

Update on development of the new curriculum for learners age 3 -16

Purpose

1. To provide the Council for Economic Renewal with an update on the development of a new Curriculum for Wales and next steps.

Background

2. Our approach to education reform has been characterised by co-construction with practitioners, informed by experts and open to review by the international expert community. In 2016, OCED were invited to review the work underway on education reforms and shine a light on progress to date. The OECD found that, since their previous visit in 2014, progress had been made in a number of policy areas and a noticeable shift had taken place in our approach to school improvement. They found the Welsh reform journey was increasingly characterised by close working between government and the education sector, with commitment to improvement 'visible at all levels of the education system'.
3. Informed by the OECD report, we published Education in Wales: Our National Mission in September 2017. Its purpose is to develop a school system which will instil in our learners an ambition to make the most of their potential, lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement, and equip them with the right skills for a changing world.
4. OECD have continued to support our work, involved in specific projects such as 'Schools as learning Organisations' and, this autumn, undertaking a further review of progress on reform.
5. Our vision for Wales is for a fully inclusive education system where all learners have equity of access to education that meets their needs and enables them to participate, benefit from and enjoy learning.
6. To enable this we are developing a transformational curriculum and schools will be responsible for ensuring all their learners receive a broad and balanced curriculum, which is designed to meet the four purposes so that children and young people develop as:
 - ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
 - enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
 - ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
 - healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

7. In delivering our new transformational curriculum, we are focusing on the following four key enabling objectives:
 - Developing a high-quality education profession
 - Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
 - Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence and wellbeing
 - Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system
8. The four purposes are the starting point for all decisions on the content and experiences developed as part of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.
9. The draft curriculum guidance has been developed using a co-construction approach, led by practitioners and informed by experts. Through this process we have engaged with a wide range of organisations and experts. For example, in developing the Science and Technology AoLE we held two large STEM events in June 2018 and in February 2019 to draw in the contributions of small businesses, large companies and leaders in industry and a range of other partners. The events provided an opportunity for everyone to engage early engagement and help shape the curriculum in this important area.
10. In developing the new draft curriculum we have drawn on market intelligence and information from Regional Skills Partnerships about the skills and knowledge our young people need. This is essential if we are to see learning across all our schools that best prepares our young people for the world of work - and to succeed in their career ambitions.
11. In April, we published the guidance for each Area of Learning and Experience, proposed approach to learner assessment and an overview for feedback.
12. The window for feedback closed on 19 July and the responses have been evaluated. We received 1,680 contributions online and via email from a diverse range of individuals and organisations. Of these, a significant proportion were received from practitioners, teachers, senior leaders and governors. Another 116 responses were received in response to the Children and Young People's Survey. We will publish a summary of the feedback later in the autumn.

A curriculum which equips learners for further study, training or employment

13. Employers have told us that they want young people to be 'work ready' when they leave education, with skills such as creativity, problem solving, team work, and communication skills. Successful Futures, the independent review of curriculum and assessments in Wales led by Professor Graham Donaldson, recommended that the new Curriculum for Wales should be designed to develop these wider skills and embed literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum.

14. The new curriculum framework focuses on the 'purposes' of education – the qualities we want to see in our young by the time they reach 16. The purposes intend to focus education on equipping learners for life, further study and work. They have informed the approach to the design of the curriculum framework – for example, placing emphasis on knowledge, skills and experience – rather than one at the expense of others. They will also inform the development of school-level curriculum.
15. Broader skills such as resilience, communications and problem solving will help young people apply the knowledge they acquire at school and apply it to real life situations.
16. Developing an understanding of the world of work will begin at an early age. Each Area of Learning and Experience will identify how it can support learners develop an understanding of related careers and work opportunities. This will be supported by additional guidance and resources to equip schools to offer high quality provision in this area. Schools will also be encouraged to build further links within their community, including businesses, to enable them to offer authentic learning experiences grounded in learners' locality and relevant to their experiences.
17. Careers and Work Related Experiences (CWRE) will be a key part of each Area of Learning and Experience, where learners will start to understand the factors that guide, shape and influence their career prospects and development, and the skills they will need to progress their career plans and development.
18. CWRE in the new curriculum will provide a greater awareness of learners' individual skills, attributes and interests and how these impact on career choices, raise learner aspirations and their understanding of consequences.
19. Research has shown that children as young as age four begin to develop career aspirations. These aspirations are influenced both positively and negatively over time, by home and school based experiences.
20. It is important to provide children with a wide spectrum of careers information through a variety of channels, at all levels, to broaden career horizons, challenge stereotypes and provide a better understanding of the world of work.
21. Careers Wales' remit letter for 2019-20 places a requirement to support primary schools and learners, as well as the continuing to work directly with secondary learners, educators, trainers and businesses. Specialist, highly qualified staff provide an impartial service.
22. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation published in 2014 'The Good Career Guidance Report', which identified eight benchmarks that would improve careers provision.

23. A two-year pilot is underway in Rhondda Cynon Taf which aims to embed the Gatsby Benchmarks in mainstream secondary schools in this authority area and potentially create a sustainable and replicable approach to the implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks that can be applied at scale in other areas of Wales.
24. Qualifications will evolve to respond to the new curriculum, so Qualifications Wales will be consulting on future qualifications later in the autumn. Their consultation will focus on the purpose of qualifications at the end of compulsory education and deriving a set of principles which will then inform further consultation on specific qualifications associated with each Area of Learner and Experience.

Next steps

25. We have developed a comprehensive plan to guide practitioners' refinement work over the autumn. This sets out a clear set of objectives and practitioners will help develop a response to feedback, which will be published alongside the refined curriculum framework in January 2020.
26. The Curriculum and Assessment Bill which will provide the legislative framework underpinning the curriculum will be introduced in 2020.
27. Schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings will be required to implement their new curriculum from 2022 for all learners up to year 7. Each year after that a further year group in secondary school will be added, with the new curriculum being in place for all learners in 2027.