GwE

Collaborating • Learning • Succeeding

THE REFORM JOURNEY

Think Pieces

Conwy

sir ddinbych denbighshire

Sir y Fflint Flintshire

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wrexham wrecsam

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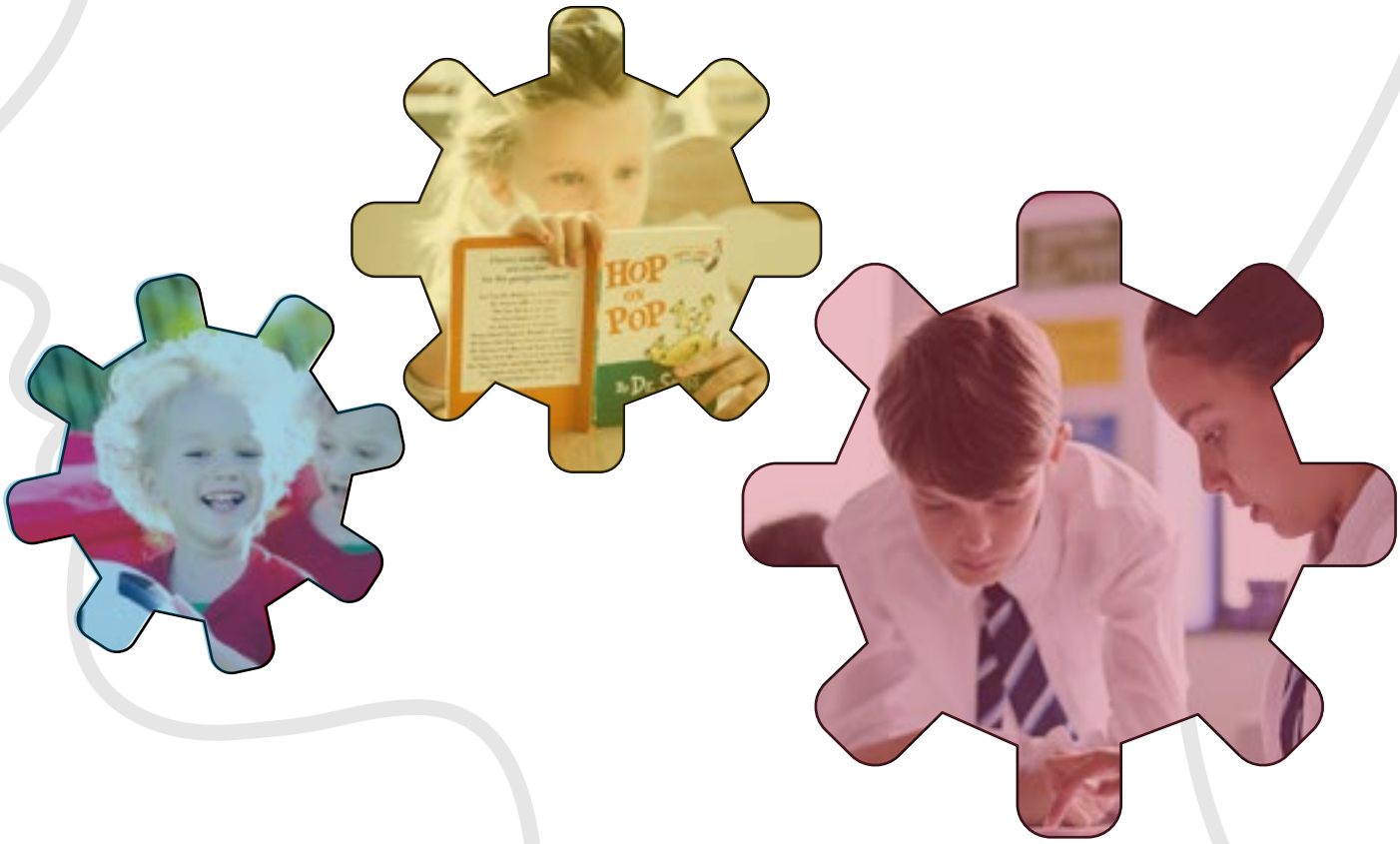


FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to share these think pieces with you. We've been very fortunate to work with Professor Graham Donaldson who has advised and guided us through the process. We are also thankful to colleagues from Local Authorities, Estyn, Bangor University and other Regional Consortia who've joined us in workshops to refine and redraft the content.

We hope that alongside the professional learning offer, these Think Pieces will provide a stimulus for staff in your school and clusters to reflect on what is already working effectively, what needs refining and what needs to be changed. I would like to invite all of you and encourage you to share practice and ideas and be part of the professional learning journey that we are all on in preparation for September 2022.

This is a learning process for all of us. We look forward to supporting, sharing and developing solutions to ensuring that the new curriculum will be built on existing excellent practice in our schools. New innovations have taken place during the pandemic which will be a strong foundation for building a new offer for learners. I'm sure that this new curriculum offer will ensure that learning for our pupils will be a very positive experience and one that will produce the highest standards for them.

