the standards in processes (as in Typology 1) and also through the use of tools which are used to support individual practitioners (e.g. online self-reflection questionnaires, spreadsheet-based tools).
- Self-reflection findings used to drive dialogue between senior leaders and practitioners around professional development.
- Settings also gather school- or faculty-wide data systematically (using in-house or externally developed tools (tools developed by RECs and commercial platforms) that can guide strategic decisions on identifying professional development and learning needs for practitioners.
- In-house or externally developed tools (tools developed by RECs and commercial tools) are being used to facilitate the gathering of quantitative data that can support this process
 - e.g. profiling staff confidence against particular descriptors.



Typology 3: used mainly as a reference point by senior leaders

- Some awareness-raising activity (e.g. presentations by senior leaders).
- Senior leaders use the standards to guide their own professional development and strategic planning activity.
- Language and terminology not embedded within professional development, performance management and PL activities. Staff not routinely exposed to the standards within these processes.
- Newer entrants to the profession are most engaged with the standards. They are less familiar to many practitioners, unless exposed to them through formal professional learning.



Language and terminology

- 4.37 Overall, senior leaders and practitioners continued to feel that the standards remained relevant and well-aligned with other aspects of education reform. Some senior leaders and practitioners referred to specific descriptors which could be reviewed, to ensure the terminology of the standards continues to keep pace with other developments (e.g. curriculum guidance). Some senior leaders felt that reviewing the descriptors to create more 'stages' of progress between completing statutory induction and 'sustained highly effective practice' could be beneficial. These senior leaders felt that this would reflect how some settings and stakeholders had interpreted the standards and developed their own scales of confidence or awareness. Some also felt that a 'refresh and relaunch' process could help also raise the prominence of the standards. This suggests there may be a case for reviewing the wording of some of the standards, in light of curriculum and other education reform.

Views of stakeholders

- 4.38 As noted in the Year 1 report, stakeholders have been involved in many activities to support use of the standards. Stakeholders have continued to develop and share resources and materials relating to the standards, promote their use and support

settings to implement the standards, for example through training or facilitating collaboration. This section summarises the views of stakeholders.

Stakeholder views on use of the standards in ITE and induction

- 4.39 The criteria for the accreditation of ITE (Welsh Government, 2018b) require ITE providers to embed the standards within all aspects of course module delivery and assessment. To facilitate this, providers have worked with EWC to develop ‘professional learning workbooks’ on the PLP, structured around the standards and descriptors, for candidates to demonstrate that they have achieved the outcomes required to be awarded QTS.
- 4.40 Stakeholders reported that ITE tutors were becoming more familiar with the standards over time and that the standards were gradually helping to change mindsets from ‘itemised portfolio gathering’ to a more ‘holistic’ approach to gathering evidence. Some ITE providers felt that the requirement to upload evidence against each standard on the PLP could lead to candidates focusing too much on this aspect of their portfolio, rather than the quality of their evidence or critically reflecting on their experiences.

‘Students often ask questions about ‘how many pieces of evidence are needed’ against each of the standards; this mindset can work against the holistic intention. There’s a misconception that once they’ve uploaded evidence against each one that they will pass.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 4.41 ITE partnerships reported that gathering evidence to demonstrate progress against the standards could seem ‘overwhelming’ for candidates at first. ITE partnerships provided examples of how they were supporting their staff and students to use the standards:
- One ITE partnership had collaborated with a REC to develop guidance and supporting materials, including video clips, to help tutors and candidates interpret and demonstrate progress against the standards.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See Cardiff Partnership: [Shared Understanding of the Standards - YouTube](#)

- One partnership had sought to make the standards less overwhelming and more manageable for candidates by focusing on 10 ‘fundamental’ standards in the first instance, and then gradually addressing the others.
- One reported they were initially mainly focusing on ‘collaboration’ during the early ITE placement, while focusing more on ‘innovation’ and ‘leadership’ in the final placement. Pedagogy was introduced in ‘layers’ throughout both placements.
- A few of the partnerships described how they had developed scales for assessing progress against the standards over time. For example, whether their practice was ‘emerging’, ‘achieving’ or ‘exceeding’ the standard.

4.42 ITE partnerships reported that they had encouraged settings and ITE candidates to build in more regular reflection time into their placements. To help facilitate this, some providers noted that they had encouraged candidates to submit reflections of their progress against the standards in a variety of formats including audio, photo and video. Stakeholders felt that offering flexibility in the format of evidence could facilitate more ‘authentic’ reflections from candidates.

4.43 As in Year 1, some stakeholders felt the standards were challenging to use in making ITE assessment decisions (pass/fail thresholds) because they were open to interpretation. Stakeholders felt the standards were useful as a developmental tool for practitioners to identify areas for their professional development journey, but that they were less useful for evaluating their current skills and capabilities, because of the subjective nature of the descriptors. Stakeholders welcomed ongoing discussions between themselves and the Welsh Government on this issue, particularly during the pandemic. Stakeholders reported that planned collaborative activity, mentioned by ITE providers during Year 1 fieldwork, to help overcome these challenges (e.g. a collaborative working group led by the Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers had been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic).

4.44 Stakeholders indicated that they would welcome more opportunities for ITE partnerships to collaborate with each other, particularly for developing a shared understanding of how the standards can be met in different ways. However,

stakeholders also commented on the importance of avoiding identifying examples of good practice that were then viewed as ‘the only way’ of achieving a standard.

Stakeholder views on use of the standards in professional learning

- 4.45 Stakeholders described how they had continued to embed the standards as a ‘common thread’ within formal training courses as well as their strategic plans.⁵¹ Stakeholders felt that the standards were becoming more clearly ‘visible’ to participants on these courses at different stages of their career. The development of professional learning workbooks by EWC and RECs for use with formal professional learning courses, including those for leaders and practitioners, was considered to be important to ensure participants engage with the standards at different stages of their career. One stakeholder described how the standards were now more prominent in their professional learning provision.

‘We’ve restructured one of our leadership programmes... ..Each module is [focused on] a different standard and we do a ‘deep dive’ into them; this helps newer headteachers in using the standards as a ‘core’. The feedback we’re having is positive, I can see how much the new heads are getting from these modules.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 4.46 Use of the PLP was considered to have increased among those who were participating in accredited or endorsed programmes. This was attributed to the development of professional learning workbooks and providers making regular reference to these and the PLP during courses, encouraging participants to record their reflections in these. Stakeholders observed that some practitioners reported that they were using the PLP for the first time since completing induction . This suggests that limited use of the PLP is made by practitioners in between critical career journey points.

‘For some, it’s the first time that they log into their PLP since induction’
(Stakeholder interview)

- 4.47 Stakeholders’ views of how practitioners used the standards outside of formal professional learning courses remained relatively unchanged. NQTs, mentors and

⁵¹ See for example, CSC (2021) [Enabling Equity and Excellence - CSC \(cscjcs.org.uk\)](https://www.cscjcs.org.uk)

those on leadership courses were considered by stakeholders to be those using them most frequently. Experienced practitioners without a formal leadership role were perceived to use them less often; some stakeholders felt that this grouping of practitioners lacked a compelling reason to engage with the standards.

‘This [the standards] sits lower down on the list of priorities than the curriculum’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 4.48 Some stakeholders reported that they were beginning to embed the standards across their wider professional learning offer, including non-accredited/non-endorsed provision. One professional learning provider noted that they had started to allocate reflection time at the end of non-endorsed courses so that participants could upload evidence of their progress to the PLP. They hoped that expanding this approach to all professional learning provision would help expose more practitioners in non-leadership roles to the standards.
- 4.49 Some stakeholders provided examples of settings that were using the standards as a framework for ongoing reflection and coaching activity with their teaching staff. However, this was not considered to be widespread practice, and stakeholders felt that few schools were referring to the standards regularly in this way, or as part of INSET or ‘twilight’ sessions. Some stakeholders suggested that there was scope to further embed the standards within coaching and mentoring sessions for practitioners.
- 4.50 Stakeholders commented that the National Professional Learning Entitlement (NPLE) would be an important driver to encourage settings and practitioners, particularly TAs, to engage with the standards. However, they felt it was too soon to observe any impact from the establishment of the NPLE yet.
- 4.51 As reported in the Year 1 evaluation report, some RECs have delivered professional learning to develop school governors’ understanding of the standards. This was considered important by some stakeholders because school governors were, in general, seen as having limited engagement with the standards. Stakeholders believed that this type of training could become more important in future. This was because, as settings increasingly use the standards as a framework for their

performance management arrangements, governors would need to develop their understanding of them to fully engage in the process.

Stakeholder views on use of the standards in performance management and self-assessment

- 4.52 Stakeholders continued to perceive that settings' use of the standards in performance management and self-assessment was variable. Some stakeholders reported that they had observed an increase in the number of settings using the standards as a framework or tool for performance management during Year 2 of the evaluation. However, stakeholders reported observing a large variety of approaches in settings they had engaged with; something which is consistent with the findings of the evaluation fieldwork. For example, one stakeholder commented that some settings encouraged staff to share completed self-evaluations identifying areas for improvement with their line manager prior to undertaking a performance management review, while others did not ask practitioners to share these with senior leaders. Similarly, several stakeholders reported that some settings were using commercial software to administer self-assessment processes, while others were using spreadsheet-based tools developed by RECs, and many used qualitative methods.
- 4.53 Some stakeholders suggested that national guidance on how the standards should be used as part of performance management would be helpful to develop a more consistent approach, particularly as more schools started to embed the standards in their processes. Stakeholders suggested that providing explicit guidance to note that settings and practitioners should use the standards for this purpose would encourage practitioners to review and reflect on the standards, at least on an annual basis.
- 4.54 Stakeholders continued to report that, in their view, practitioners' engagement with the PLP decreased after practitioners had completed their statutory induction. This was attributed to practitioners not being compelled to continue using it, apart from when professional learning providers required them to do so when they engaged in accredited or endorsed professional learning. Stakeholders also felt that PLP use

had not increased as intended because schools were using other tools for recording their professional learning and performance management.

- 4.55 As noted in the Year 1 report, stakeholders had been involved in developing self-assessment tools and templates to support schools in using the standards.⁵² These tools typically involved practitioners rating their own development against the descriptors. Stakeholders, echoing the views of senior leaders, continued to believe that these types of tools could be valuable in helping settings to make sense of the standards and in encouraging their staff to use them. This is somewhat at odds with the current Welsh Government guidance on using the standards, which suggests that settings use the PLP to record their experiences and that they should ‘Try not to... develop school pro-formas and recording systems’.⁵³ Stakeholders felt that using self-assessment tools could encourage practitioners’ initial engagement with the standards. However, they also emphasised the need for meaningful professional dialogue between practitioners and senior leaders alongside the use of these types of self-assessment tools. Some commented that there was a risk of engagement being ‘broad but not deep’ if settings used self-assessment tools without accompanying discussions to focus on development against the standards in more detail.
- 4.56 Stakeholders echoed the views of settings in relation to a perceived ‘leap’ in the progression between the lower and higher-level descriptors. Some stakeholders noted that, in their view, there continued to be a gap between completing statutory induction and ‘sustained highly effective practice’. Some stakeholders (e.g. ITE partnerships, RECs) had developed their own approaches to describing the steps between lower and higher levels and felt that this was important to make the standards more accessible by enabling practitioners to be able to observe progress over time and thereby encouraging regular use of them.
- 4.57 Most stakeholders continued to believe that exemplification material could help settings to use and interpret the standards. Stakeholders tended to favour digital content, such as videos or audio and felt this type of material could be launched

⁵² See [Performance Management and One Page Research – Hwb Playlist](#)

⁵³ See [Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership: Using the standards](#) (Hwb)

alongside a refreshed version of the standards to encourage settings which are at an earlier stage of engagement with them. Stakeholders noted that any guidance would need to be carefully presented to avoid any suggestion of a 'one size fits all' approach and that it should emphasise the need for settings to adapt tools and approaches to their own setting. Stakeholders also felt that producing additional materials alongside refining the standards was preferable to a more fundamental rethink of them.

'What we want is refinement of the standards rather than a complete overhaul.' **(Stakeholder interview)**

Summary of final evaluation findings: use of the standards

- In both waves of the evaluation, use of the standards varied significantly across settings. Levels of use were mainly driven by the emphasis placed on them by senior leaders who allocated time for practitioners to reflect against the standards, and whether practitioners were engaged in ITE, induction processes or other formal professional learning (e.g. leadership courses).
- In Year 2 of the evaluation, several of the settings had further embedded the standards in their activities and systems including performance management, professional development and professional learning. In a few settings, practitioners reported that the language and terminology of the standards were increasingly being used as part of staff meetings and informal professional dialogue among staff.
- Use of the standards remained relatively unchanged in some settings, due to other pressures and priorities faced by practitioners. Limited use of the standards continued to be reported in a few settings, with activity focused on initial awareness raising, induction processes, and senior leaders considering them as part of strategic planning.
- During Year 2 of the evaluation, senior leaders and practitioners who had participated in formal professional learning programmes reported that the

standards were prominent within these and that this had helped them to use the standards in their own setting (e.g. in planning professional learning, as part of self-reflection).

- As reported in Year 1 of the evaluation, among those who had not participated in formal professional learning programmes, use of the standards depended largely on the emphasis senior leaders were placing on them in their setting. Practitioners who were allocated time to engage with the standards and whose settings had developed self-assessment tools structured around the descriptors were more likely to report that they had used the standards.
- In settings where senior leaders were not placing an emphasis on their staff to use the standards, practitioners (including those who had recently completed induction) were less likely to use them on a day-to-day basis. TAs and experienced teachers who had not followed formal leadership courses were particularly less likely to report that they were using the standards.
- In a few settings, senior leaders were using the standards as a framework for gathering aggregate, setting-wide data on the professional development of their workforce. These senior leaders reported that this type of data was helpful in identifying professional development needs and using this, alongside other quality assurance data (e.g. classroom observations, peer review), to help plan professional learning to address these needs.
- The standards continued to be valued as a framework setting out the expectations for practitioners, with practitioners considering them as a useful developmental tool. Practitioners in PRUs valued them as providing a consistent framework which provided them with greater status. Views on the extent to which the standards can be used in a more structured, quantitative way varied, with some preferring a more qualitative approach, and others valuing them as a framework for gathering quantitative data on professional development.
- Whilst senior leaders acknowledge the alignment between the terminology of the standards and the Curriculum for Wales, the standards do not appear to

be closely integrated with settings' curriculum design and implementation processes. Some practitioners and stakeholders believed that reviewing and refreshing the wording of some of the standards, in light of curriculum and other education reforms, could be valuable.

- The PSATs are valued as a framework underpinning the professional development of support staff. However, there appears to be a need for further activity to encourage and increase use of these in settings.
- Practitioners continue to believe that much progress has been made in terms of professional development against some of the standards over the last few years, particularly innovation and collaboration. Some of this has been at least partly driven by the necessity to adapt working practices in response to the pandemic.
- The case studies set out in Annex B illustrate a range of ways in which the sample of settings engaged in this evaluation are using the standards at setting-level and practitioner-level. These have been summarised in three broad typologies which illustrate the range of practice reported in the settings engaged:
 - Typology 1: the standards used as a holistic framework for discussing professional development
 - Typology 2: the standards used as part of dialogue and data-driven approaches to professional development
 - Typology 3: the standards mainly used as a reference point by senior leaders.

It is important to recognise that these typologies are not mutually exclusive and that settings can demonstrate elements of more than one of them.

- Across all settings, there remained consistent patterns in terms of the characteristics of settings whose practitioners consider that the standards are being used effectively. As reported in Year 1 of this evaluation, these settings tend to:

- have leaders who have placed a significant emphasis on the standards, often for a number of years.
- have a culture of professional learning with regular opportunities for staff to discuss and unpick aspects of the standards in a non-judgemental way as part of a professional dialogue.
- have a collaborative approach to professional learning which encourages practitioners to take ownership of their professional learning.
- have adopted tools for practitioners to self-assess against the standards, have trained staff to use these and are using (or plan to use them) as part of performance management.
- have developed approaches that enable them to strike a balance between using the standards for individual-level reflection and collecting data that can inform the planning of professional learning at setting level.
- encourage practitioners to use standards as a 'natural' part of discussions when sharing their reflections and experiences with colleagues.

5. Support available to use the standards

5.1 This section presents the findings of the final evaluation relating to interviewees' views on the support available for settings and practitioners to use the standards. Firstly, it summarises the findings of the Year 1 evaluation report, before considering any changes to the need for and offer of support during Year 2.

Summary of Year 1 evaluation findings

5.2 The Year 1 evaluation found that:

- views about the support available varied. Whilst some practitioners stated that excellent support was available from their school and RECs, others had not experienced the same level of support
- practitioners agreed that support and information had been made available when the standards were launched, but that this support had tapered off over time. The pandemic was thought to have affected momentum and engagement with the standards, which suggested that further support and information needed to be available
- practitioners at the early stages of their career and those involved in middle leader programmes reported that there was good support available
- NQTs were often more familiar with the language and use of standards, and as such there were several examples of NQTs leading sessions on the standards to other staff during INSET training days
- practitioners and stakeholders alike felt that there was a lack of clear guidance and training available for TAs in particular, with a need to support increased use of the PSATs within schools
- in terms of additional support, practitioners noted that they would appreciate clearer guidance on how to interpret and use the standards; continued awareness raising activities to support engagement with the standards; the

need for more structured cascading of support and more time and capacity during self-reflection periods to work on the standards.

