



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29TH JUNE 2021

SUBJECT: NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES IMPLEMENTATION

REPORT BY: JAMES KENT, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EAS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Curriculum for Wales Implementation, within the context of the Covid Pandemic.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Curriculum for Wales (2022) framework and the underpinning vision and philosophy that underpins it, mark a significant departure from previous national curricula. This new framework provides schools with greater autonomy and flexibility to design a curriculum that suits their learner's requirements. The curriculum is scheduled to be enacted in all schools from September 2022 from nursery to year 7, with a new suite of qualifications being design for 14-16 year olds, which will be available from September 2025. The impact of the Covid pandemic has been mixed, for some schools it has been difficult to focus on curriculum development due to the range of operational challenges presented, whilst other schools have developed aspects of their practice that will provide sound foundations for curriculum realisation. The EAS will continue to monitor schools progress as an integral part of support for improvement planning and provide a wide range of support via professional learning, networks and the work of school improvement partners.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to receive the report for information and take the opportunity to comment.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This report is for information only.

5. THE REPORT

The Curriculum for Wales Framework

5.1 The Curriculum for Wales 2022 framework, published in January 2020 marks a significant change in the nature of the national curriculum. The design of the curriculum is underpinned by four purposes, the fulfilment of which should be the starting point for schools curriculum planning and when taken in combination describe the behaviours and attributes that we wish our young people to exhibit when they leave school at 16. The framework has been designed as a continuum of learning, to support smooth and meaningful progression for learners from 3-16.

The framework consists of:

- 6 broad areas of learning and experience (within which are a number of constituent disciplines or subjects).
- Within each AoLE a number of 'What Matters' statements provide a focus for the key concepts, knowledge and skills that learners should cover in each area (although schools are given greater choice to select contexts for learning that are suited to their individual circumstances).
- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence remain statutory, however, the frameworks that support them remain as non-statutory guidance.
- Cross-cutting themes that should be integrated in to each Area of Learning, such as Diversity, Careers and Work-related experiences and the UNCRRC.

5.2 Modifications since publication. The Curriculum for Wales framework completed its passage through the Senedd in March 2020 and achieved Royal Assent in May 2020. In order to pass in to legislation some changes were agreed to the detail of the framework and suggested supporting guidance. The detail of these changes will be made available to schools in September 2021.

Progression and Assessment in the Curriculum for Wales Framework

5.3 In the Curriculum for Wales (2022) the concept of learner progression sits at the heart of the framework. The curriculum framework defines five principles of progression, which describe how learners make progress in their learning.

These 5 principles of progression are:

- Increasing breadth and depth of knowledge
- Deepening understanding of the ideas and disciplines within Areas
- Refinement and growing sophistication in the use and application of skills
- Making connections and transferring learning into new contexts
- Increasing effectiveness as a learner

5.4 Supporting each of the Statements of 'What Matters' in each AoLE are 'descriptions of learning'. Building from the principles of progression, these provide a statement of what learners should learn and experience across each progression step (2-3 year period), from the perspective of the learner, framed as 'I can' and 'I have' statements. These statements are not designed as 'best-fit' statements to be directly assessed against and should be viewed as the starting point for planning and assessment.

5.5 The purposes of assessment as set out in the curriculum for Wales guidance are that assessment should support learner progress on a day-to-day basis, allow the school to capture learner and 'group' progress over time. There is an expectation that schools work in clusters and at least one other 'group' to share their approaches and examples

of pupil work. The outcomes from this work should then be used to support school self-evaluation.

Assessment as part of Evaluation and Improvement

5.6 The draft school improvement guidance that was consulted upon during Spring 2021 provided the following guidance:

- For the Curriculum for Wales to be successful, it is crucial that all aspects of the schools' system align with and support the curriculum and its underlying principles.
- Learner assessment information should not be used for accountability purposes. The purpose of assessment is to support individual learner progression. Local authorities and regional consortia must not, therefore, collate and aggregate school level data or create specific local arrangements to gather individual pupil level information.
- While the use of assessment information is not for external reporting and accountability, using it effectively to support learner progression and to help improve teaching practice, is a core professional responsibility of a school's teaching staff.

5.7 The consultation responses have not yet been reported by Welsh Government, but the EAS continue to work collaboratively with schools to shape future approaches to evaluation and improvement.

Qualifications Reform

5.8 Alongside curricular reform, qualifications for 14-16 year old's are also being reformed by the regulator Qualifications Wales. This is being managed through a three-phase consultation process. In the first phase (Spring 2020), stakeholders were asked about the purposes of qualifications. In general respondents stated that:

- It is important to achieve an appropriate balance between qualifications that reflect the ethos of the new curriculum, and qualifications that support a smooth progression into post-16 education.
- It is important that any new qualifications retain currency and comparability with other qualifications in Wales and beyond.
- Qualifications and the curriculum are intertwined, and reform must happen concurrently.
- A variety of assessment methods should be used across the suite of available qualifications.
- There is a need to maintain an appropriate choice of qualifications, to ensure that qualifications meet the needs of a variety of different learners.

5.9 The second consultation (which closed in April 2020), considered the range of qualifications that learners should have the choice to study at key stage 4, (the outcomes are not available at the time of writing) whilst the final consultation, which will be launched in Autumn 2021 will consider the approaches to teaching and assessment that should be utilised in this new suite of qualifications. The outcomes from this last consultation are expected in the Spring of 2022. Qualifications will be available for Year 10 learners from 2025.