Arwyn Thomas
GwE Managing Director

INTRODUCTION

The education reform programme in Wales, built around the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW), provides a positive way forward as we emerge from the restrictions of the last year. It has at its heart a number of guiding ideas.

- That the curriculum and associated pedagogy and assessment should flow from clear purposes agreed nationally and pursued locally.
- That those purposes should encompass helping all of our young people to become: ambitious and capable learners; enterprising and creative contributors; ethical and informed citizens; and healthy and confident individuals.
- That young people's learning should build progressively towards those purposes across their time in school education.
- That teachers and schools should have greater freedom to realise those purposes in ways that can meet the needs and characteristics of the young people and the communities that they serve.

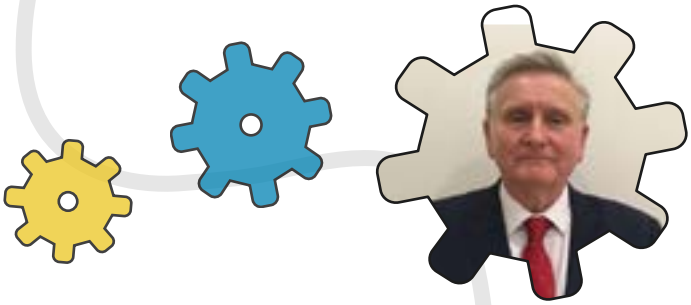
These basic ideas give rise to a number of important implications.

- That the national curriculum framework should establish necessary national consistency of purpose and approach but leave wide scope for local decision making about key aspects of learning and teaching.
- That curriculum making is a process that should involve collaboration amongst teachers, schools and wider interests.
- That accountability should not inhibit the quality or narrow the scope of learning. Wherever possible it should pursue quality enhancement rather than narrow quality assurance.

The success of the reform programme should be judged against the extent to which it leads to better and more relevant learning for young people and to higher standards of achievement. Both the quality of the learning and the nature of standards should relate to the extent to which the agreed purposes are being realised in practice for all young people.

Of course, the impact of the pandemic will influence how we can move forward with the reform. We need to re-establish the relevance of its four guiding purposes for Wales's young people. In many ways the pandemic has made those purposes more relevant than ever as we seek to build the confidence of our young people and rekindle their desire to learn. We have all had to think deeply about what matters in learning during periods of interrupted schooling and the four purposes of the new CfW stand up well to that examination. The pandemic has also required changes to the nature of the teaching and learning process, not least in the ways in which digital technologies can enhance possibilities for more independent learning.

This series of papers developed by GwE directly reflect these ideas and implications. They ask us to think deeply about purpose and highlight matters of curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment that must be addressed if we are to realise the opportunities offered by the reform programme. In particular, they are couched in the language of learning not of direction or implementation. Taken together, they provide for a process of collaboration, exploration and learning that can build firm foundations for the realisation of the opportunities offered by the new curriculum for every young person in every school and every classroom across the consortium.



Professor Graham Donaldson

LEADERSHIP

Curriculum for Wales: Considerations for School Leadership

'…… Leadership is the ability to influence and inspire action in others, and respond with vision and agility during periods of growth, disruption or uncertainty to bring about the needed change.'

Yvonne Ruke Akpoveta, Cornell University

Schools are currently facing perhaps their biggest leadership challenge ever while guiding their school through the reform journey. This challenge has been further amplified by the pandemic with school leaders having to respond quickly to keeping everyone safe, ensuring everyone's wellbeing and delivering a new way of learning.

Curriculum for Wales gives leaders at all levels, including middle leaders and governors, the opportunity to influence, collaborate and inspire others; the learner, the teachers, the wider school community and fellow school leaders across the system. While navigating a school community through this journey, everything a leader does should have the learner at the heart of any decision and action and at the centre of any changes that they influence. At each point of this journey, we need to remind ourselves of the end goal and our destination; that learners receive improved provision that ultimately leads to better standards.

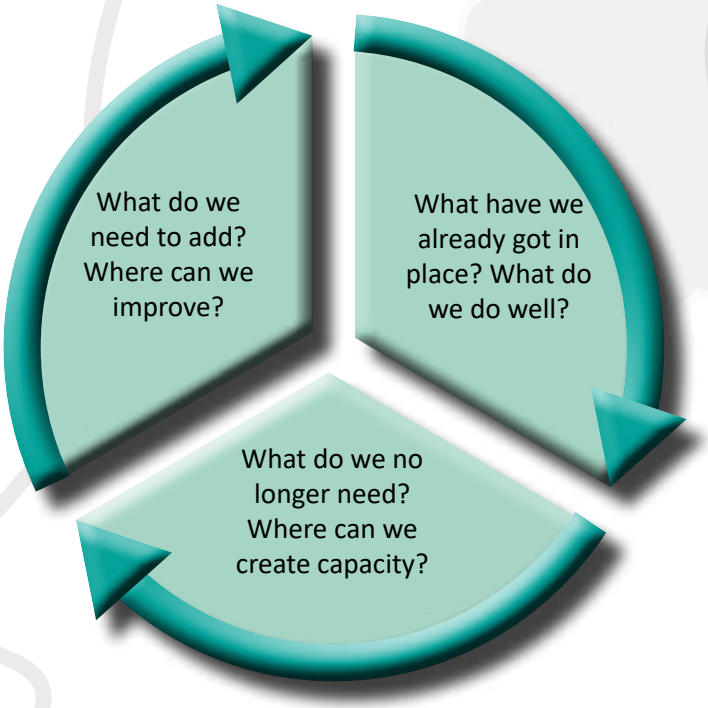
During the pandemic all schools have shown an ability and agility to adapt to an ever changing landscape, exemplifying Schools as Learning Organisations at its best. They have embraced the transversal themes of Time, Trust, Thinking together and Technology which has provided a firm foundation for the journey towards Curriculum for Wales.

OPPORTUNITIES

In a leadership context, Curriculum for Wales offers many opportunities. Further to this, although challenging, the pandemic has provided growth points such as improved partnerships with parents, a more skilled teaching profession, digital competency, collaboration between schools and with external bodies.

THE CHALLENGES

Leaders face many challenges along this journey. These challenges will be further amplified by the current pandemic. Leaders will need to carefully consider their timing of planning and executing the reform journey. This includes winning the hearts and minds of the whole school and local community, ensuring that there is a smooth transition from aspiration to activity. This will need to be done in a balanced, collaborative way, that doesn't make the complex complicated. A significant challenge for leaders will be to create the context for good management to work. Empowering leaders at all levels is paramount, as is ensuring that they have the space, time and professional learning to deliver the vision.



THE PROCESS

The implementation of Curriculum for Wales is a process, not an event and needs planning and executing in stages. Enough time needs to be built in for implementation to be effective, particularly in the preparation stage. The stages of the journey need to be prioritised appropriately. A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences and should be informed by the four purposes. When planning the processes we need to consider how we celebrate successes and let go of what's not working.

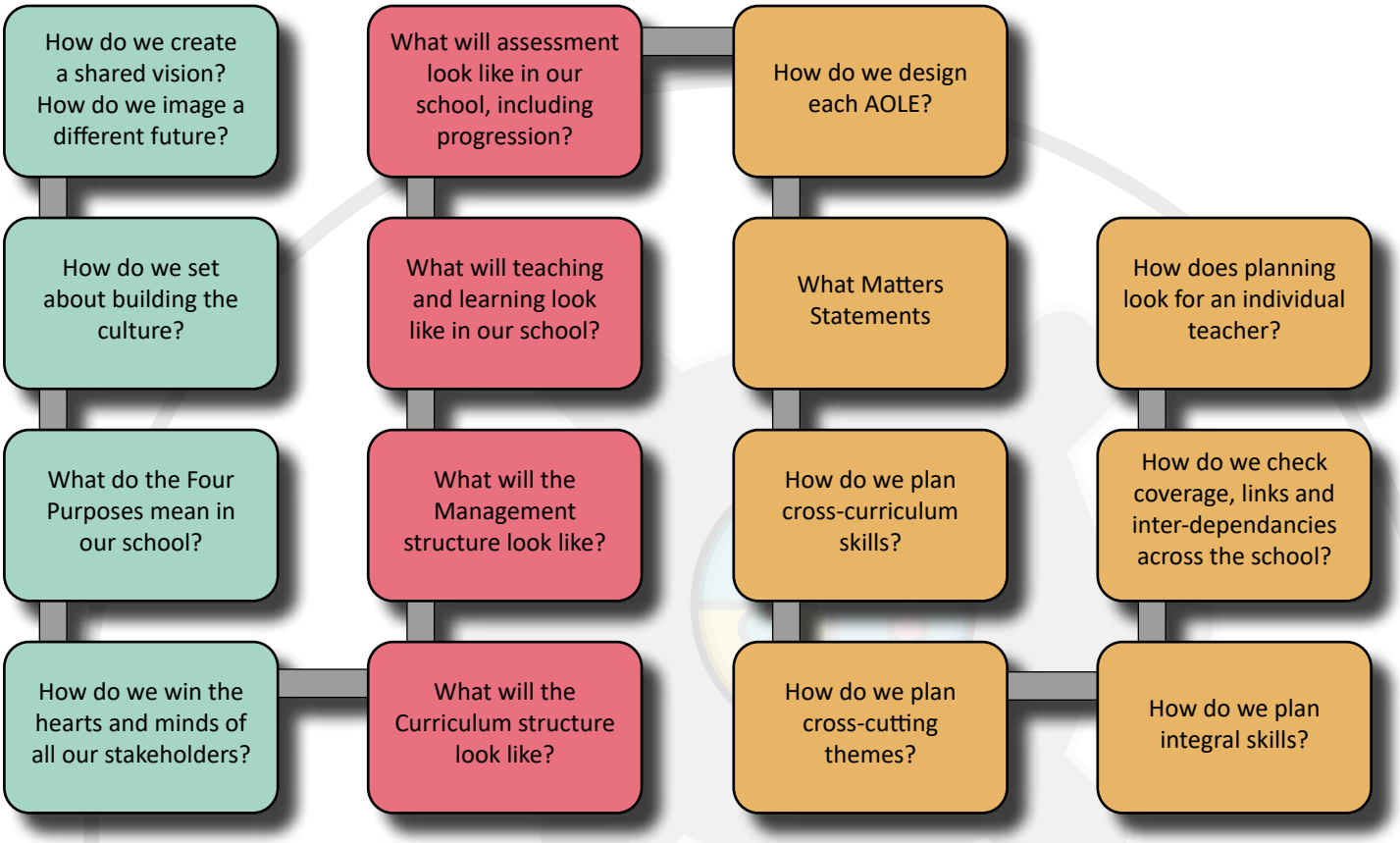
During this process, the role of every leader will need to focus on identifying the school's strengths and recognise its growth points, before sequencing the steps it needs to undertake to drive the Reform Journey within their school, local community and beyond.

STAGES / STEPS

When setting out on this journey, school leaders will be focusing on implementing a shared vision. Leaders will have to consider what steps and when to take them. By mapping out a path containing a number of steps, it will help a leader visualise the journey ahead and ensure the implementation of the vision. These steps will vary from school to school and from context to context. They can be categorised into three areas:

1. Engagement (mint)
2. Designing and Planning (pink)
3. Trialling, evaluating and preparing first teaching (yellow)

We will also need to consider what the golden thread considerations are that run through these stages; wellbeing, professional learning, 3-16 and collaboration across schools. It also imperative that there is continuous evaluation throughout the process, beginning with an evaluation of current practice and evaluating progress along each stage. Regular communication with stakeholders at various stages of the journey is also needed.



The success criteria for Leadership in our schools as we embrace Curriculum for Wales could be that ……
…**as a learner in my school I will:**

- see and feel that the four purposes are at the heart of everything my school does
- know that my wellbeing is considered important
- know where to turn for help
- be able to take risks and make mistakes along the way in a safe environment
- know that my work will challenge me to think, to have high expectations of myself and help me to be independent
- have opportunities to be a leader of my own learning
- have positive relationships all around me
- feel that I have a voice and am listened to and valued
- be reassured that I'm supported
- be given valuable feedback that helps me improve
- be known as an individual and celebrate mine and other's successes together
- appreciate that my teachers are learning alongside me to become the best teachers they can be
- be reassured that my education is preparing me for the future
- appreciate that my school teaches me everything I should know and I have opportunities to develop my interests
- be proud to be part of my local community, a citizen of Wales and the World
- have opportunities to work and learn with other children and young people from around the world
- recognise that my school is helping my future by being environmentally aware and developing sustainably

As a teacher I will:

- ensure that the four purposes are at the core of my work
- collaborate further with colleagues within my school community and further afield
- be actively involved in appropriate professional learning around Curriculum for Wales
- use research and enquiry evidence to further develop my classroom practice
- ensure that the culture of being a learning organisation is evident in my practice
- further develop my technology skills to deliver effective learning to all my students
- take advantage of coaching and facilitation sessions to help me further develop professionally
- ensure robust self-assessment procedures are in place in my classroom
- contribute effective practice case studies and facilitate professional learning sessions within the school and beyond.

As a parent I will:

- learn from the school how the four purposes are at the core of everything my child does
- see how my school works and learns from the wider community
- be assured that the teachers in my school attend high quality professional learning so that they can support my child's learning
- learn what being a learning organisation means and be part of that journey as one of its most important stakeholders
- receive support and encouragement from my school to develop my technological skills so that I can support my child's learning
- be assured that my school uses all the assessment strategies available to it so that they have a rounded and holistic picture of my child's abilities.
- Support my child's learning by taking an active role.

VISION

THINK PIECE: VISION

DEFINITION OF VISION:

- A shared vision is not an idea but a force in people's hearts – an answer to what we want to create? (Peter Senge)
- A vision is a simple statement which all stakeholders carry through with them in all thought processes over time and acts as the guiding principle.

DEFINITION OF VISION FOR WALES IN 2021 ONWARDS:

- A vision as an everyday driving force that determines changes and priorities, big or small.
- A vision that utilises the four purposes as the starting point and aspiration for the school's curriculum design.
- A vision that encompasses everyone in the school community as learners; including pupils, teachers, leaders, governors and parents/carers.

What vision means to:

Pupils

- *What is your current starting point?*
- *What do you as a learner in Wales need, to be able to succeed in the world you live in?*

Do the four purposes for pupils mean they have:

- Improved learning experiences that include rich learning opportunities and authentic learning contexts that allow pupils' skills and knowledge to be applied and refined?
- Real reasons for engaging in learning that encourage them to be creative, to keep asking questions and to contribute their thoughts and opinions?
- The confidence that they are supported to understand how they learn and how to reflect on their work and make progress?
- Security in the knowledge that the school knows them well as individuals, provides opportunities for them to collaborate with others, encourages them to prioritise their own wellbeing and empowers them to be ambitious and to have high expectations?
- A safe environment to take measured risks and to know where and how to seek help if required?

Parents/Carers

- *What is your current starting point?*
- *How can you support yourself and your child/children to be able to succeed in the world they live in?*

Do the four purposes for parents and carers mean they are:

- An active and valued partner in contributing to the vision?
- Able to engage in meaningful two-way communication with the school?
- Able to establish a relationship focused on learning that incorporates mutual trust and respect?
- Provided with opportunities to contribute to their child's/children's learning?
- Encouraged to feel proud of their children and to be an active part of what their children have achieved?

Teachers

- *What is your current starting point?*
- *What do you need to be the best teacher you can be?*
- *What does it mean to enable your learners to succeed in the world they live in?*

Do the four purposes for teachers mean they have:

- A shared understanding of success?
- Confidence to develop creativity and innovation, the empowerment to contribute to the vision and bring it to life and the opportunity to take responsibility?
- A strong sense of individual and collective wellbeing that allows them to feel valued in their profession, to know that their voice will be heard, to have high expectations and to be proud to teach in Wales?
- Opportunities to develop a broad skill set, to have a deep understanding of effective teaching and to engage in continuous professional development?
- Sufficient time to think together, to maintain positive and trusting relationships and to collaborate with others in their own school and with other schools?
- The skills to develop as leaders and to establish strong home-school partnerships?
- Safe space and freedom to take calculated risks, to become active curriculum makers to facilitate learning and to provide inclusive classrooms that support the progress of all learners?

School Leaders

- *What is your current starting point?*
- *What do you need to be the best leader you can be?*
- *What does it mean to create a thriving learning climate for all?*

Do the four purposes for school leaders mean they have:

- A shared understanding of what success looks like across the four purposes?
- A focus on better learning and higher outcomes?
- An appropriate focus on the recognition and development of a whole school ethos that promotes the school as a learning organization and promotes continuous learning at all levels?
- A sound sense of their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, a humble approach, the ability to listen, and a desire to understand and engage with local communities?
- A willingness to make a meaningful contribution to progressing learning?
- A focus on creating time for thinking together as a school and learning community, and to promote the empowerment of staff?
- The skills to develop trusting partnerships with networks of schools, to establish clear two-way communication within their own school and to engage positively with all stakeholders?
- An ethos of leadership through ideas rather than leadership by control?

Governors

- *What is your current starting point?*
- *How can the governing body support the school in bringing the vision to life?*

Do the four purposes for governors mean they have:

- A shared understanding of what success looks like across the four purposes?
- The willingness to make an active contribution to school life and to be proud to make a difference?
- A clear focus on representing the school within the wider community?
- The skills to listen, support, challenge and scrutinise across the work of the school to achieve higher standards for all?

Wider community

- *What is the current starting point?*
- *How can wider community play an active role in contributing to the curriculum?*

Do the four purposes for the wider community mean that:

- Local businesses have opportunities to contribute to learner experiences?
- There is a shared responsibility and willingness to commit across the wider community?
- The wider community can contribute to learning through improved opportunities within industry, through enhanced technology, and through advising on the skills learners will require to meet the needs of the future workforce?
- They can contribute to the vision of the school by providing an awareness of local, national and international contexts including sustainability awareness and how to reduce inequalities across our society.

Why do we need to change?

- Curriculum for Wales gives us four clear purposes of education. Therefore, we now have an opportunity to ask why? What are the needs of all learners to thrive within, and contribute to, an ever changing, technologically-advancing 21st Century?
- The current vision will not necessarily support the new curriculum. Therefore, what knowledge, skills and experiences can schools offer to allow learners to develop the four purposes?
- The Covid era has presented challenges that have changed the way schools work and operate. What can schools learn from this experience and what opportunities can we develop and build upon to create a new resilience, increased pupil independence, enhanced creativity and improved digital learning?

What do we need to change?

- The changes needed at school level will be specific to individual schools and will need to capture the vision of the four purposes at a local level.
- There will be an opportunity to consider the broader vision of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015)
- At an operational level there is a requirement for cultural change through a common re-definition of success. This should include a broader and more qualitative set of indicators, owned by all and including the wider community. Over time, these indicators will change and develop as schools gain a greater understanding.
- The design of a new vision, that includes a local curriculum from a national framework, needs to allow for, and incorporate, collaborative local decision making.
- The new vision needs to reflect a curriculum as a process that is experienced and that will evolve rather than an as end product.

How do we go about making those changes?

We must:

- Ensure all stakeholders are involved in the conversation about why these changes are happening and in resetting the vision. This will ensure that everyone feels ownership, that they can see their own role and will achieve a common understanding of success.
- Make best use of GwE's Professional Learning for senior leaders. This will encourage reflection and discussion on the process of developing a shared vision through engagement with all stakeholders.
- Make sure desirable behaviours are modelled by all through a culture of trust, and clear and inclusive communication. .
- Maintain a clear flow of communication and collaboration through positive and open relationships. Build confidence through keeping everything simple and make sure the main focus is always on the learners.

PEDAGOGY

THINK PIECE: PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy is … about more than 'teaching' in the narrow sense of methods used in the classroom. It represents the considered selection of those methods in light of the purposes of the curriculum and the needs and developmental stage of the children and young people across the 3-16 continuum. It combines theoretical and practical knowledge and skills with fine judgement about what is required to promote effective learning in particular contexts. It lies at the heart of what it means to be an excellent teacher.

('Successful Futures' p.63)

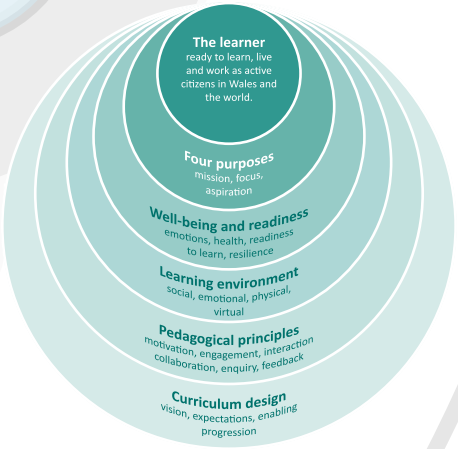
Sound pedagogy will be an integral part of the successful implementation of the curriculum. It means much more than the implementation of a pre-determined repertoire of methods and requires high-quality teachers with a sound understanding of the 'why' and 'how' of teaching as well as the 'what'. The implications for the formation and subsequent growth of teachers as reflective practitioners and for schools to develop as learning organisations are considerable.

Key questions to consider (p.52 'Curriculum for Wales guidance')

1. How will we create a culture which encourages practitioners to develop a deep understanding of pedagogy and the skills to select the most appropriate pedagogical approaches to meet the needs and interests of all learners?
2. How will we ensure that the pedagogy of the Foundation Phase is developed and built on across the continuum?
3. How will our vision for learning reflect the twelve pedagogical principles?
4. What learning environment do we need to create to fully support our vision for learning?

Pedagogy

Making sense of the interactions and relationships that lead to learning



Why do we need to change?

The need for change is very clear if we are to develop a curriculum which supports and enables world-class teaching and learning in the twenty-first century. If Curriculum for Wales is to have the intended positive impact on children and young people's learning and achievement, it is vital that we take full account of the implications for pedagogy. There is a fundamental interdependency between the 4 purposes of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

- Children and young people want lessons to be more relevant and engaging, with more practical lessons, more fun, more interactivity, and more out-of-classroom activities. There is a sense that a more general enthusiasm for learning has been sacrificed in the race for qualifications.
- There are significant needs to move away from 'learning about' to 'learning to', with a growing skills focus and an emphasis on application and development of higher-order skills, particularly creativity, entrepreneurship and digital literacy.
- There is increasing focus on the purpose and use of assessment, and in particular its critical role in relation to teaching and learning.
- Representatives of business were similarly extremely concerned that schools were out of touch with the emerging digital workplace. They saw the ability to use technology creatively for researching and problem solving as key competences that they wanted to see in prospective employees. ('Successful Futures' Chapter 2)

What do we need to change?

We need to:

- Strive for a continuity and progression of pedagogical approaches across the 3-16 continuum, that enacts the four purposes at the core of teaching and learning with well-being at the centre.
- Deepen teachers' understanding of the appropriate pedagogical approaches to meet the individual needs of children and young people rather than on the preferred methods of teachers.
- Create meaningful learning experiences that challenge and stimulate the individual needs and contexts of all the children and young people of Wales. How are we planning relevant and engaging learning experiences to ensure that they make steady and deeper progress that is appropriate to their stage of development?
- Plan learning experiences that fully develop and integrate the higher-order cross-curricular and integral skills.
- Further develop digital competencies to focus on pedagogy, deeper skill development, transferability and understanding, as well as potential application of these competencies. Build on the experiences and progress gained through blended learning approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic of online and face-to-face teaching.

How do we go about making those changes?
What does this mean for all leaders and practitioners of pedagogy?

How well are we:

- Creating, developing and implementing a shared vision for pedagogy with all stakeholders to realise the four purposes?
- Evaluating our current practice? How do we know 'what' and 'where' our strengths are in pedagogical practices and what needs to be further developed?
- Providing Professional Learning (PL) opportunities for all teaching staff to discuss and share good practice? To reflect on up-to-date educational research and to allow continual professional development that can enhance the pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills of each practitioner as well as the quality of provision within a school and cluster. How is it supporting their work in relation to the professional standards?
- Modelling effective pedagogy across the continuum? What does the progression and pace of the 12 pedagogical principles look like in practice from a teaching and learning perspective for all stages and all needs?
- Ensuring opportunities to experiment with new approaches and to allow time to share, reflect and refine?
- Ensuring that we have high expectations of all learners? Is classroom and online practice successful in engaging all learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to an appropriately high level as they move through the school and continuum?
- Exploring and realising the potential of the learning environment both indoors and outdoors? Furthermore, how classroom organisation, routines and relationships can facilitate different learning approaches and experiences as well as developing children and young people's social, emotional and physical well-being.
- Exploring Signature Pedagogies that are common to specific disciplines and Areas of Learning Experiences (AoLEs) that meet the needs of individual learners and the learning objectives?
- Embedding assessment for learning as a pedagogical principle consistently into classroom practice? How does it provide practitioners with insight into the effectiveness of teaching and learning and take into account external accountability and expectations?
- Considering pedagogy when designing assessments? Are we providing opportunities for learners to apply skills and knowledge in different ways to suit their own preferred style of learning and application?
- Ensuring that pedagogical approaches offer broad experiences whilst also allowing opportunities to

work with examinations and results? We cannot disregard the significance of qualifications in shaping young lives.

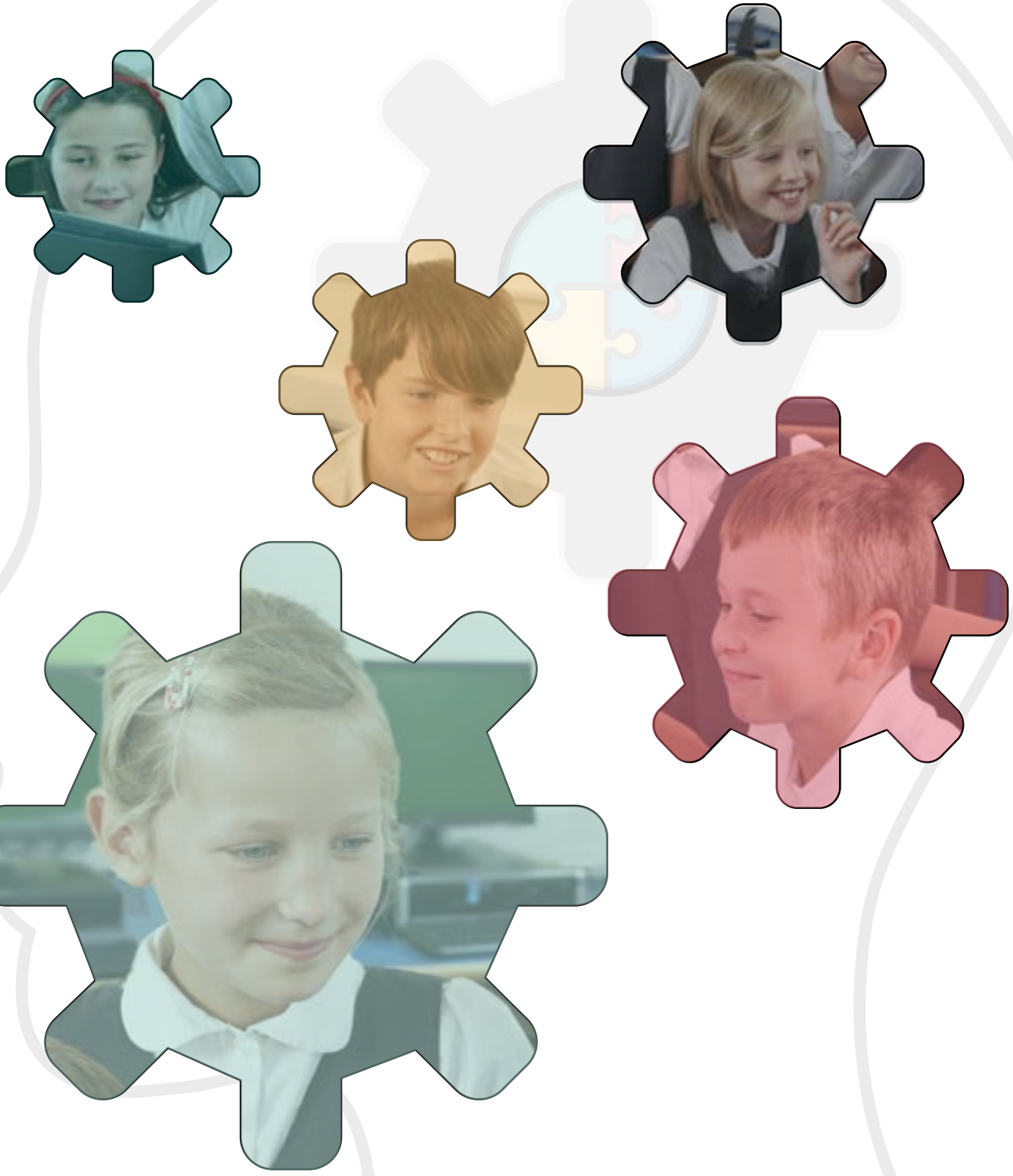
Further reading and research

- Successful Futures on gov.wales
- Curriculum for Wales guidance on Hwb
- GwE 12 Pedagogical Principles toolkit (captures research, literature, school based practice)
- 'Talk Pedagogy' national network on Hwb and Microsoft Teams

Offeryn Addysgeg
GwE Pedagogy Tool

Glossary

Signature Pedagogies - understanding experiences that allow learners to think and act in the same manner as experts in a particular field or domain.