Findings of Year 2 fieldwork

- 5.3 In the first instance, we consider the views of practitioners interviewed during Year 2 before considering the views of stakeholders in relation to the support currently available for practitioners to use the standards, and future opportunities to improve support.

Views on the support provided for practitioners to use the standards

Support to raise awareness and understanding of the standards

- 5.4 Feedback from practitioners suggests that more work needs to be done to raise awareness and understanding of the standards. Setting leaders often commented that their staff had reported to them that the standards were difficult and complex to understand and that they felt the interactive pdf document was large and overwhelming.⁵⁴ As in Year 1, practitioners generally recalled receiving an initial presentation from senior leaders on the standards, and some were using the PLP and reported making some use of the resources on Hwb.
- 5.5 Stakeholders had mixed views as to how support for the standards had developed over the past year and called for more consistency in the approach to supporting them across Wales. As in Year 1, stakeholders reiterated that the pandemic had reduced the number of opportunities available to promote awareness and understanding of the standards during the early years of their implementation. There was a call from some practitioners and stakeholders for more opportunities to develop awareness and common agreement on the interpretation and understanding of the standards. Without this, it was felt that it would be difficult to develop a consistency of practice, particularly in relation to their use in performance management and self-reflection.

⁵⁴ See [Professional standards - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/professional-standards)

‘There isn’t much ongoing support around the use of the standards, other than what is happening within the schools.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

5.6 However, there was also a view held by a minority of interviewed practitioners that they did not need any further support in using the standards or that their school had other priorities to focus on, particularly in terms of their ongoing response to the pandemic or their focus on designing the new school curriculum. As such, some practitioners felt that they only had limited time to engage with the standards. Whilst they were becoming more familiar with the language of the standards, and how they aligned with the Curriculum for Wales, they were short on time to consider them in detail.

‘I don’t think they’re difficult enough to need extra support. There’s a school-to-school learning framework that’s very strong – so that’s been the place where we’ve developed [our approach to using the] standards’ **(Senior leader, Special school)**

5.7 Similar views to those expressed in Year 1 were again raised in relation to which cohorts of practitioners required additional support. Stakeholders continued to suggest that whilst awareness of the standards was high amongst NQTs and those on middle and senior leadership programmes, there remained a need to address the gap in reaching the ‘missing middle’, namely experienced practitioners who were not pursuing formal leadership responsibilities:

‘Reaching those who don’t have leadership ambitions is the challenge...we still want these practitioners to be reflective practitioners. There needs to be a bit more ‘standards by stealth’ for this group.’ **(Stakeholder interview)**

5.8 Practitioners and stakeholders alike also reported that there was more work to do with TAs, commenting that there had been limited engagement with this cohort thus far and a need to focus on increasing support and a concerted effort to convince them of the value and relevance of the standards.

Support in the application of the standards

- 5.9 In considering the feedback received during fieldwork against the Welsh Government's guidance on 'How best to use the Professional Teaching Standards' (Welsh Government, 2017c)⁵⁵, there is evidence of regular attempts within settings to ensure that practitioners use the standards in ways that are consistent with the guidance that:
- the standards are treated as belonging to the individual teacher or leader
 - the standards are used as an overview of their professional work annually (through performance management processes)
 - the descriptors are used
 - settings encourage development over a longer term
 - the standards are becoming embedded in conversations about teaching and leadership.
- 5.10 However, there was less evidence that senior leaders expect practitioners in their settings to use the standards in other ways recommended in the 'How best to use the Professional Teaching Standards' (Welsh Government, 2017c) document. For example, there was limited evidence that practitioners use the PLP to reflect on their practice, with the exception of NQTs and those engaged in formal leadership courses. Similarly, there was little evidence that support was being provided across the board to ensure rounded development and deep reflection. Few schools seemed to link descriptors together or make links in professional practice that move from standard to standard. Whilst there was some evidence of practitioners from different settings coming together to support each other in exploring a particular standard together, this has yet to become common practice.
- 5.11 The evidence captured in the fieldwork suggests that practice within school settings does not always align with the guidance set out in 'How best to use the Professional Teaching Standards' (Welsh Government, 2017c). For example, the descriptors are often used one-by-one and are used for evidence gathering; schools tend to

⁵⁵ See How best to use the Professional Teaching Standards: [Professional standards - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/professional-standards-hwb)

develop pro-formas and recording systems and are using the standards as part of annual performance management processes with a focus on the person. There appears, therefore, to be a disconnect between practice and the guidance, with feedback suggesting that settings value using the standards in these ways. This may suggest a need to refine the guidance, particularly in terms of the standards' use in self-reflection and performance management processes.

- 5.12 Several stakeholders continued to feel that there was a lack of clarity as to where practitioners should turn for support in the use of the standards. Stakeholders also highlighted a continued lack of awareness of what resources and training were available to support practitioners and schools in the use of them.
- 5.13 The RECs receive funding from the Welsh Government to support practitioners' use and understanding of the standards and schools as learning organisations (SLO). Some stakeholders felt that each of the consortia had different levels of capability and transparency and that it was currently unclear how well the consortia were promoting knowledge, understanding and engagement with the standards in their respective regions.
- 5.14 A few stakeholders reported that demand for support from the consortia relating to the standards was relatively low among settings. One stakeholder suggested that this reflected that the standards were possibly not given sufficient priority within settings at the moment:

'I've never been approached by another [setting] for help with the professional standards' **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 5.15 One stakeholder mentioned how professional learning for professional learning practitioners (PL for PL) had progressed at another REC, with the standards now embedded, and referred to in all professional learning delivered via endorsed or accredited training.⁵⁶ There remained a challenge to ensure this was also embedded in non-accredited provision. This example suggested that the approach to facilitating the use of the standards had matured over the past year, with a more

⁵⁶ Professional learning practitioners are senior leaders or teachers who plan, lead, deliver and/or co-ordinate professional learning activity for other practitioners within their settings.

nuanced embedding of the standards into professional learning activity rather than training based on promoting the standards as a stand-alone entity.

5.16 Conversely, some stakeholders reported that weaving the standards into REC provision, made it more difficult to isolate or identify the support being provided, which linked to the question of 'ownership' of the standards across the middle tier. While some practitioners referred to the standards being prominent in professional learning courses, others struggled to recall any references to the standards in any courses or learning programmes with which they had engaged within the last year or so. It was suggested that more could be done to ensure a greater understanding of the functions of the consortia in relation to supporting the standards, with possibly a requirement for the consortia to report more clearly on the activities being delivered by the grant funding received for this purpose.

5.17 It was reported that endorsed courses for national leaders and aspiring heads as well as National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) courses now require participants to use the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) to record their evidence, and as such the standards have become embedded in their approach.

'Using the standards to structure my evidence for NPQH was really effective. Without the checklist to reflect on, I probably would have missed 90% of the things that I do'. **(Senior leader, PRU)**

5.18 Over the past year, it was reported that discussions between the Welsh Government and ITE providers on how to assess if students were ready for teaching had helped to create consistency and clarity in the interpretation of the standards by ITE providers. It was further mentioned that strong relationships between ITE providers and induction leads within local authorities and RECs had enabled a more seamless and common approach to the standards.

Practical support with the standards

5.19 There was some evidence during the fieldwork that schools were now becoming more familiar with the systems and tools used to engage with the standards,

particularly self-assessment tools. As a result, self-assessment was becoming a more natural part of performance management and reflection against the standards.

- 5.20 RECs in particular mentioned how they were appreciative of the EWC's role in creating tailored 'workbooks' on the PLP to capture evidence structured around the professional learning delivered by RECs. The EWC was also praised for its willingness to train practitioners in schools on the use of the PLP and the PebblePocket app. As reported in Year 1, it was further suggested that integrating the PLP within Hwb might encourage greater use. However, there was some evidence from school practitioners that introduction to such tools did not always translate to regular use:

'We had people introduce the PebblePad to us, but we just didn't use it. Unfortunately, we just found it cumbersome' **(Senior leader, PRU)**

- 5.21 Practitioners and stakeholders reported that there had been some progress in ensuring practitioners record evidence of their reflections against the standards when undertaking any professional learning. Some interviewees reported that there was increasing use of reflection time at the end of professional learning sessions to enable this. Stakeholders and some senior leaders continued to express an aspiration that practitioners taking part in 'twilight' professional learning sessions in school settings will be given time at the end of these sessions to upload reflections on the PLP.

'We are not there yet but that's the aspiration' **(Stakeholder interview)**

- 5.22 A few school practitioners noted that the commercial HR software systems that were available to support settings in recording evidence of practitioners' development against the standards were expensive. Some also noted that commercial software packages of this type were not always available in Welsh, and therefore Welsh-medium schools were less able to engage with such software.

Views on how to improve support for practitioners to use the standards

Developing user-friendly guidance and resources

- 5.23 Practitioners regularly stated that some of the terminology associated with the standards was difficult and complex, particularly for LSWs and other practitioners who were less familiar with them. Some senior leaders called for a more user-friendly and accessible way of engaging with them to make them easier to understand:

‘If there was a way of having entry to the standards [using them for the first time] that was enjoyable and not too time intensive it would be a way to get staff to engage with the standards more frequently’ **(Senior leader, Special school)**

- 5.24 In particular, the ‘innovation’ and ‘leadership’ descriptors were highlighted by some practitioners as standards that remained particularly difficult to fully interpret their meaning. Some interviewees suggested that the leadership standard felt repetitive and was closely linked to others. Within the ‘innovation’ standard, some practitioners reported that they were unsure about whether their reflections should be about innovation that was new to the individual or the setting.
- 5.25 Some stakeholders also felt there was a need for additional guidance to focus on and develop mutual understanding and interpretation of some of the standards. At one ITE provider, a successful approach had been undertaken where schools and their mentors worked to unpick some of the descriptors that students found difficult to reflect on, with videos of these discussions made available to candidates.
- 5.26 A specific need for training targeted at school governors to help develop their awareness and understanding of the standards was also raised by practitioners and stakeholders. One REC reported that they had delivered this type of training but felt that more could be done in this area.

Embedding into delivery of the Curriculum for Wales

- 5.27 Several stakeholders pointed to a real opportunity with the delivery and roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales to raise the profile of the standards. Practitioners saw how

the language of the standards aligned well with the Curriculum for Wales, and suggested that, over time, this would make it easier for teachers to see their relevance and purpose.

- 5.28 There was an identified need to ensure all guidance documents and frameworks related to education reform in Wales were integrated, with an opportunity to ensure the standards were seen and understood within the wider context. In this sense, there was a call for some ‘sense making’ of the standards alongside the national approach to professional learning (NAPL) and the national resource: evaluation and improvement (NREI), so that professional learning practitioners could demonstrate to schools how the standards could be incorporated into other aspects.
- 5.29 It was felt that RECs could play an important role in modelling to setting leaders and practitioners how the standards could be integrated with other aspects of reform. One-to-one coaching, webinars and podcasts were suggested as some practical ways to cascade this learning rather than written materials.

Strengthening links with the National Professional Learning Entitlement

- 5.30 It was suggested by stakeholders and practitioners that the standards needed to be given a higher profile nationally to reinforce and reinstate their importance, so that schools would place greater emphasis on them. Otherwise, practitioners believed that there was a danger that they could ‘fall by the wayside’:

‘It would be worth raising the profile of standards to promote their value. At the moment professional standards are low down on the list of valued priorities’

Senior leader, **(English-medium middle schools)**

- 5.31 The launch of the National Professional Learning Entitlement was suggested by some stakeholders as an ideal opportunity to follow up with a ‘soft relaunch’ of the standards. As noted in section 1.29 of this report, the NPLE guidance sets out expectations about how practitioners, senior leaders, settings and system leaders should engage with the standards. Stakeholders felt that the NPLE launch provided an important additional opportunity to get practitioners to engage with the standards, by making the links between the entitlement and the standards clearer.

For example, the entitlement for further time and capacity for self-reflection amongst practitioners was felt to be helpful with practitioners' progression in meeting professional standards descriptors..

- 5.32 ITE providers noted that they now focused heavily on reflection and helping students to develop their reflective skills. The standards were considered to be a useful framework for reflection, if presented in that way. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of allowing ample self-reflection time for practitioners, as a crucial way of ensuring the professional standards ultimately achieved their purpose.

'We need to release people for a couple of weeks for school-to-school support'
(Stakeholder interview)

'If we are serious about this in Wales – that is what teachers need – proper 'away time', with colleagues, to reflect and think. That is how change happens'
(Stakeholder interview)

Responsibility for the standards at national level

- 5.33 During the Year 1 fieldwork, some stakeholders commented on which organisation they felt should be responsible for the content, format and promotion of standards at national level. While these issues were not part of the initial scope of the evaluation, practitioners and stakeholders were asked during Year 2 fieldwork whether they were aware of who had responsibility for the standards at national level and whether they had any views on this issue.
- 5.34 Most practitioners reported that they had not previously considered who had responsibility for the standards at national level. Practitioners, particularly senior leaders, most commonly believed that the standards were 'owned' by the Welsh Government and most were aware that they were hosted on the Hwb website. However, most practitioners also reported that they did not consider this issue to be important to them at a setting or practitioner level. Most practitioners commented that that it was up to individual practitioners to take ownership of the standards.

- 5.35 Most stakeholders believed that ownership of the standards sat with the Welsh Government, with some making the point that they did so because they are a statutory requirement. As with practitioners, most stakeholders did not consider that ownership of the standards was a significant issue, noting that the most important thing was that practitioners should take individual ownership of them.
- 5.36 Some stakeholders questioned what ‘ownership’ of the standards entailed in practice, noting that this could involve a number of functions:
- full and independent editorial control of the content, format and presentation of the standards
 - a role or representation on a working group with responsibility for the content, format and presentation of the standards
 - responsibility for promoting, increasing awareness, understanding and use of the standards among practitioners.
- 5.37 When prompted to consider who should have responsibility for the standards, a few stakeholders reflected on whether the EWC should be responsible for them. The rationale for this view was that the EWC already host the PLP which is the platform where evidence of development against the standards is recorded by practitioners. One stakeholder felt strongly that the standards should be the responsibility of the EWC, noting that it was the norm for professional bodies to take ownership of them in other countries and that this would provide clarity in terms of who should promote awareness of the standards and support practitioners to use them. However, as noted above, most stakeholders did not have a strong view on this issue.
- 5.38 Some interviewees felt it was important that stakeholders worked collaboratively to refine the content of the standards and support practitioners to use them. One stakeholder observed that there has been an effective and collaborative relationship between EWC, WG and ITE providers in relation to the standards and they wish to see this continue. As a result, this stakeholder argued that the standards can continue to be owned by the Welsh Government, as all interested stakeholder organisations work together to ensure they are appropriate for all leaders, teachers and those assisting teaching. Some felt that the Welsh

Government could set out clearer responsibilities for specific stakeholders in terms of promoting the standards and supporting their use.

- 5.39 A variety of approaches of ownership and responsibility for professional standards are adopted in other countries' education systems. In some countries, standards are owned by the regulatory body for the education workforce. However, there appears to be limited evidence on which models are most effective. Additionally, the context in which professional standards are used is significantly different in some countries. For example, in Scotland practitioners are required to undertake self-evaluation against the appropriate Professional Standards as part of the 'Professional Update' process to maintain their registration. This includes a requirement for them and their line managers to confirm every five years that they have 'engaged in ongoing professional learning and reflected against the appropriate Professional Standards'.⁵⁷
- 5.40 Engaging with regulatory bodies and governments outside of Wales to gather evidence of the effectiveness of different models of ownership and implementation of professional standards for teachers has been beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, this could be considered as part of future research to explore the question of ownership of the standards.

Summary of final evaluation findings: support

- 5.41 The key findings from the final evaluation are that:
- practitioners generally still require and request support to raise understanding and usage of the standards. However, this remains a relatively low priority against a backdrop of responding to the aftermath of the pandemic and increasingly, the roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales.
 - some aspects of the standards are being used as originally proposed, but there remains work to be done to embed a new way of thinking and working within the profession.

⁵⁷ See [Professional Update - The General Teaching Council for Scotland \(gtcs.org.uk\)](https://www.gtcs.org.uk)

- there is a call for a more consistent approach to the support being provided across Wales with a need for more clarity and reporting upon the approaches being undertaken at consortia level.
- there may be a case for delegating specific responsibilities for raising awareness and promotion of the standards to one or more stakeholder organisations.
- it seems an appropriate time to consider a relaunch of the standards and making the linkages between their support and embeddedness with the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales and the National Professional Learning entitlement.

6. Perceived and anticipated impacts of the standards

6.1 This section presents the findings relating to practitioners' and stakeholders' perceptions of the emerging impacts of the standards and views of the impacts they anticipate the standards will have in future. It first summarises the findings from Year 1 of the evaluation, before considering how perceptions on the impact of the standards have changed during Year 2.

Summary of Year 1 evaluation findings

6.2 Practitioners and stakeholders considered that it was too soon to observe the impact of the standards at a workforce or setting level, and most felt unable to attribute any impacts to the influence of the standards. However, practitioners and stakeholders also provided a number of examples of emerging impacts they had observed.