Preparedness of Schools and the Impact of Covid-19

- 5.10 Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic Headteachers' working with their Challenge Adviser self-assessed their progress towards curriculum for Wales, based on pre-determined criteria, which were based on three phases. The three phases are as follows below:
- 1) Engagement Phase – e.g. to what extent do all school-based staff understand the curriculum model and what this means in practice.
 - 2) Designing, planning and trialling - e.g. engaging with a range of stakeholders to trial new approaches to curriculum planning, teaching and learning
 - 3) Evaluating and preparing for next steps – e.g. evaluating existing approaches through an enquiry model and modifying practices accordingly in light of lessons learned.
- 5.11 In Summer 2019 and Autumn 2019, on average primary schools rated themselves as 'amber' in terms of their readiness of curriculum implementation in Autumn 2022, although within this there were a broad range of responses within the data. In Summer 2019 most secondary schools assessed themselves as being 'red' in terms of readiness, although this had moderated to 'amber' by Autumn 2019.
- 5.12 Monitoring of progress towards curriculum for Wales as a requirement of CA reporting was postponed in Spring 2020, in recognition of the immediate and significant operational challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to focus on the move to both school-based hub provision and distance/blended learning.
- 5.13 In Autumn 2020, the Curriculum for Wales, Journey to 2022 document was published. This was co-constructed by the regional consortia, Estyn and Welsh Government. This set out the phases of development that schools should aim to go through in preparation for the curriculum for Wales. The guidance advised schools to move through a three-phase process. Briefly, this included an 'engagement' phase, to ensure all staff had a secure understanding of the curriculum framework, a 'designing, planning and trialling phase', during which teachers would trial aspects of the new framework and an 'evaluation' phase, during which schools would reflect on their learning, before further planning and development. Discussions regarding school's readiness for September 2022, will recommence in the summer term 2021 as part of the wider strategic conversation surrounding school development planning for 2021/22.
- 5.14 Despite the huge challenges presented by the pandemic, based on the work of Dr Simon Breakspear, EAS have encouraged schools to capture learned from the pandemic that can support them in the realisation of the curriculum for Wales. Through the course of the pandemic, EAS Officers have captured this learning for sharing across schools via the CSSR (Collaborate, Share, Support and Refine process). Key aspects emerging are:
- Both pupil and teacher confidence in the development of 'digital competence' (a key cross-curricular responsibility in the curriculum framework).
 - The development of new 'thematic' approaches to the curriculum.
 - New approaches to providing feedback/formative assessment through digital technologies.
 - The ability to link to external providers via digital technology to provide a broader ranges of learning experiences in keeping with the new curriculum framework.

- A variety of approaches to supporting learner wellbeing, which are a central feature of the new framework.
- In the early stages of the pandemic (particularly), schools reported that staff have been able to engage in meaningful professional learning to support their professional skills.

Engagement with Professional Learning

5.15 The EAS has continued to run the cross-regional (national) programme for Senior Leaders and Headteachers to support the realisation of the curriculum for Wales throughout the Autumn of 2020 and Spring term 2021. The programme has been designed to align to the 'journey to the curriculum for Wales 2022' document (see above). Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, attendance at the programme from schools across the borough has been mixed, with around 50% of schools engaging with sessions during this period, although all schools are able to access all professional learning materials on-demand (asynchronously).

Supporting Schools to Realise the Vision for 2022

- 5.16 Working in partnership with the local authority, the EAS will ensure that schools have access to appropriate levels of support and professional learning to realise the curriculum for Wales. This will comprise:
- Support from the school's School Improvement Partner (and school to school, good school link, where appropriate)
 - Example School Development Planning guidance to assist with strategic planning.
 - Access to the national professional learning programme for Headteachers and Senior Leaders
 - Access to the national professional learning programme for Middle Leaders and Teachers
 - Professional learning for HLTAs / TAs
 - The Secondary Curriculum Design Network
 - Area of Learning/Subject Networks
 - Bespoke support / support for cluster working as needs emerge.
 - Regular update sessions for governors.

All support opportunities are advertised via the region's supporting our schools' site and via well-established Teams networks.

Risks

- 5.17 Continued disruption caused by the pandemic makes the engagement of schools with the professional learning and networking across the cluster and other groups of schools challenging.
- 5.18 Schools will feel under pressure to fast-track their curriculum development work and miss key milestones in the sequencing of development work, as set out the in Journey to 2022 document.

Conclusion

- 5.19 The curriculum for Wales was published in January 2020. This is part of an integrated suite of reforms, that include changes to evaluation and improvement arrangements and changes to qualifications to learners in the 14-16 age group. The impact of the

Covid-19 pandemic has been significant, with schools required to turn their attention to the considerable operational challenge of providing in-school, distance and blended learning provision. Whilst this has meant that many have been able to focus on the development of their curriculum and work with cluster partners less, other learning and skills have emerged, which will support their efforts to realise the curriculum for Wales. EAS will continue to monitor schools' preparedness for the curriculum for Wales, whilst working with partners to provide a wide range of professional learning support and guidance.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1. There are no specific assumptions.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is an **Information Only** and a completed IIA is not necessary at this stage.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This work is funded through the EAS Business Plan, therefore there are no specific financial implications.

8.2 Support processes will now be rolled out during the remainder of the summer term to all schools and settings. An event to launch this process was held in March 2021 to explore a range of themes including quality assurance, the use of technology to support pedagogical approaches and reflective practice.

8.3 The regional approach, 'Striking the Balance' was shared with headteachers and governors at the end of Spring Term 2021 to seek their views on the approach and the support identified for schools and settings moving forward.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The Consultees are noted below. No specific feedback was received from consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: James Kent, EAS

Consultees:

Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Steve Harris, Head of Corporate Finance & S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer.