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RESEARCH

Practitioner survey on preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022: interim findings from primary and secondary school senior leaders

Initial findings of a survey examining schools' preparations for the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales.

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Introduction

This paper presents initial findings of a survey carried out in June and July 2021 that examined schools' preparations for the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales. A full report of survey findings, together with the results of a small-scale qualitative follow-up with schools, will be published later in Autumn term 2021. This paper sets out an overview of the survey methodology and analysis carried out to

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date.

Methodology and analysis

The findings presented in this paper draw on the following research and analysis.

- A survey of all schools, pupil referral units and non-maintained early years settings in Wales was distributed in June 2021 through multiple channels.
- In total 345 responses were received from headteachers and senior leaders in unique primary and secondary schools, which equates to approximately 23% of the total school population of maintained schools in Wales; these responses form the basis of the analysis in this interim paper.
- The sample is broadly reflective of the overall school population by sector, medium, geography, size and percentage of learners receiving free school meals and survey data has been weighted to match the profile of the whole population.
- A further 48 responses were received from senior leaders in schools where the headteacher had also responded. An additional 222 responses were received from respondents who identified themselves as middle leaders, teachers or learning support workers. To allow for timely publication, these responses do not form part of the analysis in this interim paper but will be analysed fully and presented the main report, which will be published later in Autumn term 2021.
- Throughout this paper the term senior leaders is used to refer to respondents who identified themselves in profiling questions as headteachers or senior leaders.

Further detail on the [methodology, sampling and analysis can be seen in Annex 1](#). The [questionnaire used in the survey is included in Annex 2](#).

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Summary of main interim findings

- Overall, responses from senior leaders in primary and secondary schools were positive.
- The findings indicate very strong levels of commitment to the curriculum reforms among senior leaders.
- Senior leaders also reported high levels of knowledge of the curriculum reforms.
- A clear majority of senior leaders indicated that they are well-placed to design their own curriculum and make changes to their professional practice ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022.
- However, around half of senior leaders were not clear about how assessment arrangements will change in their school following the reforms and what their school is required to do to plan their own assessment arrangements.
- Furthermore, a majority of senior leaders disagreed that sufficient time has been available within the school calendar to prepare for the new curriculum. A majority also reported that their school is in need of additional support to prepare for the roll-out of the new curriculum.
- It is worth noting that in virtually all areas explored in the survey there was at least a small minority of schools who indicated a clear lack of commitment, knowledge or readiness. Further analysis will be conducted to explore any patterns amongst this small number of schools so that resources can be appropriately focused.
- Although there were no notable differences^[1] between sectors in any of the specific questions analysed for this interim report, there was a general pattern in the sample: primary school leaders were equally or more positive in their responses to all the questions analysed compared their secondary school counterparts.

[1] See Annex 1, section 2 for a definition of ‘notable differences’ including a description of the approach taken to the analysis of these differences.

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Knowledge about curriculum change

The vast majority (97%) of senior leaders in schools agreed that ‘the reasons for reforming the curriculum are clear to me’. [2]

- 2.7% of senior leaders in schools disagreed with the statement.

The vast majority (95%) of senior leaders agreed that ‘I know what is required in my school to ensure the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales are achieved’.

- 3.4% of senior leaders disagreed with the statement.

A clear majority of senior leaders (89%) agreed that ‘I am clear about both what will be the same and what will be different in my school under the new curriculum arrangements’.

- 6.8% of senior leaders disagreed with this statement.

Senior leaders were split fairly evenly in terms of the percentages who agreed and disagreed with the statement: ‘I am clear about both what will be the same and what will be different in my school under the new assessment arrangements’.

- 46% of senior leaders disagreed with this statement and 43% agreed with it.

[2] The figures included in this report reflect the aggregated agree / disagree percentages for each question unless otherwise indicated. That is, agree percentages are combined Strongly agree / Agree / Somewhat agree responses. Disagree percentages are combined Strongly disagree / Disagree / Somewhat disagree. Responses to alternative question formats are indicated.

Understanding how to respond to curriculum change

The vast majority of senior leaders (91%) agreed that 'I understand what my school is required to do to design our own curriculum in accordance with the Curriculum for Wales Framework'.

- 7.0% of senior leaders disagreed with this statement.

Senior leaders were split fairly evenly in terms of the percentages who agreed and disagreed with the statement: 'I understand what my school is required to do to plan our own assessment arrangements in accordance with the Curriculum for Wales Framework'.

- 45% of senior leaders agreed with this statement and 41% disagreed with it.

The vast majority of senior leaders (92%) agreed that 'I understand what I need to do to prepare for and implement curriculum changes in my school'.

- 6.0% disagreed with this statement.

Commitment to curriculum change

The vast majority of senior leaders (98%) agreed with the statement 'I am committed to the aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales'.

- 0.9% disagreed with this statement.

The vast majority of senior leaders (98%) agreed with the statement 'I am committed to making changes to my professional practice to help learners realise the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales'.

- No senior leaders disagreed with this statement.

The vast majority of senior leaders (99.6%) agreed with the statement 'I am

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committed to learning more about the Curriculum for Wales’.

- No senior leaders disagreed with this statement.

Preparation to establish the conditions required to realise the curriculum

A clear majority of senior leaders (81%) stated that their school ‘has developed a vision for its new curriculum’.

- 18% stated that they had not, and 1.6% did not know.

Just over half of senior leaders disagreed (54%) with the statement ‘To date, sufficient time has been available within the school calendar to prepare for the new curriculum’.

- Just over a fifth (21%) agreed with this statement.
- The remaining respondents (25%) answered ‘neither agree nor disagree’.

The vast majority of senior leaders (98%) stated that their school has ‘tried classroom approaches linked to the new curriculum’, with 59% stating they had done so ‘a lot’ and 38% stating they had done so ‘a little’ (2.3% stated they had not done so).

The vast majority of senior leaders (95%) stated that ‘teachers in our school have engaged in professional enquiry to support preparations for the new curriculum’, with around half (51%) stating they had done so ‘a little’ and 45% stating they had done so ‘a lot’.

- 4.8% stated they had not done so.

Capability to practice in ways that realise curriculum aspirations

The vast majority of senior leaders (95%) agreed with the statement 'My school has the staff with the skills required to design the new curriculum'.

- 2.4% disagreed with this statement.

A clear majority of senior leaders (84%) agreed with the statement 'My school has sufficient staff capacity to design the new curriculum'.

- 13% disagreed with this statement.

The vast majority (97%) of senior leaders agreed with the statement 'My school's staff have the necessary skills to plan and deliver lessons in line with the new Curriculum for Wales'.

- 2.3% disagreed with this statement.

Overarching questions on the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales

A clear majority (81%) of senior leaders agreed with the statement 'My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022'.

- 13% disagreed with this statement.

A clear majority (86%) of senior leaders agreed with the statement 'My school is well-placed to make changes to our professional practice ready for the planned roll-out of the new curriculum from September 2022'.

- 9.0% disagreed with this statement.

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Two-thirds of senior leaders (67%) agreed with the statement ‘My school is in need of additional support or resources to be ready for the planned roll-out of the new curriculum from September 2022’.

- 16% disagreed with this statement.

Annex 1: further detail on methodology and sampling

Methodology and sample

A questionnaire was designed by Arad’s research team, working with our associates and with input from Welsh Government officials and middle-tier partners. The survey was piloted during early June with a sample of primary and secondary schools and revised following this. The survey was structured around a conceptual framework that identified five aspects of readiness for curriculum reform. This was an adaptation of a model developed by a member of the research team, Professor Claire Sinnema. The survey included questions on the following:

- knowledge about curriculum change
- understanding of how to respond to curriculum change
- commitment to curriculum change
- preparation to design, adopt and implement the curriculum
- capability to practice in ways that realise the curriculum

The [survey text can be seen in Annex 2](#).

A link to an electronic survey was emailed to head teachers in all schools in Wales (census approach) and was publicised via Welsh Government’s communication and social media channels, and with the support of local authority and regional consortia communications teams. The survey was aimed at head teachers, senior leaders and practitioners in schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and non-maintained early years settings. Headteachers who were sent

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the survey by email were encouraged to share the link to the questionnaire with colleagues. The survey was launched on 16 June and closed on 17 July.

The sample of responses was monitored continuously, and targeted reminders were sent to schools to ensure good representation by sector, medium, geography, size and percentage of learners receiving free school meals. The response rate was good, particularly in view of the pressures facing schools at the end of an academic year severely impacted by the pandemic.

- In total 345 responses were received from headteachers and senior leaders in unique schools, which equates to approximately 23% of the total school population of maintained schools in Wales. The sample is broadly reflective of the overall school population by sector, medium, geography, size and percentage of learners receiving free school meals. These responses form the basis of the analysis in this paper.^[3]
- 48 responses were received from senior leaders in schools where the headteacher had also responded. An additional 222 responses were received from respondents who identified themselves as middle leaders, teachers or learning support workers from among the schools represented in headteachers and senior leader responses. To allow for timely publication, these responses do not form part of the analysis in this interim paper but will be analysed fully and presented the main report.

^[3] Not all respondents answered all questions. The number of responses to each question (n) ranges from 345 to 315.

Analysis and data presentation

As part of the analysis, survey results have been weighted by sector to ensure that the profile of the sample better reflects the survey population.^[4]

This interim paper focuses on responses from headteachers and senior leaders. As noted above, a census approach was taken to survey distribution, with a quota sampling method used for following up specific types of settings to try and ensure the sample was as representative as possible of the population of schools and PRUs. The chosen method and levels of non-response mean that

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the sample of respondents cannot be considered a probability sample, and therefore cannot be generalised to the population. Tests of statistical significance should only be applied to probability samples. As an alternative, in order to have some basis to determine noteworthy differences between senior leaders' responses in primary and secondary schools, and to help identify emerging patterns in the sample, we have treated differences of more than 16 percentage points between sectors as being 'notable differences'.^[5]

Although there were no notable differences between sectors in any of the specific questions analysed for this interim report, there was a general pattern in the sample: primary school leaders were equally or more positive in their responses to all the questions analysed compared their secondary school counterparts.

^[4] For headteachers and senior leaders (one response per school was included in this analysis), data was weighted to reflect the population of schools in terms of the percentage of schools in each of the following sectors: primary and nursery schools, all-through schools, secondary schools, special schools and PRUs. For middle leaders, teachers and Learning Support Workers, data was weighted to reflect the percentage of registered practitioners in each of these sectors across the population of teachers.

^[5] If the sample of respondents were a true random sample, then the achieved sample sizes would enable us to report the results of the survey with a confidence level of 95% based on a confidence interval of 5% for senior leaders. Statistically, this would enable us to state with 95% confidence that our sample responses are within 5% of the 'true' percentage for the population of senior leaders. Confidence intervals vary slightly for sub-samples of primary (6%) and secondary (10%) senior leaders. For this reason, only differences of over 16 percentage points between primary and secondary respondents would have been considered notable, but this threshold was not reached in any of the questions analysed for this paper.

Points of note and terminology

The analysis in this paper is limited to a selection of key closed questions

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included in the questionnaire. The survey ([see Annex 2](#)) included questions in different formats. Most questions included the following Likert scale:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/insufficient knowledge

In this summary paper, all three 'agree' responses (strongly agree / agree / somewhat agree) and all three corresponding 'disagree' responses have been combined to provide an overall agree / disagree percentage. The figures included in this report reflect the aggregated agree / disagree percentages for each question. Data tables will be presented in the full report, setting out complete graduated responses. Other question formats were also used, which are indicated in footnotes in this paper. Please refer to the relevant questions in the Annex for further information. Analysis of supporting written comments provided by practitioners in response to the survey's open-text questions will be included in the full report.

During the time the survey was open, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, announced changes to the implementation timetable for Curriculum for Wales. He confirmed that Curriculum for Wales would continue to be implemented in primary schools, maintained nursery schools and non-maintained nursery settings from September 2022. The Minister also announced that secondary schools that "are ready to roll out the curriculum to year 7 will be able to press ahead with that. However, formal implementation of the new curriculum will not be mandatory until 2023, with roll-out in that year to years 7 and 8".^[6]

Throughout this paper the term senior leaders is used to refer to respondents who identified themselves in profiling questions as headteachers or senior leaders.

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Primary schools refers to primary and nursery schools, but excludes non-maintained early years settings.

This interim report primarily focuses on the responses from mainstream primary and secondary schools. Responses were received from other categories of schools: special schools, PRUs and all-through (3 to 16/3 to 18) schools. Complete datasets including data from respondents in these schools will be set out in the full report.

[6] Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, Statement 6 July 2021

Contact details

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

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