- Practitioners and stakeholders noted that the standards were likely to be having a greater impact on those who used them the most, frequently NQTs and those completing ITE
- Practitioners reported that the standards had helped establish a common language and framework to support self-reflection
- TAs reported that the standards had supported professional dialogue, raising awareness of opportunities to develop and had the potential to improve perceptions of TA roles
- Practitioners in some settings reported that the standards had helped improve self-assessment and self-reflection processes by establishing a more robust structure to support their continuous development and improvement
- Senior leaders and stakeholders provided examples of practitioners taking greater autonomy and ownership of their professional learning

- Practitioners and stakeholders noted that the standards had increased practitioner awareness and understanding of leadership, and had encouraged greater collaboration and innovation
- Some practitioners and stakeholders anticipated that the increased focus on pedagogy in the standards will, over time, contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Findings from the Year 2 fieldwork

- 6.3 In the first instance, we consider the views of practitioners interviewed during Year 2 before considering the views of stakeholders in relation to the emerging impacts of the standards and views of the impacts they anticipate the standards will have in future.

Impacts on leaders and teachers

- 6.4 There was a noticeable change in the views of senior leaders and teachers on the emerging impact of the professional standards on how teachers engage with professional learning, as well as their impact on teaching practice. Whilst during the first phase of the evaluation most practitioners emphasised that the impacts of the standards would not be seen for several years, many more examples of emerging impacts were provided during follow-up discussions with senior leaders, teachers and TAs during year 2.

Changing mindsets: supporting continuous improvement through self-reflection

- 6.5 Senior leaders and teachers emphasised the value of the professional standards in helping to change the mindsets of teachers: throughout the evaluation, teachers have recognised that the standards are developmental in nature, that they are not to be used as 'thresholds' or 'judgements', but instead they provide a framework for teachers to develop and improve continuously.

6.6 Senior leaders in many schools noted that the standards have begun to impact on staff by making them more aware of the expectations on them and the areas they need to develop continuously. The standards were described as providing important ‘scaffolding’ for reflection and professional development.

6.7 Comments from senior leaders and teachers reinforced evidence heard during Year 1 of the evaluation that teachers were taking greater responsibility for their own professional development. It was suggested that there was a gradual shift in how teachers see professional learning and their own engagement with it. One senior leader noted that, whereas previously, teachers were at times ‘passive recipients’ of CPD, they are now more aware of the type of professional learning they would benefit from in terms of improving specific aspects of pedagogy or leadership. Another senior leader noted:

‘Historically SLT would decide on all training. I like that [the standards] put the onus on teachers to think about and seek out their own CPD – in this regard, it has started to have an impact on teachers’ professionalism.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium Secondary School)**

6.8 A number of schools interviewed referred to the fact that practitioners had started to adopt different approaches to professional learning or that they were more proactive or self-directed in undertaking professional learning. In some cases, senior leaders suggested that distance learning during the pandemic was a trigger for this: examples were provided of teachers undertaking their own research into learner wellbeing and blended learning:

‘They were not reliant on being spoon-fed with possible sources or courses to address the issues they were facing. They were taking more direct responsibility for their learning and seeking out support and resources.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium primary)**

Since then the professional standards have provided a framework for more autonomous and teacher-driven professional learning to be sustained.

Increased collaboration

6.9 A number of changes in behaviour were observed by senior leaders and teachers, including:

- Teachers sharing their professional standards priorities or 'development targets' with each other
- Teachers engaging in more dialogue about their professional development and areas for further improvement
- Greater joint planning, with an emphasis on discussions about pedagogy, often framed by the professional standards.

6.10 As can be seen above, many of the emerging impacts identified by senior leaders and teachers relate to increased collaboration and discussion between practitioners. Examples were provided by primary and secondary school leaders of a shift from teachers developing schemes of work independently to working across key stages or within Area of Learning and Experience teams to plan jointly. Senior leaders acknowledged that the professional standards were not necessarily the main driver of further collaboration, however they supported other developments and reforms at school and wider system levels.

'There has been a strong team approach to strategic planning in the school for the last two years, and the adoption of this co-production model coincided with the professional standards being introduced.' **(Senior leader, English-medium primary school)**

6.11 Senior leaders and practitioners reported that further positive outcomes have arisen from greater collaboration and collective discussions about practice, driven in part by schools' engagement with the professional standards. More frequent professional dialogue, it was suggested by one senior leader, is contributing to teachers feeling less isolated and also less 'overwhelmed'. This was considered to be very important at a time of considerable reform across the education system, bringing new and additional pressures on the workforce. Senior leaders indicated that there is an increasing openness among staff to discuss a range of issues including teaching and learning methods, planning and behaviour management.

‘The standards are very much about development and improvement – our ethos as a school now recognises that there is always scope to get better, to collaborate more. I don’t think teachers feel as isolated as a result... the standards allow open discussion in a good way – they help create a safe space. Curriculum for Wales has helped – as we are all in the same boat with the new curriculum, we are all learning and it’s new for us all. It’s an exciting time to be in education.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium secondary school)**

Other emerging impacts on teachers

- 6.12 A range of other observed changes in teacher behaviour and practices were reported by senior leaders. Staff were reported to be more comfortable in taking risks and in trialling new approaches. This was considered to be partly driven by curriculum reform but also by the emphasis on innovation as part of the professional standards. Examples included digital innovation and engaging in action research to inform new pedagogical approaches.

‘I wouldn’t have done a formal piece of research before [action research relating to pedagogy] – I would have done some research into a specific subject, but I wouldn’t have recorded it and reflected upon it against the standard. It’s got me into a good habit which I wouldn’t otherwise have done’.

(Teacher, PRU)

- 6.13 There was evidence to suggest that the standards were supporting teachers’ commitment to continuous improvement and helping to develop teachers’ understanding of good pedagogy. Indeed, there was a general recognition that, ultimately, the key measure of the standards’ impact will be whether they have contributed to raising the quality of teaching practice.
- 6.14 In some cases senior leaders felt that the standards’ impact was not helped by the disconnect between the standards and performance management arrangements. Although some of the schools interviewed as part of the evaluation had introduced processes that had meant the standards were embedded as part of performance management, this was the case in a minority of cases. One senior leader observed:

‘Performance management is a bit anachronistic in our current educational context – it’s bizarre that professional standards aren’t necessarily explicitly connected to performance management arrangements’. **(Senior leader, Welsh-medium secondary school)**

Impacts on teaching assistants

6.15 Interviews with senior leaders and TAs identified that the development of standards for assisting teaching had led to a number of emerging impacts, some of which echo those outlined above in relation to teachers. The existence of standards for assisting teaching were said to have promoted the importance of value of the roles of teaching assistants. Impacts cited frequently included:

- An emphasis in schools on identifying opportunities to upskill TAs.
- Schools taking a more integrated approach to thinking about TAs’ professional development, alongside that of teachers. The emphasis on collaboration between teachers has been mirrored in some schools in relation to TAs, adjusting processes to ensure that they too have opportunities to plan and reflect collectively.

‘Previously TAs had their PPA time individually, at separate times but now they have that time jointly on Friday mornings.’

- Increased numbers of TAs engaging with professional learning, as a result of them taking greater ownership of their own professional development.

‘We’re starting to see more LSAs taking part in PL now, they are definitely more confident now to try and engage with new PL and tie it back to the standards. It’s very much the culture in the school now. It’s given them something that’s up there and has some status to it.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium all-through school)**

- Schools assigning responsibility to TAs to lead professional learning activity as part of INSET days, resulting in TAs feeling more valued.

- TAs being invited to staff meetings, whereas previously this had not been the case.
- TAs reported feeling that they were a closer and more valued part of the wider staff team within schools.
- The standards encouraged TAs to think more creatively about their work and how to improve their practice, something that senior leaders and teacher saw as being beneficial for learners.

Impact on whole-school planning and wider priorities

- 6.16 There was some evidence to indicate that the professional standards were impacting or contributing to wider school approaches to supporting continuous improvement.
- 6.17 Echoing some of the examples set out in section 4 of this report on the use of the standards, the standards have helped schools to identify the CPD priorities or areas of focus across the school. This is considered an important impact, helping to determine which aspects of the standards can potentially be targeted strategically to help drive improvements in teaching and learning.
- 6.18 The standards were seen to be making a difference to the ‘tone’ of conversations about teaching and learning, according to a number of senior leaders and teachers. Previously, teachers reported that they often felt ‘defensive’ or as if they were being judged during discussions about their teaching practice or the quality of their teaching. There appears to have been a change in many schools: discussions about teaching practice were described as being more ‘conversational’ and ‘more honest’. Schools are ‘trying to encourage a culture of talking and reflecting on practice’ that is based on supporting continuous development, not judging against criteria.
- 6.19 Importantly, senior leaders noted that this continuous improvement should be based on the individual teacher’s strengths, needs and priorities. One senior leader

underlined the need for 'bespoke professional learning requirements' in response to teachers' needs. This, it was said, had led to:

'improvement in teaching and improved engagement with professional learning. [It] sits in parallel to other projects and programmes we're doing. It's integral to whole school plan for teaching and learning.' **(Senior leader, English-medium secondary)**

- 6.20 The emphasis on collaboration and reflection that forms part of the school's engagement with the professional standards has led to one school recognising the good practice and learning that they can draw on from within the school and not always look for support from external partners.

'We have a strong ethos of continual development and professional enquiry. There is a strong circular system of professional learning and feeding back and I think this is essential for us. The fact that we do this across the school is important: we don't always have to seek external help when there is good practice within the school itself.' **(Senior leader, Welsh-medium secondary)**

- 6.21 Senior leaders suggested that the professional standards are helping to develop and shape pedagogy in a way that will enable schools to deliver and realise the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales.

- 6.22 One measure of impact that could be examined over time is whether the professional standards contribute to larger numbers of teachers progressing into leadership positions. The standards promote the leadership qualities that all teachers need to develop and display in their work, from ITE onwards. Senior leaders noted that the standards could help practitioners understand and value their own leadership skills and help them realise that there is a leadership pathway that they could pursue.

'Leadership is not for everyone – however there has been, historically, a shortage of head teachers. It will be interesting to see if there is a greater uptake of the NPQH in the future.' **(Senior leader, English-medium secondary)**

Impact on learners

- 6.23 Limited evidence was presented by senior leaders and teachers of any direct impacts of the professional standards on learners. Some senior leaders were confident that the standards could support better learner outcomes but that this would only happen over time and, some suggested, only after schools have been able to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Others noted that the impact on learners would be seen as the standards contribute to improving the quality of teaching.

‘I expect that, as part of their continuous reflection and review of their progress against the professional standards that teachers will be thinking about what difference their teaching is making to learners and the way in which their pedagogy is supporting good learner progress.’ **(Senior leader, English-medium primary school)**

- 6.24 Nevertheless, in a minority of cases, schools noted that teachers’ engagement with the standards had led to a greater focus on certain aspects of learners’ experience, including learner wellbeing, peer-learning and peer-assessment and developing skills in independent learning. Senior leaders and teachers in some schools and settings noted that research and professional enquiry carried out linked to the professional standards were helping to improve the support provided by practitioners in relation to children’s mental health and wellbeing.

‘Research undertaken by staff on this area means that the school is getting better at recognising mental health and wellbeing issues and are finding more effective approaches for dealing with them. The feedback from some TAs around this area for instance has shown us that pupils don’t have to learn all the time during the day. It’s OK to take them out of class and get them back in when they’re ready to learn. We’re getting better at finding ways of helping pupils around ACE – but the impact of this of course won’t be achieved on a short-term basis.’ **(Senior leader, PRU)**

Stakeholders' views of perceived and anticipated impacts

- 6.25 As was reported during the Year 1 report, stakeholders' views on the emerging and anticipated impacts of the standards largely reflected those expressed by senior leaders and teachers. Most stakeholders believed it remained too early to be able to assess fully the impact of the standards.
- 6.26 Stakeholders underlined the importance of leadership in supporting the use and driving the impact of the professional standards. Several national stakeholders noted that where leadership teams promote the standards as a central part of professional learning systems the impact on teaching and learning will be stronger over time.
- 6.27 Stakeholders offered examples of what they considered to be impacts of the standards to date. These included:
- An increased understanding among practitioners of what constitutes good pedagogy and of the importance of collaboration in supporting pedagogy. Regional consortia, in particular, underlined these points, noting that this would bring about positive impacts for learners over time.
 - Increased use of the language and vocabulary of the standards.
 - Regional consortia reported having observed a greater emphasis on reflection and self-evaluation among practitioners. While this was reported to be most prevalent among newer entrants to the profession, there was also some evidence of this taking place among more experienced practitioners.
 - Greater awareness and understanding of leadership skills among NQTs and early career practitioners, and an increased appetite for responsibility at an early stage of their careers.
 - Practitioners, particularly NQTs and early career teachers, taking greater ownership of their own professional learning.
 - Greater collaboration between practitioners, including collaboration that supports development in relation to the professional standards.

- Increased enthusiasm and motivation to take part in professional learning among teaching assistants.
- More collaborative working taking place between practitioners – this includes a greater openness to share learning experiences and reflect on areas for development.
- More innovation and creativity in teaching and learning.

6.28 Stakeholders commented on the difficulty of assessing the impact of the standards, noting that their influence at a system level was likely to be gradual and difficult to isolate from the influences of other reforms across the system. As was noted during Year 1 of the evaluation, stakeholders referred to the many contributory factors driving improvements to teaching and learning, including the National Professional Learning Entitlement, curriculum reform and Schools as Learning Organisations.

6.29 Stakeholders also commented on the potential for the standards to have an impact on learners, particularly through improving pedagogy and subsequently the quality of teaching and learning. Some stakeholders referred to examples of enquiry-based research they felt had led to improved learner experiences. Others commented on the potential for greater innovation in the classroom to support learners. Some stakeholders referred to the potential for the standards to contribute to longer term outcomes for learners such as improved attendance and attainment.

6.30 Finally, stakeholders referred to the fact that, although awareness and use of the standards were increasing, this remained variable. Consequently, the impact of the standards would also continue to vary. A number of stakeholders considered that the standards' impact was likely to be highest among NQTs through the emphasis on them during induction. Several observations were made about ways in which the impact of the standards could be increased: firstly, by making the use of the standards to support professional development mandatory for support staff; secondly by requiring schools to ensure the standards are at the heart of schools' performance management processes; and thirdly, embedding the standards as part of self-evaluation and performance management processes for all staff. In relation to the latter point, stakeholders questioned whether there was a need for national

guidance for schools to ensure that practitioners use the standards as part of their self-evaluation and performance management activity.

Summary of findings: perceived and anticipated impacts

- Evidence from practitioners and stakeholders reveals that, gradually, the professional standards are having an increasing impact on teachers' behaviours and practice.
- The standards are seen by senior leaders and practitioners as providing a framework that supports self-reflection and continuous professional development.
- Evidence indicates that teachers are taking greater responsibility for their own professional development. It was suggested that there was a gradual shift towards many teachers taking a more active role in identifying the types of professional learning needed to improve specific aspects of pedagogy or leadership.
- Senior leaders report greater collaboration between teachers, and that this is often related to or informed by the professional standards. This includes teachers discussing their pedagogy, professional development and areas for further improvement.
- Evidence collected during the evaluation indicates that there is a greater openness among staff to discuss teaching and learning methods, planning and behaviour management. The professional standards provide a vocabulary and language that supports this.
- The standards for assisting teaching are leading to further opportunities for teaching assistants to engage in professional learning. This is contributing to greater appreciation of the roles of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants report that the standards have contributed to them feeling more valued members of the wider staff team.

- There was some evidence to indicate that the professional standards were impacting or contributing to wider school approaches to supporting continuous improvement. Schools use information linked to the teachers' development in relation to the professional standards to identify priorities for CPD to help drive improvements in teaching and learning. Senior leaders suggested that the professional standards are supporting the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales by helping to develop appropriate pedagogy among teachers.
- Limited evidence was presented by senior leaders and teachers of any direct impacts of the professional standards on learners. Some senior leaders were confident that the standards could support better learner outcomes but that this would only happen over time.
- Some schools noted that the standards had led to increased focus on learner wellbeing, peer-learning and peer-assessment and developing learners' skills in independent learning. Senior leaders and teachers also noted that professional enquiry relating to the professional standards were helping to improve the support for children's mental health and wellbeing.
- Stakeholders noted that the growing awareness and use of the standards was gradually leading to more evident impacts on school processes and teaching practice. However, they felt that the impacts remained very variable across the wider system and that impacts were highest among NQTs and senior leaders who engage more fully with the standards. The challenge is to ensure the standards are promoted and embedded more widely. Some stakeholders proposed that additional national guidance for schools be developed to encourage, or require that, practitioners use the standards as part of their self-evaluation activity.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The conclusions below have been developed based on the findings set out in Sections 3-6. As noted in Sections 2.21-2.23, the qualitative nature of the methodology means that these conclusions should be considered to be indicative of the sample of settings and practitioners engaged and the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population of practitioners.

Awareness and understanding of the standards

7.2 Over the course of the evaluation, relatively little change was observed in most practitioners' awareness of the standards, and this was supported by evidence from stakeholders. However, there was evidence of increasing depth of understanding among some groups of practitioners. This appeared to be mainly influenced by two enabling factors:

- increased use of the standards within settings that had further embedded them into existing school practices
- participation in professional learning that is closely aligned with the standards.

7.3 Findings from the final evaluation show that settings continued to access a wide range of information and guidance relating to the standards. As well as specific information on the standards being included in documents and activity by the Welsh Government, stakeholders and settings (e.g. presentations by stakeholders or senior leaders), there was more evidence during Year 2 that the standards were embedded in other activities. Stakeholders and practitioners reported that the standards have become more embedded, and were more visible, in professional learning programmes. These programmes, play an important role in increasing the relevance of the standards, thereby enhancing practitioners' understanding of them.

