



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

24 FEBRUARY 2021

Report by: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

Subject: The Reform Journey and Professional Learning

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present information to Joint Committee members regarding the professional offer to support the Curriculum for Wales.

2.0 Background

2.1 As you are aware, Wales has an ambitious reform programme, which has been shared via Welsh Government's 'Our national mission' and goes into detail about the courses of action and priorities to deliver the Curriculum for Wales.

2.2 Even though the title is Curriculum for Wales, the reform is much wider than curriculum reform alone as this has an impact on all aspects of educational life, including developing an evaluation, improvement and accountability framework, the Additional Learning Needs Act and developing a million Welsh speakers as part of Cymraeg 2050. Throughout this reform, there is a strong commitment to supporting and developing leadership on all levels, and professional learning is a key part of supporting the workforce.

2.3 Across GwE we have developed an integrated approach to address this work, as we fully realise that the reform should be considered from the standpoint of schools. Our support is testament to this, with the full GwE team collaborating with colleagues in the Local Authorities to embed and agree on common and consistent messages.

2.4 In October 2020, ['The journey to 2022'](#) was published, a document co-constructed with Welsh Government, Estyn and the regional consortia. The purpose of the document is to set out shared expectations that should empower school leaders as they work in their own schools and across their collaborative networks, so as to take ownership of the changes in their school and plan and sequence the right kind of activities as they prepare for the new curriculum.

2.5 In this context, Professional Learning is of key importance, and GwE will offer support to schools in various ways to achieve the steps noted in ['The journey to 2022'](#). As part of the professional offer to support this publication, and to assist schools to take action towards the milestones, a series of sessions for senior leaders in schools commenced in January 2021 with a focus on 'Change Management' and 'Developing a Shared Vision' in the first instance, before moving on to planning the curriculum. These sessions were developed in collaboration with the other three regions in Wales.

3.0 Matters for consideration

3.1 The majority of schools now recognise the need to go through the process of identifying how to manage change and create a shared vision before rushing to plan the Curriculum. Originally, both these sessions were designed to be whole day, face to face workshops, and more than 250 headteachers and deputy headteachers had registered to attend back in March 2020 before we had to postpone due to the lockdown. The sessions have now been adapted so that we can deliver the

presentations virtually and in an interactive manner, and 893 headteachers and members of Senior Leadership Teams have registered to attend.

- 3.2** The Professional Learning offer continues to be offered as a cluster as we are keen to develop discussions within clusters, appreciating that schools are at different points on the journey. There is flexibility for schools to participate in these sessions and they are recorded should anyone be unable to attend.
- 3.3** Working through Covid-19 has been a challenge for us all. It has meant that we all need to work in a new way. We have seen better learning partnerships with parents, more emphasis on well-being, improved digital skills, teachers having a space to be creative and create original learning opportunities and collaboration between schools and external bodies. There is also an opportunity for schools to reflect on new ways of working to assist them to move forward with this reform agenda.
- 3.4** As a service, we have opportunities to meet as a full team on a regular basis, to try to 'make sense' of the new Curriculum and develop consistent messages. GwE is working with Professor Graham Donaldson to develop a range of think pieces to support schools to implement the new curriculum, creating a series of prompt papers including - Vision, Pedagogy, Assessment, Leadership, Curriculum Design and Reflection in terms of the 4 purposes.
- 3.5** Following the Minister for Education's announcement on 5 February 2021 confirming that children aged three to seven will return to school after half term on 22 February 2021, and along with the ongoing discussions in the secondary regarding arrangements for awarding grades in the summer of 2021, it was decided to postpone for the time being the 'Developing a Shared Vision' sessions arranged for clusters. This decision is based on feedback received from headteachers across the sectors. We will continue to hold discussions with schools as regards when it will be timely to resume these sessions.

3.6 The work is continuously reviewed to respond to the Covid-19 situation and government guidance and regulations, and approved by GwE's Management Board and Joint Committee. In addition, the work programme and its delivery will be discussed and agreed with headteachers and schools.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note and approve the content of the report.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within current financial resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation undertaken

8.1 Consultation with GwE Management Board.

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I note in part 5.1 of the report that there are no financial implications arising from the report and that GwE will act on this matter within its current resources.