7.4 During both waves of fieldwork, the same cohorts of practitioners remained most familiar with the standards, with those engaged in professional learning programmes being the most likely to have improved their understanding over the

past year. Senior leaders and those involved in ITE and induction processes (i.e. NQTs, ITE students, induction mentors and external verifiers) continued to be most likely to report higher levels of awareness and understanding. Experienced practitioners in schools that have not embedded the standards in performance management activity and TAs remained least familiar with the standards. Without further encouragement, or stronger strategic direction, schools that have not already done so are unlikely to extend the standards to support staff.

- 7.5 During Year 2, practitioners and stakeholders continued to report that the standards were well aligned with other policy developments, particularly Curriculum for Wales. However, there is a continued perception that awareness of the standards has been overshadowed by other reforms. Findings suggest there may be an opportunity for more awareness-raising activity to be undertaken at national level to 'refresh and relaunch' the standards.

Use of the standards

- 7.6 The frequency and extent to which practitioners used the standards varied significantly across the sample of settings engaged during both waves of the evaluation. The main factors influencing the frequency and depth of use by practitioners were:
- the emphasis placed on the standards by senior leaders, such as whether they had embedded them in recruitment, performance management and professional learning processes
 - whether practitioners were engaged in ITE, induction processes or other formal professional learning (e.g. leadership courses).
- 7.7 In both waves of the evaluation, senior leaders, NQTs, induction mentors and those who had participated in professional learning courses were most likely to report that they were using the standards regularly or in-depth. TAs and experienced teachers who had not followed formal leadership courses, were less likely to report that they were using the standards.

- 7.8 In Year 2 of the evaluation, there was evidence of increasing depth of use of the standards among some practitioners. Practitioners in settings that had further embedded the standards in their activities reported an increasing familiarity and confidence in using them in formal (e.g. performance management) and less formal (e.g. professional dialogue) contexts. Similarly, at an individual level, senior leaders and practitioners who had participated in formal professional learning programmes had engaged in greater depth with the standards; this had supported use the standards in their own setting (e.g. in planning professional learning, as part of self-reflection). Practitioners who were allocated time to reflect on their development against the standards (e.g. through self-assessment tools structured around the descriptors) were more likely to use them.
- 7.9 In some settings, use of the standards remained relatively unchanged over the course of the evaluation. In these settings, senior leaders often pointed to other pressures and priorities which had limited the extent to which they had embedded the standards. A few settings continued to report they had made limited use of the standards beyond awareness raising activity and activity that was required as part of induction processes. In the absence of senior leaders encouraging use of the standards, practitioners (including those who had recently completed induction) were less likely to use them on a day-to-day basis.
- 7.10 There was evidence of an increasing depth of engagement with the standards as a framework for strategic planning among a few senior leaders. In a few settings, these senior leaders were gathering aggregate, setting-wide data based on practitioner self-assessments to identify professional development needs, and to plan professional learning, at faculty and whole-setting level.
- 7.11 The standards continued to be valued as a framework setting out the expectations for practitioners, with practitioners considering them as a useful developmental tool. Practitioners in PRUs valued them as providing a consistent framework which provided them with greater status. The PSATs continued to be valued by support staff and senior leaders, although TAs were less likely to be using these compared with teachers and senior leaders' use of their standards. There may be a case for further activity to encourage greater use of the PSATs in settings.

- 7.12 Whilst senior leaders acknowledge the alignment between the terminology of the standards and the Curriculum for Wales, the standards do not appear to be closely integrated with settings' curriculum design and implementation processes. Some practitioners and stakeholders believed that reviewing and refreshing the wording of some of the standards could be valuable, particularly in light of Curriculum for Wales and other reforms across the system.
- 7.13 Regardless of the extent to which the standards were being used, practitioners and stakeholders were consistently of the view that progress against some of the standards had been made across the education workforce in recent years, particularly in relation to innovation and collaboration. The evidence suggests that practitioners and stakeholders attribute this to the necessity to adapt working practices in response to the pandemic as well as the need to respond to other reforms (e.g. curriculum design).
- 7.14 The findings show that there has been an increase in the percentage of practitioners who have created their own PLP over the course of the evaluation; around half of teachers and a third of support staff had created their own PLP by September 2022. This largely reflects the number of teachers creating their own PLP during their induction period making up an increasing proportion of the total number of practitioners who have created their own PLP. However, there continued to be limited evidence, based on the sample of practitioners engaged in the evaluation fieldwork, that practitioners actively use their PLP after completing their induction period to upload evidence or reflect against the standards. Monitoring data on the evidence and reflections uploaded to the PLP is not yet available by role of practitioner and therefore does not enable wider conclusions to be drawn on this.
- 7.15 Practitioners and stakeholders continued to report mixed experiences of using the PLP to record their professional learning experiences and reflect on their development in relation to the standards. Those who had regularly used the PLP as part of ITE and induction had a variety of perspectives on its accessibility and user friendliness. Senior leaders and practitioners continued to propose that integrating the PLP login with Hwb might increase their likelihood of using it to record their professional learning experiences. Some senior leaders who had adopted other

self-assessment tools in their settings for practitioners to record evidence of professional learning continued to indicate that they would place greater value on the PLP if it enabled them to examine aggregate department and setting-level data on their workforce.

Support for using the standards

- 7.16 There were variations in the amount and nature of support accessed by practitioners to use the standards. This was closely linked to:
- how much emphasis their setting placed on using the standards
 - for example, whether they were trained to use self-assessment tools structured around the standards, or had detailed discussions around the descriptors in performance management discussions.
 - whether they had been engaged in professional learning which was structured around the standards, and therefore had been supported to reflect on and interpret the descriptors
 - this was particularly the case for NQTs, induction mentors and those on accredited or endorsed professional learning courses.
- 7.17 The evidence suggests that there is a need for more support to raise understanding and use of the standards among practitioners. More experienced practitioners and TAs in non-leadership roles continue to be reliant on school-level support to understand and use the standards, which can be variable. Evidence also suggests there is variability in the amount of support provided to settings by RECs. There is a need to ensure a more consistent approach to the support being provided. However, encouraging settings and practitioners to access support is also a challenge in the context of responding to the aftermath of the pandemic and the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. This suggests a national focus on additional support may be required to both raise awareness and provide guidance on using the standards.

7.18 Most settings are using the standards in line with the guidance set out by the Welsh Government, but some are embedding them in ways that appear to be inconsistent with parts of the guidance but which these settings to consider to be beneficial (e.g. in developing their own recording systems). This suggests a need to review the guidance, alongside the language in some of the descriptors, and to consider a 'refresh and relaunch' of the standards. This would provide an opportunity to ensure that the standards take account of more recent developments, such as the Curriculum for Wales and the National Professional Learning entitlement.

7.19 In Year 2, interviewees continued to believe that clearer guidance on how to interpret and use the standards should be developed, aimed at particular groups of practitioners (e.g. support staff). Examples included:

- developing exemplification materials to show how practitioners can meet the descriptors in various contexts (drawing on some of the practice in ITE partnerships referred to in this report)
- continued awareness-raising activities and support linked to other education reforms (e.g. how the standards can be used to support curriculum design and realisation)
- guidance on how the standards should be used as part of schools' performance management processes
- guidance on allocating time and capacity to practitioners to reflect on the standards as part of professional learning.

Perceived and anticipated impact

7.20 The final evaluation has found evidence of deepening engagement with the standards in some settings and among some practitioners, which does appear to be having an impact on teachers' behaviours and practice.

7.21 In Year 2, senior leaders continued to value the standards as a framework to support self-reflection and continuous professional development. Some senior

leaders reported that using the standards as a framework had been a catalyst for an increased focus on professional development in their setting.

- 7.22 The evaluation has found some evidence that teachers are taking greater ownership of their own professional development, with the standards seen as an influence on this alongside an increasing focus on pedagogy in the wider reforms. In Year 2, some senior leaders and practitioners indicated that teachers were now taking a more active role in identifying the types of professional learning they need to improve aspects of pedagogy or leadership. Preparations for the implementation of Curriculum for Wales was also considered to be an influence on this process.
- 7.23 More examples of collaboration between practitioners and settings were reported during Year 2, for example in relation to practitioners discussing pedagogy, professional development and areas for further improvement. Senior leaders attributed this to various influences, including the standards, Curriculum for Wales and activities in response to the pandemic. Senior leaders suggested that the professional standards are supporting the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales by helping to develop appropriate pedagogy among teachers.
- 7.24 An improvement in the quality and depth of professional dialogue between practitioners was reported by some leaders, practitioners and stakeholders. Evidence suggests a greater willingness among settings to discuss teaching and learning methods, planning and behaviour management. The professional standards provide a common vocabulary and language that supports this process.
- 7.25 There is some evidence that the PSATs are leading to further opportunities for support staff to engage in professional learning, by providing a pathway and generating a sense of value and generating greater aspiration within the profession. A few TAs reported that the standards have contributed to them feeling more valued members of the workforce.
- 7.26 The evaluation has found limited evidence that the standards have led to impacts on learners. However, some senior leaders felt that the impacts on the workforce would be likely to support better learner outcomes over time. In a few settings, practitioners felt the standards were promoting an increased focus on learner

wellbeing, peer-learning and peer-assessment and developing learners' skills in independent learning.

- 7.27 There is evidence that practitioners and stakeholders believe that use of the standards was gradually leading to improvements in settings' professional development processes and teaching practice. However, the variations in the depth of use of the standards across practitioners and settings mean that these impacts were variable. Those settings and practitioners (e.g. senior and middle leaders, NQTs) most engaged in using the standards would be most likely to benefit from this, while others (e.g. experienced teachers, TAs) may require additional support and guidance to encourage, or require them, to use the standards.

8. Issues for consideration

- 8.1 The following issues for consideration have been developed based on the conclusions set out in the previous section.
- 8.2 Further activity to raise awareness of the standards should be considered at national level, particularly aimed at those practitioners whose awareness and understanding is reported to be lower (e.g. support staff and more experienced teachers). This could include materials providing practical examples of how the standards can be used in these roles. A 'refresh and relaunch' of the standards should be considered at national level to raise awareness of the standards, following a review of the wording of the standards and associated guidance (see Section 8.3 below)
- 8.3 The Welsh Government should consider convening a working group of key stakeholders to review and refine the wording of the standards and to consider priorities for how best to support practitioners to use them in future. This process should consider how to align the standards more closely with publications and developments since their original publication (e.g. Curriculum for Wales guidance).
- 8.4 The Welsh Government should take into account the practices observed in schools and reported by stakeholders in this evaluation when reviewing the current guidance on using the standards. In particular, clearer guidance to settings on whether they should develop their own pro formas and recording systems for use of the standards should be considered.
- 8.5 The Welsh Government, in partnership with stakeholders, should consider developing new guidance and supporting materials for settings and practitioners on the use of the standards, including:
- guidance on how the standards should be used as part of schools' performance management processes, including practical examples of how different types of settings have embedded the standards and descriptors within self-assessment and discussion processes. This should include guidance on the use of the PLP and other platforms schools are using to support performance management. This could include dissemination of

example templates for performance management discussions and self-assessment tools which have been structured around the standards.

- exemplification materials (e.g. videos) to illustrate how practitioners can meet the descriptors in various contexts, drawing on some of the practice in ITE partnerships referred to in this report
- materials aimed at making the links between the standards and other education reforms more explicit (e.g. how the standards can be used to support curriculum design and realisation)
- guidance on allocating time and capacity to practitioners to reflect on the standards as part of professional learning.

8.6 Senior leaders should be encouraged to involve their staff who are, or have recently been, engaged in ITE and induction processes in the process of raising awareness and understanding of the standards among their workforce. This would help ensure that staff who are more familiar with using the language and terminology in the descriptors are supporting others to use the standards.

8.7 The Welsh Government should consider whether responsibility for promoting the use of the standards and developing tools to support their use should be delegated to one or more stakeholder organisations.

8.8 The Welsh Government and local authorities should consider strengthening the expectation that settings engage TAs in using the standards as part of their professional development, building on the expectations set out in the NPLE guidance.

8.9 The Welsh Government should continue to monitor how the PLP is used by practitioners, particularly those who have completed their statutory induction period. They should set out more detailed regular data monitoring requirements to EWC to ensure that it is possible to examine how many practitioners in different roles (e.g. experienced teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders) are actively using the PLP (e.g. uploading evidence and rating themselves against the standards descriptors). The Welsh Government should also gather practitioners' views on the functionality of the PLP, and its use as part of professional learning programmes. Consideration

should also be given to the views of senior leaders and practitioners on the desirability and feasibility of the PLP being further developed to enable the collation of aggregate, setting-level data. This should include consideration of any privacy and data management issues such developments might raise. EWC and the Welsh Government should also explore the feasibility of integrating the PLP login with Hwb.

Annex A: Research tools

Topic guides used with each of the participant groups during the Year 2 fieldwork are set out below. Year 1 fieldwork tools are included in the previous report.

Topic guide for Strategic stakeholders

Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role and responsibilities with regard to the design and use of the standards. [If relevant] Has this changed since last year?

Awareness and knowledge

2. [Only if new interviewee in Year 2] What would you say are the principles that have guided the development of the standards?
 - What do the standards aim to achieve?
 - In what ways, if any, do the standards differ from previous standards?
 - Prompts for use as appropriate:
 - Understanding of the implication for practitioners' skills, knowledge and behaviours
 - Awareness of the five standards and the overarching values and dispositions
 - Awareness of the implementation timetable
3. What is your understanding of how the standards relate to other national activities and interventions? [If relevant] Has your view changed since the last interview?
 - Curriculum reform, Schools as learning organisations, National Approach to Professional Learning, performance management, ITE, induction, the PLP.
 - [If appropriate] National Academy for Educational Leadership, National Professional Qualification for Headship, the HLTA programme.
4. In your experience, to what extent are schools aware of the standards? Has this changed over the last year?
 - To what extent do schools understand the standards' implication for practitioners' skills, knowledge and behaviours?
 - Are there any differences in awareness and understanding across SLT, middle leader, serving teacher, NQT and TA/HLTA levels?
5. Are you aware of who 'owns' or has responsibility for the standards at national level?
 - Does who 'owns' or has responsibility for the standards at national level make a difference to how they are perceived or used, in your view? If so, in what way?

- Would it make a difference to you if another organisation had responsibility for overseeing the standards? If so, how?

Use of the standards

6. [Refer back to Year 1 notes and tailor questions accordingly] How have you and your organisation engaged with or responded to the standards since the last interview?
 - Prompts: strategic planning, support programme.
7. To your knowledge, how have schools/settings and practitioners engaged with the standards? Has the nature of this changed over the last year?
 - Prompts: strategic planning, professional learning, INSET, School Development Plans, performance management, wider policies and practices.
 - To your knowledge, how has the PLP been used by practitioners to support use of the standards? (explore views on frequency and extent of use, accessibility and flexibility of the PLP)
 - Prompts: informing professional learning, collaboration, statutory requirements, frequency of use, variation in use between standards, use compared to previous standards.
 - Does engagement vary across SLT, middle leader, serving teacher, NQT and TA/HLTA levels? If so, how?
8. To your knowledge, how has the Professional Learning Passport been used by practitioners?

Effectiveness of use

9. How effective, in your view, are the standards in terms of:
 - [Explore for ITE students, practicing teachers, NQTs, school leaders, TAs and HLTAs] Setting clear expectations about effective practice upon entry into the profession and during a practitioner's career?
 - Providing inspiration and a focus for continuous improvement?
 - Establishing a framework to set goals and assess progression at key career stages?
 - Encouraging practitioners to take responsibility for their own standards?
 - Enabling practitioners to reflect on their practice?
 - Supporting practitioners to identify areas for professional learning and supporting performance management processes?
 - What evidence is there to support the above?
10. How effective, in your view, are the standards in:

- Supporting schools and other education stakeholders to set goals, monitor progress and identify actions?
- Supporting school improvement processes?
- Encouraging collaboration between schools and practitioners?
- Supporting schools to develop the skills and behaviours required to realise the Curriculum for Wales? As schools progress their curriculum preparations and approach the roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales, has this changed the way in which the standards are used or perceived? Has it raised or diminished the use of the standards?
- What evidence is there to support the above?

11. What factors and conditions enable and hinder effective engagement with the standards?

- At national, regional or school, individual or other level.

Support

12. What are your views on the support available for schools and practitioners to use the standards?

- Support provided by your own organisation [if relevant]
- Support at national, regional and cluster/school level

13. How can the support available for schools and practitioners be improved?

- Support at national, regional and cluster/school level

Anticipated impacts (and initial impacts experienced)

14. What changes or initial outcomes, if any, have you seen at practitioner, school or education system level?

- Prompt for impact on:
 - i. Learners
 - ii. Practitioners (teaching practice, career development, wellbeing, job satisfaction) [explore for all practitioner groups]
 - iii. Collaboration and cluster working
 - iv. Schools (leadership, strategic planning, performance management, culture)
 - v. The wider education system (accountability, inspection, regional and national support structures).
- What evidence is there of emerging changes or outcomes?

15. How could the standards have a greater impact on the above groups? What factors could influence or hinder this?

- [If not already covered] Would changing who has responsibility for the standards make a difference, in your view?

Topic guide for School heads, SLTs, mentors & middle leaders

Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role and responsibilities with regard to the engagement with, and use of the standards in your school or setting. [If relevant] Has this changed since last year?

Awareness and knowledge

2. [New interviewees only, unless already covered in response to Q1] To what extent are you aware of the standards and what they aim to achieve? Explore in relation to the following:
 - The five standards and the overarching values and dispositions
 - Clarity and accessibility of the standards
 - Understanding of the implication for practitioners' skills, knowledge and behaviours
 - How they differ from previous standards (if relevant)
 - Your role in using the standards for your own and facilitating others' development.
3. How, in your view, do the standards relate to other national activities and interventions? [If relevant] Has your understanding changed since the last interview?
 - Curriculum reform, Schools as learning organisations, National Approach to Professional Learning, performance management, ITE, induction. the PLP.
 - [If appropriate] National Academy for Educational Leadership, National Professional Qualification for Headship, the HLTA programme.
4. What is the level of awareness of the standards among the practitioners in your school or setting? Has this changed since the last interview?
 - In your experience, are there any differences in awareness across SLT, middle leader, serving teacher, NQT and TA/HLTA levels?
 - To what extent do practitioners understand the standards' implications for skills, knowledge and practice? (Any differences across SLT, middle leader, serving teacher, NQT and TA/HLTA levels?)
5. Are you aware of who 'owns' or is responsible for the standards at national level? [Prompt for Welsh Government, EWC, someone else]

- Does who 'owns' or is responsible for the standards make a difference to how they are perceived or used, in your view? If so, in what way?

Use of the standards

6. [Refer back to Year 1 notes and tailor questions accordingly] How has your school or setting used the standards at a strategic level? Has this changed since the last interview?
 - Prompts: strategic planning, professional learning, INSET, School Development Plans, departmental plans, performance management, wider policies and practices.
7. How have practitioners in your school or setting used the standards?
 - Prompts: informing professional learning, individually, as departments, collaboration – between schools and practitioners, statutory requirements, frequency of use, variation in use between standards, compared to previous standards.
 - Does engagement/use vary across SLT, middle leader, serving teacher, NQT and TA/HLTA levels? If so, how?
 - Do you monitor, or record, your own progress against the standards? If so, how?
 - Is progress against the standards recorded at school-wide level? If so, how?
 - [For mentors] How have you used the standards to monitor the progress of NQTs?
8. Which aspects of the standards (if any) have you found most useful and relevant to your role?
9. How has the Professional Learning Passport been used by practitioners in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year?
 - Prompts: frequency and extent of use (any variations between SLT /experienced practitioner/ NQT use?), accessibility and flexibility of the PLP.

Effectiveness of use

10. How effective are the standards in terms of:

[Explore for ITE students, practicing teachers, NQTs, school leaders, TAs and HLTAs]

 - Setting clear expectations about effective practice upon entry into the profession and during a practitioner's career?
 - Setting clear expectations about effective practice during a practitioner's career?
 - Providing inspiration and a focus for continuous improvement?

- Establishing a framework to set goals and assess progression at key career stages?
- Encouraging practitioners to take responsibility for their own standards?
- Enabling practitioners to reflect on their practice (individually and collectively)?
- Supporting practitioners to identify areas for professional learning and supporting performance management processes?
- What evidence is there to support the above?

11. How effective are the standards in:

- Supporting schools to develop the skills and behaviours required to realise the Curriculum for Wales? How would you describe the link between the standards and curriculum reform?
- Supporting your school or setting (e.g. mentors/department/faculty leads) to set goals, monitor progress and identify actions?
- Supporting your school or setting's improvement processes?
- Encouraging collaboration between schools/settings and practitioners?
- What evidence is there to support the above?

12. What factors and conditions enable and hinder effective use of the standards in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year?

- Success factors?
- Challenges? (How can these be overcome?)

Support

13. What are your views on the support available for you to use the standards in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year?

- Type of support available?
- Support at national, regional and cluster/school level (e.g. consortia, NAEL, ITE providers, school SLT)
- How could it be improved?

14. How do you support practitioners to use the standards in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year?

- What feedback, if any, have you received on the support you provide?

Anticipated impacts (and initial changes experienced)

15. What changes or initial outcomes, if any, have you seen in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year? Prompt in relation to outcomes for:

- Learners

- Practitioners (teaching practice, career development, wellbeing, job satisfaction) [explore for all practitioner groups]
- Collaboration and cluster working
- School and settings (leadership, strategic planning, performance management, culture)
- The wider education system (accountability, inspection, regional and national support structures).
- What evidence is there of these changes or outcomes?

16. How could the standards have a greater impact on the above groups? What factors could influence or hinder this?

- [If not already covered] Would changing who has responsibility for the standards make a difference, in your view?

Topic guide for Teachers, NQTs, TAs/HLTAs

Background

1. Please provide an overview of your role. [If relevant] Has this changed since last year?

Awareness and knowledge

2. [If new interviewee, unless already covered in response to Q1] To what extent are you aware of the standards and what they aim to achieve? Explore in relation to the following:
 - The five standards and the overarching values and dispositions
 - How clear and accessible are the standards?
 - Understanding of the implication for practitioners' skills, knowledge and behaviours
 - How they differ from previous standards (if relevant)
3. How do you access the standards and information about them? Has this changed over the last year?
 - Whole school or setting INSET, department, consortia, mentor
 - PLP, Other professional learning platform, School professional learning resources.
4. How, in your view, do the standards relate to other national activities and interventions? Has your view changed over the last year?
 - Curriculum reform, Schools as learning organisations, National Approach to Professional Learning, performance management, ITE, induction. the PLP.

- [If appropriate] National Academy for Educational Leadership, National Professional Qualification for Headship, the HLTA programme.
5. Are you aware of who is responsible for the standards at national level? [Prompt for Welsh Government, EWC, someone else]
- Does who 'owns' the standards at national level make a difference to how they are perceived or used, in your view? If so, in what way?
 - Would it make a difference to you if another organisation had responsibility for overseeing the standards? If so, how?

Use of the standards

6. [Refer back to Year 1 notes and tailor questions accordingly] How have you used the standards? Has this changed over the last year?
- Prompts: to develop own professional learning and teaching practice, to support own reflective practice, to evaluate own progress, departmental planning and practice, part of this school or setting's performance management process, collaboration with other practitioners and schools or settings. Is there any variation in use between standards compared to previous standards?
 - Do you record your own progress against the standards? How?
 - Do you use the standards as part of the performance management of others?
 - [For mentors] How have you used the standards to monitor the progress of NQTs?
7. [Refer to last year's response if interviewed in Year 1] Have you heard of, and do you use the Professional Learning Passport? Has this changed over the last year?
- Frequency, and extent of use.
 - Access mode, i.e. laptop, tablet/i-pad, or PLP app on android/i-phone
 - Do you use it for any particular activity? Target setting, recording experience, supporting career progression, professional learning.
 - What are your views on the PLP's accessibility and flexibility to use?

Effectiveness of use

8. How effective are the standards in terms of:
- Setting clear expectations about effective practice upon entry into the profession (for NQTs) / throughout your career (for practicing teachers, TAs and HLTAs)?
 - Providing inspiration and a focus for continuous improvement?
 - Establishing a framework to set goals and assess your progression at key career stages?
 - Encouraging you to take responsibility for your own standards?

- Enabling you to reflect on practice (individually and collectively)?
- Supporting you to identify areas for professional learning and support your performance management?
- What evidence is there to support the above?

9. How effective are the standards in:

- Supporting you to develop the skills and behaviours required to realise the Curriculum for Wales? How would you describe the link between the standards and curriculum reform?
- Supporting you to set goals, monitor progress and identify actions needed?
- Supporting you to improve practice?
- Encouraging you to collaborate with other schools/settings and practitioners?
- What evidence is there to support the above?

10. What factors and conditions enable and hinder you to use and meet the standards?

Has this changed over the last year?

- Success factors?
- Challenges? (How can these be overcome?)

Support

11. What are your views on the support available for you to meet the standards? Has your view changed over the last year?

- Type of support available? Explore nature and extent of support provided by peers.
- Support at national, regional and cluster/school level (e.g. consortia, NAEL, ITE providers, school or setting SLT)
- How could it be improved?

12. How do you support others to use the standards in your school or setting? Has this changed over the last year?

- What feedback, if any, have you received on the support you provide?

Anticipated impacts (and initial changes experienced)

13. What changes or initial outcomes if any, have you experienced? Has this changed over the last year? Prompt in relation to outcomes for:

- Your teaching practice, career development, wellbeing, job satisfaction
- Learners
- Practitioners (teaching practice, career development, wellbeing, job satisfaction) [explore for all practitioner groups]
- Collaboration and cluster working

- School and settings (leadership, strategic planning, performance management, culture)
- The wider education system (accountability, inspection, regional and national support structures).
- In your own practice and the practice of others?
- What evidence is there of these changes or outcomes?

14. How could the standards have a greater impact on the above? What factors could influence or hinder this?

- [If not already covered] Would changing who has responsibility for the standards at national level make a difference, in your view?

Annex B: Case studies

Case Study 1: Abertillery Learning Community, English-medium 3-16 school, Blaenau Gwent

Theme: Mapping staff development against the standards

Overview of school's use of the standards

Use of the standards increased during the evaluation, as part of a focus on school improvement under the school's new leadership team. After reviewing how the standards were being used in other schools, senior leaders were increasingly discussing the standards in the context of quality assurance, performance management and self-reflection processes.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Senior leaders reported that, between the first and second year of the evaluation, they and their staff were using the standards more regularly. One of the drivers for this was that senior leaders were enrolled in the National Senior Leader Development Programme (NSLDP), which places an emphasis on the standards. Senior leaders considered the standards to be a useful tool for conducting more focussed conversations on performance management, and also found the standards useful from a leadership perspective in making decisions on how to support staff.

'As SLT, we've seen the value in them, we have invested in them down to middle leadership. Our staff find them purposeful, and they help with career progression'.

Senior leader

To increase understanding of the standards, the school arranged a webinar on how to use them, suggesting ideas for gathering evidence against them. Middle leadership training was also carried out within the school, focusing on the importance of effective pedagogy in driving improvement.



Self-evaluation, which is informed by the standards, adopts tailored software



Professional development is increasingly targeting weaknesses and areas of need

Using software to more easily map progress against the standards

Practitioners were engaging with the standards though using a self-evaluation software tool ([Teaching Continua](#)). Practitioners used this software to map their development against the standards. Senior leaders felt that this enabled staff to engage with the standards in an

accessible way, which had led to more opportunities to self-reflect and then discuss their teaching practice.

'Teachers are used to the model of using Teaching Continua, the standards sit nicely alongside it. To achieve green [a level in the tool], steps are made really clear, we can track progress and support improvement easily. Staff understand and are able to implement steps effectively. In the past there has been ambiguity about next steps'. Senior leader

After undertaking this self-assessment, practitioners were asked to choose three 'segments' from the standards to develop, two segments from pedagogy and one other. Practitioners selected the aspects they wanted to focus on, reflecting on their practice and uploading any examples of professional learning in these areas and reflections of the impact this had on their practice.

Senior leaders felt that using this type of self-evaluation tool had helped staff to identify areas for development and to reflect on the progress they were making. Practitioners reported using colours in a progression 'wheel' that corresponded to the three Standard level descriptors. The school had broken these down further to include 'interim' levels i.e., 5 levels in total. Senior leaders felt that the leap between expectations for NQTs and Teachers was too broad and they had found it more helpful to have additional steps in between.

'The Teaching Continua format has really supported staff development – highlighting in detail the next steps needed to make progress. The small steps of progress are more apparent – the support needed is described clearly – the Continua format is extremely useful and easy to navigate.' Senior leader

Ensuring time is given to use of the standards

As well as the use of this self-evaluation tool, senior leaders also emphasised the importance of allocating periods in the timetable to enable staff to self-reflect. Practitioners assess themselves against the standards three times a year, but the self-evaluation tool is also a 'live' document that they can use regularly. The school also emphasises the importance of 'organic' discussions between practitioners and line managers based on the self-evaluation results, focusing on specific sections of the standards. At these meetings, staff reflect with senior leaders on their progress, identify actions and allocate time for addressing these. To facilitate this, more than one person can access practitioners' self-evaluations, and the head of each faculty can review their team's progress.

‘Staff self-evaluation is clearly timetabled into our calendar. Because the time allocated is set aside, staff ensure they access the tool. As a result, we are putting support in for staff and reacting to what they are saying. The Self Evaluation tool is driven by both middle and senior leadership in the school.’

Senior leader

Impact and next steps

The standards have provided a framework through which the school can undertake performance management, self-reflect and identify areas where they need more support. Staff were able to speak confidently about how they had used the self-evaluation tool and coaching to support faculty members. Practitioners can review their previous self-evaluation ‘colour wheels’ so they can see their own progression over time. The school can also aggregate individual data and look at progression by phase or faculty level.

‘Evidence is uploaded, it builds staff confidence seeing themselves progress – in a visual way [Colour Wheel], not just in a list of things to work on.’ Senior leader

Senior leaders reported that progress has been seen against the standards within the school, however the school feels that they are still playing ‘catch up’ due to the time lost as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, although senior leaders report they are seeing progress each year, it is difficult to attribute specific impacts to the standards.

‘Good teaching equates to better pupil outcomes, but we won’t see the full impact until we’ve ‘caught up’ [post-pandemic], however our data is showing that we are seeing progress year on year.’ Senior leader

Senior leaders believed that further national-level activity to raise the profile of the standards and their relevance to other programmes and activities would be valuable.

Case Study 2: Christ Church, English-medium Community Primary School, Denbighshire

Theme: Senior leaders using the standards holistically in performance review processes

Overview of school's use of the standards

Senior leaders introduced the standards to staff when they were published and have used them holistically as part of performance management arrangements. Some practitioners have used the standards during their professional learning activity. The school consider themselves to be at an early stage of engagement with the standards and noted that the disruption caused by the pandemic had slowed progress in using them. Awareness of and engagement with the standards is higher among senior and middle leaders than practitioners.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Awareness of the standards varies among staff. Senior leaders felt they had developed a detailed understanding of the standards through taking part in sessions, run by their regional consortium, to promote them. Senior leaders felt that the standards were an important framework for developing the type of teacher that the school was keen to see i.e. practitioners that were reflective and committed to their own professional improvement. Middle leaders were also considered to have a good understanding of the standards, driven in part by a requirement to demonstrate how they use the standards within the school during Middle Leaders Professional Learning.

Teachers, particularly NQT mentors who were using the standards in supporting NQTs and ITE students, were reported as being aware of the standards and how they related to their career. Information about the standards had also been disseminated to Teaching Assistants, although it was felt that they may not consider the standards to be as relevant to them.

Performance management

Senior leaders reported that the standards have supported them in implementing Performance Management discussions. The schools use performance management documentation that include targets for staff which are related back to the standards. Senior leaders felt the standards were a helpful reference point.

' The standards help to clarify in one place what is expected of you in your role. I know it's a document I can refer to if I needed to discuss an issue or develop an action plan for performance management.' Senior leader

Aside from in performance management discussions, engagement with the standards was not considered to have increased significantly since practitioners were introduced to them. Staff did not

record progress against the standards regularly and the standards were not considered a key driver of the School Development Plan. The school tracks practitioners' professional learning themselves and staff were not reported to be using the Professional Learning Passport.

Reflections on use of the standards

Senior leaders considered the standards to be quite general but liked the breakdown of different aspects of the standards, which were considered to be helpful when senior leaders were trying to support staff in a specific area. Interviewees felt it was useful that the standards had sections for staff at different levels.

Staff felt that there had been limited support or training relating to how they should use the standards. The school had also found that other priorities, such as their response to the pandemic and design of the school curriculum, had limited the amount of time they had to engage with the standards. In general, staff felt that the language of the standards aligned well with the Curriculum for Wales, but they had not yet had time to consider this in detail.

Impact and next steps

The standards were felt to have provided a framework through which the school can holistically consider practitioners' professional development. They were considered to be particularly useful to senior and middle leaders and those mentoring NQTs and ITE students. The standards are also seen as useful in supporting practitioners to reflect on, and take ownership of, their own professional development, rather than over-relying on senior leaders to drive this process.

' I like the aspect where it's their responsibility. Historically the Senior Leadership Team would decide on training. Like that, it [the standards] puts onus on their own CPD, so it [the standards] has had an impact on professionalism', Senior Leader

Senior leaders felt that the school is still in the early stages of using the standards and had not yet observed any measurable impact from their use. However, practitioners have found them useful in terms of increasing their awareness of the expectations for their own roles and responsibilities. The school plans to continue using them as part of performance management processes and anticipate observing more links between the standards and the Curriculum for Wales as it is rolled out.

Case Study 3: Ysgol Llanfaes, English-medium Primary School, Powys Theme: Embedding Standards into school-wide practices

Overview of school's use of the standards

The standards are embedded into school-wide practices and are adopted by all school practitioners as part of their professional learning. They are well aligned with the school development plan and used to underpin professional review approaches.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

The standards have been introduced to all practitioners and governors by senior leaders as a positive tool to help professional development. There is widespread awareness and use of the standards as a personal development tool amongst all practitioners including senior leaders, teachers and learning support staff. Younger practitioners, particularly those who have completed their induction more recently, have fully embraced the standards. Understanding the terminology has been one of the challenges of the standards and practitioners have found the 'innovation' Standard to be more difficult to grasp. Learning support staff have tended to find it more challenging to engage with them than other practitioners due to their unfamiliar terminology, wide-ranging coverage and a reliance on courses as their main form of professional learning.

'Everyone adopts the standards ... everybody is singing from the same hymn sheet. It values everybody'. Senior leader

The three main areas where the standards are used by the school are: school development plan, professional review and professional learning.



Standards underpin professional review approaches



School development plan is aligned with Standards



Practitioners self-evaluate against the standards to identify areas of development



Staff reviews structured around the standards

School development plan

The school development plan is co-produced by the whole school community, including pupils, parents, governors and practitioners and sets out upcoming development priority areas. These priority areas help to shape and inform individual practitioners' professional learning. Practitioners are required to identify one area of professional development which is aligned with school development plan priorities, as well as two others which are focused on personal development and continuous professional development.

'The standards feed into the School Development Plan and vice versa ... the School Development Plan informs the priorities for professional learning' (Teacher)

Professional review

The standards underpin professional review discussions at the school and performance management paperwork has been adapted to reflect these. Performance management discussions are held on a termly basis, with the first of these forming the initial review session, and discussions are structured around the five professional Standards. The main change experienced by the school is that professional review discussions are now 'more in-depth, focused and meaningful' and that practitioners are 'reflecting much more on where they're at' than was previously the case (senior leader). Practitioners are required to complete a self-assessment against the standards prior to a performance management discussion and are encouraged to set their own targets and areas of future professional learning. Performance management is no longer considered as 'something that is done to people'. One lesson learnt is that some practitioners set themselves too many targets around the standards and performance management discussions have concentrated on cutting these down to a set of more manageable ambitions.

'The standards offer such a clear framework, the meetings themselves are really good'. (Senior leader)

Professional learning

Since the introduction of the standards, practitioners have increasingly embraced professional learning opportunities and require less direction and guidance on professional learning than was previously the case. Practitioners feel more empowered to arrange professional learning opportunities themselves and are encouraging their colleagues to participate in their own professional learning. Professional learning is no longer restricted to an arranged course activity but rather practitioners will explore other information and evidence sources, such as research or webinars. INSET days are used for individual research opportunities and the co-production of the School Development Plan, as opposed to pre-arranged courses. The standards have given practitioners greater clarity about the areas of professional learning they need to concentrate upon and stimulated greater professional discussion across the school.

'Five years ago, I would have been sharing links to courses ... but they really grasped the notion [during the lockdown period] that they are responsible for their own professional learning' (Senior leader)

Impact and next steps

There is greater self-motivated learning in place and a greater depth of professional discussion amongst all practitioners. This has led to more collaboration across teaching teams. Professional dialogue between practitioners takes place on a regular, informal basis. Support staff feel more valued and 'on par with teachers', particularly as the standards have helped them to realise that they're 'doing the right thing'. There has been continued reflection on pedagogy, and how this can be better aligned with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

Case Study 4: Ysgol Pendalar, Special school, Gwynedd
Theme: Use of the standards by senior leaders in planning whole-school professional learning

Overview of school's use of the standards

Engagement with the standards increased in the school between the first- and second-year of the evaluation. This was driven in part by a senior leader using the standards as part of the National Senior Leader Development Programme (NSLDP), delivered by the regional consortium. Use of the standards in the school is generally focused on whole-school planning activity at strategic level, especially in relation to professional learning and the development of the school's new curriculum.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

A senior leader at the school has participated in the National Senior Leader Development Programme (NSLDP), through which their awareness of the standards has increased. As part of the programme, this senior leader completed a leadership experience task for Curriculum for Wales (involving writing a vision, values, developing a baseline, and evaluation), referencing the standards as part of this process.

'With every part of the task [part of the NSLDP], we mapped it against the standards. It was a useful process because I hadn't used the standards in work before – work is so busy with planning and assessment; the standards haven't been an obvious part of my role.' Senior leader

Greater awareness of the standards since participating in the NSLDP have allowed this senior leader to consider the standards when planning professional learning across the school. This has included considering how the professional learning relates to each of the standards, providing senior leaders with a framework for planning this activity. While the link to the standards isn't yet explained explicitly to the practitioners during their professional learning, it has provided senior leaders with greater reassurance and confidence when planning it.

'It's not always obvious to staff that they are mapping what they're doing against the standards – it's me who's doing the mapping. I do find it useful in terms of planning professional development.' Senior leader



Senior leadership aware how professional learning relates to the standards



Professional Standards are identified and drawn upon in the development of the new curriculum

The Professional Learning Passport (PLP) isn't used by the senior leaders interviewed because they are unclear on what the benefits of using it are, of how to use it, and that there is never time to prioritise it. In turn, teachers (other than NQTs) in the school are not required to use the PLP. This can be viewed in the wider context of the standards being used primarily to support and inform whole-school development (such as curriculum development or planning professional learning). The performance management pro-forma generally used by the local authority does not link to the standards either, but the school has recently addressed this by developing a template of their own in order to promote discussion about the standards. Senior leaders felt that the process of embedding the standards within performance management had not been a focus during the pandemic, with other activities taking priority. Senior leaders emphasised that their priorities had been the wellbeing of learners and staff, with staff retention seen as a key priority.

'We're not operating in a usual time. There are competing tasks, like keeping classrooms open and staffing levels. It's hard to bring Standards into a discussion – staff feel quite negatively about this at the moment because of the strain they're under. It's not an easy conversation to have. We are more focused on wellbeing levels than the standards – we're trying to protect our staff rather than have specific challenges about Standards.' Senior leader

The school does not utilise software formally connecting the professional standards with performance management, with senior leaders noting that the HR software needed to do this can be expensive and is often not available in Welsh.

Impact

The impact of the standards was clear at the senior leadership level, through participation in the NSLDP increasing confidence in planning professional learning activity in the school. Senior leaders hoped this would permeate to staff through their participation in professional learning and their involvement in developing the curriculum, although the links with the standards weren't being made explicitly. Senior leaders felt that it was too early to observe impacts on staff and learners, but it was hoped that the standards would 'help staff see the links between their development and a national framework of standards'.

Next steps

The next step for the school was to raise the profile of the standards amongst staff and encourage direct and individual engagement with them in a supportive manner through the new performance management template. The headteacher commented that more external training sessions on the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) would be useful in pushing the use of the standards, as well as ensuring that training delivered by the regional educational consortium on the PLP is well-linked

to the professional standards, but in a more accessible way. Furthermore, the headteacher emphasised the importance of making it as easy as possible for teaching staff and support staff to engage with standards, such as integrating the PLP within Hwb.

'Staff often say that the standards are too difficult or complex – I wonder if there's a more enjoyable and user-friendly way of engaging with the standards? The document is large, like lots of other documents we have to engage with. This can be demotivating. It would be great if they could be presented in a way that's easier to understand or more accessible'. Senior leader

Case Study 5: Ysgol Bro Preseli, Welsh-medium 3-19 school, Pembrokeshire
Theme: Using the standards for self-evaluation and performance review

Overview of school's use of the standards

The standards underpin the school's approach to self-evaluation and performance review, and they are used to inform professional development and learning.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

The standards have been adopted within the school's performance management of teaching staff and there is good awareness of the standards amongst practitioners, although support staff have yet to embrace them.

The standards are used by the school across teachers' self-evaluation, performance review and professional development.



Self-evaluation, which is informed by the standards, adopts tailored software



Self-evaluation software identifies individual as well as departmental and school level priorities and needs



Practitioners self-evaluate against the standards to identify areas of development



Professional development is increasingly targeting weaknesses and areas of needs

Self-evaluation

The school collaborated with an external company, Xlence, to develop a bespoke software package which teachers could use to self-evaluate against the new Standards. This involved developing more detailed definitions for each step along the continuum for each of the standards, as it was considered challenging for practitioners to self-evaluate themselves against the criteria provided. Teaching staff are expected to self-assess their performance against each of the standards prior to their performance review, using the Xlence software. Practitioners score themselves (on a score of between 1 and 6) on the extent to which they feel that they reach each definition, and the software produces a visual spider diagram, which helps to highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses against each of the standards.

Staff find Xlence an easy and useful tool to use for self-evaluation purposes, and particularly like the annual tracking functionality which allows them to monitor progress from one year to the next.

'The prompts [additional definitions] provide me with a much greater understanding .. they help me identify my weaknesses'. (Teacher)

'Without this, I'd find it difficult to track where I am on the spectrum against the five Standards' (Teacher)

The data produced through the self-evaluations can be analysed at an individual practitioner, departmental and school level which allows the school to identify professional learning priorities and needs at these different levels. It is also possible to monitor changes from one year to the next, thereby allowing progress to be tracked.

Performance review

During performance review meetings, practitioners use the findings of the self-evaluation to discuss and agree upon annual targets and objectives. Practitioners are required to adopt three targets, one of which stems from the self-evaluation activity. Practitioners felt that the process was proving useful for teachers who are considering their future career and next steps as it helps clarify the next steps they need to adopt.

Professional development

Following a more informed and robust self-evaluation exercise, teaching staff are increasingly adopting professional development objectives which are focused on their areas of weakness and which need to be developed. The new approach also helps to identify school level priorities for development and over the last few years, the self-evaluation process has shown that innovation and leadership are two Standards which have required greater prominence and support at a school level. These findings help shape annual programmes of in-work training and learning.

'Before, staff would set themselves targets for areas which they enjoyed ... rather than their weaknesses'. (Senior leader)

Impact and next steps

The introduction of Xlence as a self-evaluation tool has meant that staff have a greater understanding of the individual Standards. The standards play a pivotal role in the setting of teachers' professional development objectives for the coming year. The standards provide a robust framework for teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

There is scope to further embed the standards across the school to ensure that they are considered on an on-going basis, and not just as a one-off exercise during the autumn term as part of the self-evaluation and performance review process. There is also scope for support staff to embrace the standards as part of their performance management and professional development.

Case Study 6: Tonyrefail Community School, English-medium, 3-18 school, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Theme: Embedding the standards in the performance review process for all staff

Overview of school's use of the standards

The school has put the standards at the heart of its staff review and development processes. This has involved senior leaders promoting awareness of the standards, incorporating the standards within an online self-review tool and discussions with line managers and setting staff development goals that are linked to this process.

How they have engaged with the standards

Since the newly formed school opened around four years ago, senior leaders in the school have raised awareness of the standards through presentations and have sought to encourage familiarity with the terminology, in order to embed this in their professional dialogue. This has involved raising the awareness of teachers, LSWs, school administrative and estates staff.

Part of this process has involved incorporating the standards within a self-evaluation tool (a platform developed by a commercial company, Xlence). All staff are given time to complete a '360 review' against the standards, twice a year, during 'twilight' or INSET sessions. Staff rate their confidence against the standards, guided by the descriptors on screen. Staff can select the Teaching, Leadership or Assisting Teaching standards, as appropriate for their role, and can add evidence to support their self-evaluation or reflect on their previous 306 reviews for comparison.



Senior leaders have raised awareness through presentations



Standards embedded in setting's online self-evaluation tool



Staff self-evaluate against the standards (360 review)



Staff reviews structured around the standards



Staff allocated specific time to complete self-evaluation



Professional development goals are linked to the standards

Having completed this process, staff are presented with a visual representation of their 360 review. One middle leader felt that the process helped get them to engage with the standards, familiarise themselves with the terminology and think about the descriptors.

With some of them [descriptors] you have to think a bit harder about what you do, but over time you start to interpret the wording and reflect a bit more.' Middle leader

Teachers and LSWs felt that their awareness of the standards had increased as a result of completing the '360 review' self-evaluation process and subsequent staff review discussions with line managers. They felt the language of the standards was helpful as a framework for encouraging reflection and steering their own development. Staff felt that a key part of this process was being allocated specific time to complete the review by school leaders.

'... our school has been really thorough in introducing them and giving us time and a system to reflect on them.' Teacher

School leaders are also able to view the 360 reviews of staff whom they manage; these inform the review discussions between them and their staff. As part of this process, leaders have given presentations to other staff within their faculties which have focused on how they themselves have used the standards in their performance reviews. Senior leaders in the school explained how they used the 360 review findings to support them in identifying areas for staff development and planning professional learning activity across the school.

'I could [as line manager] look at the LSWs' 360 reviews on a spreadsheet and use the information to help plan the upskilling I was leading.' Senior leader

Self-evaluations and staff reviews over the last 3 years have informed teaching and learning priorities for individuals, faculties and the school. Each individual has three targets for the year

1. Whole school target (linked to the school development plan)
2. Faculty / team target (set by faculty leaders)
3. Individual performance management target (agreed in staff review)

Senior leaders emphasised that the process was still in its infancy and that they had not yet been able to quality assure the self-evaluation process or reflect on how the areas for development identified at faculty level through the 360 reviews aligned with their own strategic priorities.

Impact and next steps

Interviewees felt that the standards had provided them with a common language for discussing their professional development, particularly in terms of pedagogy and innovation.

'The language lends itself to what a natural teacher is... ..I think they work well to steer you in a direction of being a reflective practitioner.' Teacher

They also felt that incorporating the standards as a framework for their staff review processes had helped them identify professional learning priorities in the school at individual and faculty level. They intend to 'triangulate' the review findings with their quality assurance processes in future. Senior leaders felt that the standards could be further developed at national level to cover other non-teaching roles within settings.

Case Study 7: Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberystwyth, Welsh medium primary school, Ceredigion

Theme: Standards support performance management

Overview of school's use of the standards

The school's leadership team has a deep knowledge and understanding of the standards and have made use of information and knowledge gleaned through involvement with the National Academy for Educational Leadership to help raise awareness among staff. They see the standards as having a good fit with other national programmes. The standards are already integrated into performance management processes and there are plans to expand their use across the school, particularly in relation to the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

How they have engaged with the standards

As a school they have worked on increasing practitioners' awareness and knowledge of the standards through the interactive documents available online via Hwb. However, practitioners felt that simpler documents which outline the standards more clearly would be welcomed. The senior leadership team felt that practitioners were becoming increasingly familiar with the standards and that their mindsets in relation to professional development were changing as a result.

'Everything follows the standards. As a school we really like the standards and how they are set out. There is an obvious sequence there, and a logic.' Senior leader



Senior leaders have raised awareness of the standards



Performance management tools have been developed to support practitioners and leaders



Professional development goals are linked to the standards



Consideration is given to how the standards will support the Curriculum for Wales

NQTs and the senior management team had a greater awareness of the standards than other staff members, and senior leaders reported that the Covid pandemic had slowed progress in terms of raising staff awareness further. In response to that, the senior leadership team were looking to formalise their approach to the standards a little more.

'There is a lexicon shift with the new curriculum and with the new Standards – and practitioners have yet to see the big picture and how the whole jigsaw fits together. At

the moment I'd say that there is awareness of the standards, but they are yet to integrate it into their thinking fully.' Senior leader

The standards were being used as part of performance management processes which ultimately fed into the school development plan. The school has developed a 'teaching wheel' and a 'leadership wheel' for the standards, and the whole approach to performance management in the school has changed. Each Standard principle is considered on the teaching and leadership wheels, and each performance management objective is based on the core principles. The school was planning to utilise the standards in the performance management of HLTAs too.

'The standards pull you back to what you should be doing. They stop you from being complacent. They bring you back to where you could improve. It is so easy to lose track of your personal development when you're in class teaching day after day'

Middle leader

Senior leaders felt that the standards provided practitioners with clear expectations and guidance on how to improve. As a school there was support for personal development and encouragement from the senior management team for staff to continuously improve. The standards were seen as a useful tool that practitioners would increasingly use over time in a more conscious effort to target their development against.

Impact and next steps

It was felt to be too early to see many impacts yet. The standards were still relatively new and fresh, but over time, there was an expectation that they would be effective, particularly for those teachers who wanted to develop their careers.

Senior leaders felt that the standards would increasingly be used as a way of reporting effectively on development and progress, particularly in relation to the Curriculum for Wales. The school was keen to try out new things and were confident that they would be leading the way with the standards when the time was right. Alongside the Curriculum for Wales, schools as learning organisations was considered to align well with the standards, allowing for more collaboration, innovative approaches and learning from others. School leaders indicated they were increasingly looking outwards, collaborating with other similar schools beyond the county.

'I think we will see the biggest difference when the Curriculum for Wales comes in. When that comes along, the approach – working thematically across the six

key learning areas – everything will come together and gel.’

Middle leader

Case Study 8: Ysgol Maes Derw, Pupil Referral Unit, Swansea
Theme: Standards are embedded into self-evaluation and performance review

Overview of school’s use of the standards

The standards are embedded across the PRU, including within the school improvement plan and staff performance management. All practitioners at the PRU consider the standards as part of their self-evaluation review, prior to participating in a performance review.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Maes Derw Pupil Referral Unit is a new setting, established when four PRUs across Swansea merged and relocated into new premises at Cockett. The standards have been used in a consistent manner over time across each of the settings, prior and following the merger. Awareness of the standards across the settings was reported to be high amongst all practitioners. This awareness was driven by a requirement for all staff to self-evaluate their practice against the five values as part of a self-evaluation exercise they undertook prior to undertaking a formal performance review. Senior leaders and practitioners reported that there were variations in the extent to which staff had embraced the standards.

‘Some staff are more naturally self-motivated to improve themselves and more inclined to reflect upon their own practice than others ... they’re more open about where they’re at.’ (Senior leader)



All practitioners including TAs self-evaluate their practices against the standards



Performance review sessions are structured around the standards



Standards help to identify strengths and areas of under-performance



School level professional learning opportunities are informed by self-evaluation findings

Self-evaluation

Practitioners were reported to be somewhat ‘daunted’ by the standards at first, especially support staff, so the school had to invest time upfront to discuss them with staff and to ‘unpick’ them with TAs. Practitioners found the standards easier to navigate when using a spreadsheet-based self-evaluation tool which was shared by their regional education consortia. This tool was used for self-evaluation purposes during the first academic term to help practitioners identify their strengths and weaknesses. Practitioners reported that they found the visual spider diagram which is produced

through this process a helpful tool to illustrate these strengths and weaknesses. The self-evaluation exercise helped to identify professional learning needs. Senior leaders reported that this meant the school 'no longer jumps into a training opportunity' on the basis of it simply being available, but rather takes a more well-informed judgement based on need.

'it really encourages you to think about your strengths and helps to identify these. You don't necessarily think about these so it is nice to see and reflect on what you're doing well, especially after working in the profession for so long'. (TA)

Performance review

The standards underpin staff performance management processes. Practitioners discuss the outcome of their self-evaluation exercise with their line manager during performance review meetings, and this has helped to stimulate professional conversations and identify future professional development priorities. Practitioners noted that Standards provide a 'solid' framework for line managers to have honest conversations with staff and give line managers greater confidence that they are approaching performance review in 'the right way'.

'It allowed me to have a framework to start conversations, set targets and review performance ... the previous ones never formed a starting point for conversations.' (Senior leader)

School development plan

There is clear alignment between the standards and the School Development Plan as common professional development needs highlighted during self-evaluation activities are then reflected in school development priorities. This has enabled a whole-school team approach and all practitioners are working towards common goals set out in the School Development Plan. Over the last few years, school-level priorities have been upon the two standards of pedagogy and professional learning. INSET activity has focused on these two professional development areas.

'We're all talking about it and moving in the same direction. If everybody had different goals, then it would restrict our ability to share progress and experiences'. (Senior leader)

Impact and next steps

Practitioners were reported to be adopting greater responsibility for their own professional practice and learning since the standards were introduced and, as a result, were improving their teaching practices:

'I wouldn't have done a formal piece of research before – I would have done some research and learning about the subject, but I wouldn't have recorded it and reflected upon it against the standard. It's got me into a good habit which I wouldn't have otherwise done'. (School teacher)

Staff reported that the standards had also helped to instil a greater sense of equality among PRU practitioners when comparing themselves to mainstream schools, as they are all adopting the same set of Standards. Practitioners felt that having a single set of Standards helped ease the transition of practitioners from one school setting to another. They believed that the standards have helped to increase the status of TAs roles, and that being able to demonstrate that they met the standards provided 'credit for the work they do' and validated their contribution to the school.

The school had concentrated its efforts on a few of the more 'straightforward' Standards initially and will extend its focus to the remaining Standards, such as innovation, over the coming years, accepting that they would need to break the standards down to 'manageable chunks' over time.

Case Study 9: Risca Community Comprehensive School, English-medium secondary school, Newport

Theme: the standards supporting a culture of reflection and collaboration

Overview of school's use of the standards

Senior leaders have used the standards to act as a catalyst for a culture-change within the school. The standards were being used as a prompt for a self-reflection and self-improving teaching workforce, encouraging practitioners to take greater ownership of their professional development. The standards were also contributing to greater collaboration between practitioners and schools.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

School ethos

Practitioners are encouraged to self-reflect against the standards and make decisions about their practice based on this. This school described their approach to the standards as being 'flexible' and 'low-key'. This approach has been preferred to incorporating them in a more formal manner, because senior leaders felt a more flexible approach would be more positively received by staff. Senior leaders felt that this flexibility would accommodate staff differences and that this would empower teachers to take ownership of their own professional learning and development, by encouraging them to reflect on what was working well and less well within their own classrooms.

Practitioners are encouraged to self-reflect against the standards



Greater collaboration reported to be taking place between practitioners and schools



Practitioners described engaging with the standards in a variety of ways. A middle leader emphasised that due to the size and detail of the descriptors in the standards, a tick-list approach would not work. This practitioner emphasised to staff working in their department that they should be identifying standards that are pertinent to their own, the department's, and the school's specific needs. At the time of the interview, staff within this department were being encouraged to pay specific attention to the leadership elements of the professional standards:

'Everyone is a leader in this school – they lead a classroom, they lead training days. Having a hierarchy is not helpful or important. The standards help give teachers their entitlement of professional development, that they try and progress in whatever way they choose.' Middle leader

Practitioners described the standards as being integrated naturally into professional dialogues within the school. The ethos of the school was described by a senior leader as being 'very much about developing – there's always scope to get better and collaborate more'. Senior and middle leaders felt that this ethos had created an open and non-judgemental environment for practitioners to discuss their development. A senior leader felt that the development of their new school curriculum complemented the curriculum design process, because all practitioners were learning, innovating and developing together.

'They're [the standards] especially relevant with the Curriculum for Wales, because we're all in the same boat: it's all new to everyone, so we're all learning together, collaborating and innovating.' Senior leader

Reflection

Reflecting on pedagogical practice is another aspect of how the standards have become incorporated into the school's ethos towards professional standards and professional development.

'The standards have allowed us to ask 'are we doing things in the best way, and are there other ways we could be doing this better? ... The standards have helped with the question of 'why' focus on pedagogy ... Personally, I find them [the standards] very useful for reflection. It's easy to go 'cold' in this job and I have an appetite to keep fresh. The whole idea of the standards is central to this, in helping me ask myself 'what kind of practitioner do I want to be?' when I'm feeling a bit flat.' Middle leader

Impact

Collaboration

Practitioners reported that an ethos of collaboration had been instilled as part of the school's wider approach to the standards, with the process of sharing between educational settings becoming more normalized. The school reported working closely with other comprehensive schools with the overall view to address inequity in educational standards between schools. A senior leader noted that practitioners were now more open to sharing ideas and resources than they were before the implementation of the standards and Curriculum for Wales, and that this was part of a wider cultural shift towards collaboration rather than competition which they hoped would continue.

'In order to fulfil the curriculum, you need staff that understand not only their own subject but also pedagogy more broadly because we are required to have quite a broad toolbox to fulfil the new curriculum' Middle leader

Next steps

The school intends to continue to bolster its ethos of reflection and collaboration. However, one interviewee noted that more sources of information about the standards would be welcomed, specifically in helping them to understand how and why the standards were developed, and practical ideas for engaging with them. It was envisaged that this type of support could bridge the gap between the classroom floor and policymakers.

Case Study 10: Ysgol Gynradd Llangynnwr, dual stream primary school, Carmarthenshire
Theme: Standards encourage collaboration and peer-to peer learning

Overview of school's use of the standards

The standards are applied across all aspects of strategic planning within the school and as part of practitioners' personal development planning. The standards align clearly with the school's development plan and permeate the school's professional learning and development offer.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

A middle leader within the school had been involved with the development of the standards on secondment with the regional consortia. Awareness raising activity led by middle and senior leaders helped to ensure sound awareness and understanding of the standards among experienced practitioners at the school.

No formal work had been undertaken to present the standards to support staff yet, although the senior team considered that the ethos of the standards had begun to be introduced to Teaching Assistants through their updated performance management approach which included aspects of reflection and consideration of development opportunities.

'The standards are really consistent with the Curriculum for Wales. It means we, as teachers, can continue to think and reflect and it makes us start to look at new ways of learning. It has given us all a buzz. It feels different from what it was before. We are entering an exciting new era' Middle leader

There are three main areas where the standards are used: performance management, continuous improvement, and collaboration.



The standards underpin strategic planning processes



Standards help practitioners to identify areas for improvement or development



Standards are integrated into performance management processes



The standards open up opportunities to collaborate and look outwardly

Performance management

The standards are primarily used within performance management processes, with targets based on the five Standards. The standards were now integrated and used during performance management discussions with individual practitioners, with targets set in a way that related back to the standards. There had been encouragement from the school for practitioners to reflect on and consider aspects that needed to be developed.

Staff noted that, during performance management discussions, when a practitioner was finding it hard to identify personal development or improvement opportunities, the standards descriptors were useful in generating ideas on where to focus further development. The standards were also considered to be effective in supporting the school in setting goals, monitoring progress, and identifying areas for improvement at a strategic level. Collectively, the standards, the school improvement plan and performance management processes all feed each other.

'The standards make me sit back and reflect more about where we are at. They are relevant to my own personal development. They provide clear expectations and consistency, and they enable staff to identify where they need to focus their development' Senior leader

Continuous improvement

The school had already started to change its approach to planning, based on cross-curricular themes. Staff indicated that the standards had come at the right time for them to help develop their thinking and development across the curriculum. The school has been working informally with their Challenge Adviser to embed the standards in their day-to-day learning and teaching approaches. Senior management liked the standards and felt that the core principles accurately conveyed the five aspects of a practitioner's role in a way that was much more concise than the previous Standards.

The school had a high number of newly qualified teachers who were very familiar with the standards, and their appointments had further strengthened awareness and knowledge across the school, making more experienced teachers also reflect on their approach and pedagogy. NQTs saw the standards as a great opportunity to work together and share experiences with each other during the year. They felt that the standards encouraged them to talk to other teachers in the same situation so that they could learn together. The process of reflecting and evaluating had become a natural process for them.

'The standards really make you think, and it helps us as teachers to see the importance in continuous professional learning – the standards are not just for NQTs anymore' Mentor

Collaboration

The standards were seen to have encouraged and driven collaboration both within the school and between schools in the cluster. As a relatively large primary school, various practitioners had different specialisms. The standards had enabled staff to learn from each other and teach skills to peers. The standards had also presented an opportunity to work with another similar school within their cluster. The standards had been used as part of a joint project using Learning Walks and monitoring lessons, to share and learn from good practice. Practitioners felt that some aspects of

the standards were easier to engage with when working with other schools and appreciated the focus on seeking experiences and looking outward rather than simply seeking to meet Standards from within their own school setting. The opportunity to see how others worked was widely valued by practitioners.

‘It has been valuable to work through some issues alongside [another similar school]. We need to get to know each other and for staff to see that this is something to benefit from – it’s not about finding fault. Over time, I hope that my staff will become happier to share their experiences and receive advice – knowing that they are not being criticised.’ Senior leader at cluster school

Impact and next steps

Some of the momentum had been lost as a result of lockdowns and the impact of the Covid pandemic but senior leaders feel that there is already a visible change in the mindset of teachers entering the profession. Over time practitioners felt this would impact upon existing teachers and would lead to a ‘step change’ in their understanding and embracing of the standards. Staff felt there is already recognition of the need to learn to change things, with the standards playing a constructive part in supporting continuous lifelong learning amongst practitioners. The senior team reported an increase in the willingness and desire of staff to attend courses – partly because of the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, but also due to a greater appetite for professional learning within the school.

Case Study 11: Ysgol Maesteg School, English-medium secondary school, Bridgend
Theme: Using the standards as a framework for structured self-evaluation

Overview of school's use of the standards

The school has used the standards as a structure for practitioner self-evaluation and reflection. Findings from this were being used to guide performance management discussions and to help inform personalised development targets for staff. The standards also provided a framework for the work of action inquiry groups within the school and were felt to align well with the SLO approach.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

The school was working towards the SLO approach, and the standards were considered to align well with this framework. Each Area of Learning and Experience had a 'Teaching and Learning' champion who led on encouraging professional learning activity. The school initially raised awareness of the standards through presentations and discussions with all staff during INSET days. EWC were also invited to give a presentation to staff about the PLP, and to explain how the Pebblepad app could be used to document their professional learning against the standards. Senior and middle leaders reported that staff preferred the new Standards to the previous set.

'The old standards were more cumbersome; these at least feel a bit more usable.'
Middle leader

During the first year of the evaluation, senior leaders felt that some of this early momentum in familiarising staff with the standards had been lost because of the disruption to teaching and learning during the pandemic. However, during the second year of the evaluation, senior leaders explained that they had re-focused efforts on integrating the standards into performance management processes.

Self-assessment against the standards as part of performance management

All staff were asked to self-assess themselves against the standards ahead of their performance management appraisal. A spreadsheet-based tool, structured around the standards, was developed by senior leaders and distributed to practitioners. The completed self-assessment was discussed by the practitioner and their line manager during their performance management discussion. In turn, this informed the development of individualised targets for professional learning over the next 12 months. Practitioners welcomed the increased focus on individualised targets.



Practitioners self-assess against the standards using spreadsheet tool



Self-evaluation findings discussed with line managers in performance reviews



Performance reviews inform professional development targets



Standards used as a framework for action enquiry discussions

At a strategic level, senior leaders were able to consider feedback from line managers' reviews to plan whole-school professional learning activity. Senior leaders explained that this process had been helpful to them in planning the school's professional learning activity, but that it also helped increase practitioners' familiarity with the standards.

'I do think that being familiar with the standards and having bespoke PL requirements helps to raise the profile of the standards' Senior leader

Senior leaders noted that they hoped to place greater emphasis on practitioners uploading evidence, and reflecting on the outcomes of, professional learning. Increasing the emphasis placed on the standards in regular teaching and learning meetings was also considered a priority; senior leaders hoped this could help embed the standards in everyday professional discourse.

'We're trying to make professional learning more hands-on and conversational. Maybe part of the answer is linking our bi-weekly discussions back to the standards.' Senior leader

Raising the status and aspirations of support workers

Middle leaders explained that the PSATs had been incorporated into professional learning for LSWs in the school. While it was acknowledged that awareness of and engagement with the standards was generally lower among LSWs, practitioners felt that the increased focus on the standards was helping to raise the status of support workers by providing a 'common language'.

'Some LSAs want to progress in their career so the standards are there to guide them. Others who've been doing the job for years can stagnate a bit and the standards can help managers to promote a culture of achievement for all staff, to get LSAs [learning support assistants] to see themselves at the same level [status] as teachers.' HLTA

Using the standards as a framework for practitioner enquiry

The standards were also being used as a framework and reference point for professional enquiry activity in the school. Middle leaders noted that the standards helped encourage these aspects of teachers' practice.

'From the perspective of NPEP, I think the standards are helpful in guiding more teachers to become researchers. Some are grasping the opportunity to become action researchers and the standards kind of encourage that.' Middle leader

Impact and next steps

Senior leaders reported that they had observed an improvement in teaching over the course of the evaluation as well improved engagement with teaching and learning. While it was not possible for senior leaders to attribute this to one factor, they felt the standards had contributed towards this.

'They [the standards] sit in parallel to other projects and programmes we're doing and they're integral to whole school plan for teaching and learning.' Senior leader

Interviewees felt there needed to be a greater emphasis on promoting the standards at national level, to raise their profile. Some noted that there was a risk the standards could appear to be 'optional' at times, particularly for practitioners who were fully qualified and did not aspire to leadership responsibilities. Interviewees suggested a further 'drive' to use them from Welsh Government and middle tier stakeholders would help foster a greater sense of ownership of the standards in the profession.

Case Study 12: Ysgol y Moelwyn, Welsh-medium secondary school, Gwynedd
Theme: Standards used holistically in professional development, enquiry, and learning

Overview of school's use of the standards

The standards were emerging as a useful reference point for a growing emphasis on professional development, enquiry, and learning. While the standards were not always explicitly referenced within these activities, staff were aware of how the standards frame their professional development and learning activity.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Senior leaders, NQTs, induction mentors, and department leads had greater awareness of the standards than other staff, through having engaged with them more regularly. However, other staff were also aware of the standards through professional learning activity, including some LSWs. Staff reported an increasing emphasis on professional learning and enquiry in the school in recent years. This had led to more incidental usage of the language contained in the standards and descriptors, although the standards aren't always referred to 'explicitly' in the school.

'We do a lot of things that make us more successful as a school, but do this without referring explicitly to the standards'. Senior leader

There are three main areas where the standards were being used holistically: performance management, professional groups and curriculum development.



Standards referenced in performance management discussions



Interviewees reflected on development of Standards through 'professional groups'

Performance management: 'professional interviews'

Regular 'professional interviews' take place between a member of staff and a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) to identify three professional development targets (one personal goal, one aligned with departmental/faculty goals, and the other linked to targets from the school development plan). As part of each professional interview, staff are asked the following: 'Consider the professional standards for teachers. Are you confident that you are fulfilling these standards? Are there specific aspects you want to discuss? Are there aspects you'd like support to fulfil?'. This process enabled staff and their line managers to reflect on their own progress in the context of the standards, and identify areas for development.

'In our 'Professional Interviews' [performance development discussions], we have talked about some of the standards, and it makes you realise that we do naturally

cover many of these things in our work. It has been useful to reflect and discuss that they often do these things without thinking about it or realising'. HLTA

Professional groups

Professional groups of around 10 school staff were meeting weekly to carry out professional enquiry on different topics (e.g., behaviour, pedagogy). Each group had the same agenda with different research topics. It was hoped that these smaller groups would allow staff to conduct their professional enquiry in a way that was supportive and collaborative. In turn, research findings were fed back to the wider school.

The professional groups were a more formalised format of a more general collaborative ethos which was in-part prompted by the school adjusting to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. Teachers reflected on whole-school training they delivered on digital learning and ICT at the beginning of the pandemic which was widely considered to be helpful to all staff. The standards were incorporated organically and retrospectively as part of a reflective process, rather than being deconstructed in advance or used as a checklist. Teachers felt they had developed the standards of leadership and collaboration, for example, but this was reported as something they had reflected upon afterwards rather than considered in advance as part of a deliberate effort to meet these specific Standards.

'Even in lockdown, there was a focus on online delivery and having to work together – we struck every standard there. In the lockdown, [teacher] gave us digital training and all of us have progressed so much from this.' Middle leader

Curriculum development

Senior leaders emphasised the importance of integrating the standards in a purposeful way in designing the school's vision curriculum, rather than seeking to create links between the two things retrospectively. Senior leaders felt that the language and ethos of the standards aligned well with those of the Curriculum for Wales, and practitioners gave examples of developing their pedagogy and increasing collaboration between subject areas. Practitioners considered that they had been developing professionally during the curriculum design process and were able to reflect on the links between the design process and the standards.

'It's helpful that they [the standards] are introduced naturally as part of what we're already doing. We then reflect retrospectively on how this relates to the standards so it's not so as much a tick box exercise.' Teacher

Impact and next steps

The standards have provided a framework within which the school's existing professional development activity can be reflected upon. The alignment of the school's existing actions and the standards was reported to be providing staff with confidence and reassurance. Senior leaders hoped to make more explicit the connection between current behaviours and Standards as part of a broader initiative to raise the profile of the standards and thus encourage teachers to identify their good practice.

Case Study 13: Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, Welsh-medium secondary school, Wrexham
Theme: Using the standards in performance management processes

Overview of school's use of the standards

The school uses the standards as a framework for conducting staff appraisals and has integrated them within a software platform they use for performance management and review (BlueSky). The school uses information from the appraisals to identify professional development needs at practitioner level and to plan professional learning activity at school level.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Senior leaders and practitioners reported that practitioners in the school were aware of the objectives of the standards. Some had used them as part of induction processes while others were familiar with them through engaging with the standards during self-evaluation and performance management processes.

'We appraise staff at the end of the performance management period, identify next steps and carry out a whole-school appraisal through BlueSky to identify the school's professional learning and INSET needs'. Senior leader

Most interviewees felt that the standards set out clear expectations for practitioners. Senior leaders reported that, compared with the previous standards, the wording used was more challenging for practitioners to interpret, with some practitioners noting that they found some of the standards to be 'wordy'. However, senior leaders also reported that staff were becoming more familiar with the standards as they engaged with them more regularly during performance management processes.

'I think the [new] Standards are a bit more challenging in terms of the language than before. It's only after you've worked with them [the standards] and started to think about your own situation in relation to them that you start to become more comfortable with the language.' Senior leader



Standards referenced in performance management discussions



Software platform used by school to record self-evaluations



Performance management targets refer to the standards



Professional learning is planned and evaluated against the standards

Performance management

Interviewees described how they had self-evaluated their own performance against the standards using a software platform (BlueSky) used by the school. Practitioners rated themselves according

to the extent to which they felt they were meeting or exceeding the standards as well as whether they felt they needed to develop in relation to them. This information was then used by practitioners and their line managers to set more bespoke, personalised professional development targets. Senior leaders were also reviewing the data from these appraisals to identify common needs which could be addressed during professional learning for groups of staff. Senior leaders found it helpful to have practitioner-level information collated in a consistent way on one platform which they could then analyse in various ways.

'I have gone through all the statements in BlueSky [software package] and assessed where I have reached in terms of 'needing to develop', 'reaching the Standard', 'going beyond the Standard' or identifying it as 'a clear strength.'

Teacher

Senior leaders emphasised the importance of setting aside dedicated time during INSET sessions for practitioners to reflect on their practice and professional learning.

'It's important we give the staff enough time to reflect. In the past we've packed INSET sessions full of things for the staff to do, but we also need to take a step back give them a fair amount of time to think about their practice in relation to the standards and their professional development.' Senior leader

Impact and next steps

Interviewees felt that the standards encouraged teachers to take greater ownership of their own professional development. Senior leaders reported that, prior to introducing their new performance management approach, line managers would be responsible for writing most appraisal documents and would set targets for staff. Since introducing the new system, senior leaders reported that staff had taken on greater responsibility for setting their own targets, identifying professional learning opportunities and evaluating their progress against the standards, uploading evidence of this to the software platform (e.g. lesson observations, links to web pages or research read, practitioner notes).

Senior leaders hoped that, by identifying professional development needs more systematically, they would over time be able to plan more bespoke professional learning activities aimed at specific practitioners from their school and potentially those from other schools who had identified similar needs. Some practitioners felt they would like to receive training on using the standards and to see examples of good practice that met the standards.

'I would like to receive further training on the standards, for example getting to see examples of good practice that meets the standards. Also I'd like to have enough time available to develop against these new Standards'. Teacher

Case Study 14: Ysgol y Deri, Special school, Vale of Glamorgan
Theme: partial and selective engagement with the professional standards

Overview of school's use of the standards

The school uses the standards as part of their professional development discussions with practitioners. The standards are used in a flexible way, with an emphasis on engaging in depth with individual elements of the standards at appropriate times, rather than expecting practitioners to engage with all of the standards simultaneously.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Senior leaders described how the standards had provided them with a 'standardised framework' and a 'common language' for discussions relating to their staff's professional development. Senior leaders found the standards useful for framing discussions with practitioners about pedagogy and improvement in a way that all staff were 'on board' with.

The common language and reference points provided by the standards were considered helpful to ensure that practitioners could understand why particular elements of their practice were being discussed. Senior leaders felt this provided practitioners with reassurance that discussions relating to professional development were not 'random' or determined solely by line managers.

This school had adopted a flexible approach to engaging with the standards and considered this to be the most useful and realistic way to use them in their setting:

'An intelligent approach to the standards rather than a blanket approach [...] you can't improve and do everything at once – you have to scan the horizon.' Senior leader



Standards used as a reference point in professional development discussions



Recognition that practitioners may develop in some aspects more quickly than in others

The standards were therefore being used selectively and purposefully at the individual level for performance management. In turn, senior leaders were using the information from the performance management process at a strategic level to inform and support whole-school improvement:

'For example, [based on performance management discussions] we observed that new teachers weren't highly engaged in the autism pedagogy strategy, so we needed to address this. The standards help us as a leadership team in providing

an evidence base, which in turn informs our PL [professional learning] offer.
They're a mechanism to identify where needs exist.' Senior leader

This senior leader emphasised that it was important for practitioners to recognise that it was realistic, and acceptable to develop some parts of their practice before others, and not feel under pressure to develop all aspects of their practice in a uniform manner. One senior leader described how they would look at the standards that are appropriate to a given practitioner at a given time, rather than 'sit with a teacher and look at every standard'. Referring to the visual representation or 'profile' of a practitioner's development against the standards, one senior leader described that they would emphasise to their staff that developing strengths in different standards at different times is acceptable and to be expected.

Senior leaders also felt the standards were a useful as a basis for discussions with practitioners who needed to develop their practice in relation to a particular aspect of their practice where they were not meeting the standards.

The headteacher welcomed the fact that the standards were not expected to be used as a 'check list'. Instead, the standards were a framework that facilitated open and, at times, subjective dialogue about various elements of teaching practice or professional development.

'The allowance of interpretation is a good thing, and it would be bad if regulatory bodies took the opposite view. Teachers would grab aspects of it that they think are relevant to them, and then use Standards as a framework to assess whether they're on the way or whether there's more they need to do.' Senior leader

Senior leaders felt the school was well supported in using the standards, noting that they discussed their approach in school network meetings.

'I don't think they're difficult enough to need extra support. There's a school-to-school learning framework that's very strong – so that's been the place where we've developed our [approach to using the] Standards.' Senior leader

Impact and next steps

Senior leaders felt the standards has helped improve the quality of discussions relating to professional development and that information from their performance management discussions was helping to inform their strategic planning of professional learning.

Senior leaders felt that engagement with the standards could be increased if greater emphasis was placed on them in the school inspection framework, noting that this was particularly influential in driving school-level practice.

Case Study 15: Pupil Referral Unit

Theme: using the professional standards as a basis for performance management with an emphasis on innovation and collaboration

Overview of school's use of the standards

The setting has placed an emphasis on collaboration and innovation as part of its focus on the standards. The standards are used in both performance management and in supporting the design of the school curriculum through providing a framework that encourages new pedagogies and cross-curricular working and planning activity.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Performance management based on Professional Standards

Performance management is structured around the standards in the PRU. The headteacher felt that the standards provided a framework that enabled a more structured performance management discussion, whereby line managers 'decode' the standards in the context of the staff member's role.

In turn, these conversations had resulted in staff reflecting on their current practice and areas they wanted to improve. Senior leaders described having conversations where practitioners had 'had their eyes opened' by these discussions, having reflected on things they 'did not realise they were doing' which were articulated in the standards.

Practitioners described how they then try to embed the standards in their practice, for example whilst doing reviewing pupils' books. However, teachers said that most of their engagement with the standards comes in the form of retrospective self-evaluation, rather than the standards being widely referred to in day-to-day teaching, where there are other competing priorities.



Looking to other schools for inspiration on professional development



Staff help one another identify professional development opportunities



Staff self-evaluate against the standards retrospectively



Conversations with line managers structured around the standards

Senior leaders reported that their current approach to performance management, based on the standards, is a 'significant change' compared to previous more ad-hoc discussions. It was felt that the standards are effective for providing a framework, setting expectations and goals for staff, in turn improving the quality of performance management conversations.

'It's a useful scaffold for planning and self-evaluation.' Senior leader

Practitioners described examples where performance management discussions based around the standards had inspired them to pursue particular professional learning opportunities.

'One teacher had started learning Welsh recently, something she had considered doing for a while, but which was partly stimulated by reflecting on the Welsh language element of the professional standards.' Senior leader

Collaboration and innovation

Practitioners noted that, although the Curriculum for Wales reforms encourage collaboration anyway, the standards further encourage and reinforce this. Practitioners reported that they were increasingly collaborating and learning from each other in the setting. Interviewees identified a clear link between Standards encouraging 'collaboration' and 'innovation'. For example, the school purchased a 3D printer, and this has encouraged more innovative activity and collaboration between Science, Arts, and Design & Technology. It was also reported by teachers and support workers that there is more collaboration between them, with one teacher helping a support worker to identify a technician's course they wanted to do in order to develop.

One senior leader provided an account of collaboration between the PRU and other schools, noting that they had identified a nearby secondary school who they considered to be doing 'excellent things' with professional learning. The senior leader had attended professional learning at this nearby school, and learnt about various resources/platforms ([WalkThrus](#)) and professional development approaches (i.e., instructional coaching). It was on these principles and resources that the headteacher based a developmental and supportive approach to professional learning alongside a continual focus on pedagogy.

Impact

The standards were considered to have had an impact on collaboration and innovation among staff, providing practitioners with a 'license to try new things'. Senior leaders felt that this was gradually encouraging staff to re-evaluate their roles and encourage them to continuously develop professionally.

'Staff can see that the foundation is in realizing the curriculum, especially when it talks about being a professional learner and continuing to engage with research. I think it's raised the professional attitude of staff and the shared understanding and expectation of what being a teacher is – being a lifelong learner.' Senior leader

Next steps

Senior leaders at the PRU intend to continue to ensure that practitioners take actions based on self-evaluation using the standards. They intend to continue to encourage staff to develop professionally through innovating and collaborating to ensure that the standards are as effective and meaningful as possible.

Case Study 16: Welsh-medium secondary school

Theme: opting for an ‘open’ culture-based engagement with the standards rather than close engagement

Overview of school’s use of the standards

The Professional Standards have been incorporated into school-wide processes and are reflected and promoted in a range of areas, from recruitment to professional development activity. There is no separate or prescribed way in which the standards are used, however they are used in a way that is consistent with the school’s vision, values and culture. The language of the standards has been embedded in practitioners’ job descriptions as well as performance management processes. Senior leaders considered the standards to be an important part of conversations relating to practitioners’ professional development.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

The standards were described by senior leadership as being ‘foundational’ to the school’s culture and ethos. The school has taken a collaborative approach to raising awareness of, and engaging with, the standards. Senior leaders in the school place an emphasis on joint-reflection, discussion with staff and ‘co-developing’ ways in which the standards can be incorporated into day-to-day activity, including lesson planning and thinking about pedagogy. The school does not take a prescriptive approach to their use, specifying how teachers should use the standards – instead the standards are referenced and woven into various working practices.

‘Our vision and values have moved to align more with the standards’ Headteacher

Within the overall school culture, the standards are referred to explicitly in two main areas: job descriptions and performance management.

Broad engagement with Standards
based on developing a ‘school
culture’ of development



Professional standards
incorporated into job descriptions

Job descriptions and recruitment

The standards have now become a part of all job descriptions for posts in the school (including an explanation of what they are, and the value placed by the school on them). Job descriptions are therefore created to reflect the standards, with a special emphasis on pedagogy and leadership. In turn, the questions asked to applicants in interviews are based on the standards, including some phrases associated with the standards. It was felt that this contributed to a school culture whereby the importance of the standards is emphasised from the outset, and thus helping them to become foundational to a teacher’s career in the school.

Performance management

The standards are also explicitly referred to in performance management reviews. Each teacher is required to set one personal target which relates directly to one of the standards. However, senior leaders emphasised that how staff respond to these targets, and the discussions that are initiated relating to the standards and the quality of practice, were more important than the targets themselves. Senior leaders emphasised their preference for this developmental approach rather than a more prescriptive or accountability-driven engagement with the standards.

Senior leaders felt that there were good conceptual linkages between the standards and other Welsh Government initiatives (e.g., Curriculum for Wales), but that there were differences in how schools and institutions valued and approached the standards. Senior leaders felt that this could disincentivize schools from developing too close an engagement with the standards, due to a worry of introducing too much inequity or discrepancies between school based on their geographical location (e.g., some schools using the standards as a framework for assessing teachers).

'You need to identify the dos and don'ts, to be told 'you have the flexibility to do this but don't do this'... there is an obvious potential for misinterpretation as the standards go down the 'chain' towards schools. There are differences between regions and Estyn for example – there can be up to 6 or 7 strategies that are all different that would mean there is no marry-up across Wales' Headteacher

Impact and next steps

The headteacher felt that inevitably there will be development in the standards when teachers are getting used to new ways of assessing year 7s against progression steps.

'I'm expecting to see improved understanding on assessment issues. There will be a way of measuring the success of this focus – but I'd be wary of making this into a narrow assessment. It's going to be wider than just the standards, we're unlikely to be assessing this purely against the professional standards'

Headteacher

Case Study 17: Welsh-medium secondary school
Theme: Approaches by the school to develop NQTs' leadership experience to meet Standards during their induction year.

Overview of school's use of the standards

Senior leaders introduced the standards to all staff during 2018/19 and started to integrate the standards within performance management, although this process was later delayed by the pandemic. NQTs who had engaged with the standards more recently were being encouraged to support other practitioners in raising their awareness of the standards, and in doing so were developing their own leadership experience.

How they have engaged with the standards over time

Senior leaders explained that NQTs and mentors were very familiar with the standards as a result of having to map evidence of their practice against them during their induction. Senior leaders felt that levels of familiarity with the standards would increase over time as the number of practitioners who had used them during their induction grew.

‘We have a group of staff who are very familiar and confident with them [the standards] and another group of NQTs starting in September. This is how awareness of the standards will develop in a school, because they [new staff] don't know anything else [other than the new Standards]’ Senior leader



Senior leaders gave presentations to staff on the standards



Staff reflect on progress against the standards in performance reviews



Staff trained to use a spreadsheet based self-assessment tool



NQTs encouraged to share experiences of using the standards with others

Demonstrating leadership at different levels

Senior leaders reported that, during the early phase of using the standards, some practitioners had found it challenging to demonstrate evidence of meeting the leadership Standards. To address this, senior leaders reviewed and raised the profile of leadership responsibilities at different levels throughout the school. Practitioners were then allocated tasks that would enable them to develop their leadership skills and provide evidence of this which they could then map against the standards.

One teacher described discussing with their mentor how they could demonstrate leadership during their induction year. This practitioner identified a research task they had led on, which they then collated and presented to colleagues. This task was then used as a basis for demonstrating evidence of progress against this Standard.

Senior leaders also encouraged NQTs and early career teachers to share their experiences of using the standards with other practitioners in the school. This enabled NQTs to demonstrate leadership through providing presentations and guidance to others in relation to gathering evidence and mapping this against the standards. It also helped raise the profile of the standards among more experienced teachers and developed their understanding of them.

'We're getting the five NQTs from this year to give presentations on their experiences and how this mapped against their Standards. This helps develop their confidence and leadership, and also helps other staff understand them [the standards].' Senior leader

Senior leaders reported that, on occasion, practitioners found it difficult to identify appropriate evidence against some of the standards, because they had such a wide range of experiences and evidence to draw on. Providing real-world examples, through presentations by NQTs, was considered an effective way of overcoming this issue.

Developing performance management arrangements based around the standards

The school had started a process of structuring performance management discussions around the standards. Senior leaders reported that other schools in their cluster had developed a spreadsheet-based self-assessment tool which was structured around the standards. This tool included a colour-coded breakdown of the descriptors which describe practitioners' levels of confidence against each element of the standards. The colour-coded scale included four levels, more than the three which are included in the standards documentation. Senior leaders felt that this additional level provided more scope for practitioners to demonstrate their progress over time.

'One of the problems was that everyone chooses the amber/medium status – so we'll do it in a matrix of four to account for this gap.' Senior leader

Impact and next steps

Senior leaders felt it was too soon to be able to observe any impact from using the standards, although awareness had increased during the evaluation.

Senior leaders planned to ask all practitioners to self-assess themselves against the standards ahead of performance management discussions with their line manager. As part of this process, practitioners would be asked to use this tool to score their confidence against each of the standards, and to note which areas they felt they needed to develop. Senior leaders were also planning to develop further guidance on the standards for their staff, which would set out more

detail on progressing from one level to the next. This would include examples of evidence which could be used to demonstrate progress.

Senior leaders hoped that this process could then inform data analysis at a strategic level to identify school-wide professional learning priorities at faculty and whole school level. This in turn could provide staff with a steer for their own planning, preparation and assessment time.

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