ASSESSMENT

THINK PIECE: ASSESSMENT

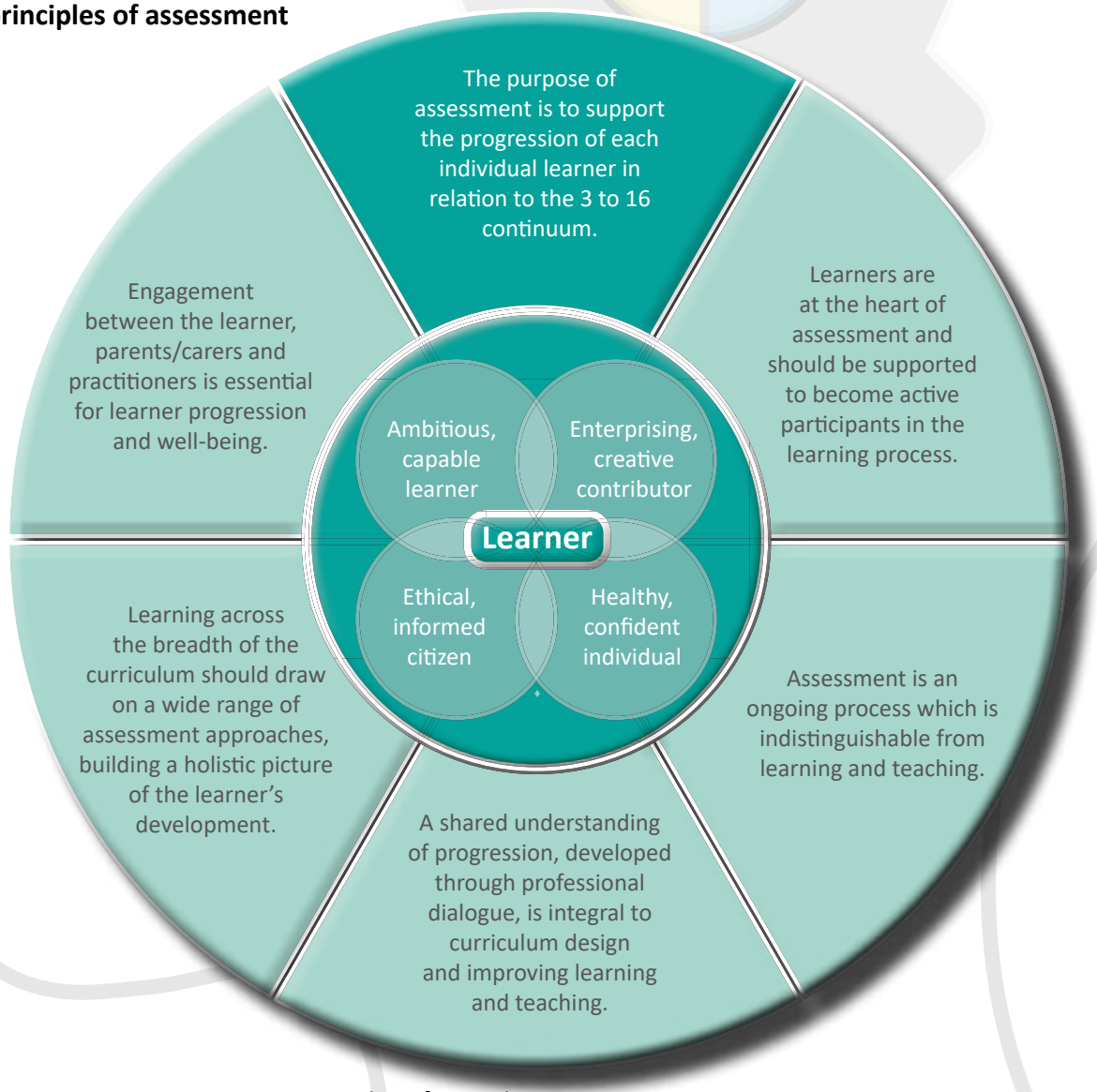
The main owners of assessment information are the learners and they should play a key part in their learning process. Assessment, curriculum design and pedagogy are interdependent and their planning needs to be aligned.

According to the Curriculum for Wales 'Supporting Learner Progression Assessment Guidance' the main purposes of assessment are:

- Supporting individual learners on an ongoing, day-to-day basis
- Identifying, capturing and reflecting on individual learner progress over time
- Understanding group progress in order to reflect on practice

It also notes:
"Assessment plays a fundamental role in ensuring each individual learner is supported and challenged accordingly. It should contribute to developing a holistic picture of the learner – their strengths, the ways in which they learn, and their areas for development – in order to inform next steps in learning and teaching."

The key principles of assessment



Curriculum for Wales Supporting Learner Progression Assessment Guidance

Why do we need to change?

- Some assessment processes are unnecessary and don't align with the principles of Curriculum for Wales
- Assessment needs to effectively reflect the changes to the vision, curriculum and pedagogy.

What do we need to change?

We need to:

- Increase the emphasis on effective formative assessment, discussing and assessing learning with learners.
- Encourage more professional dialogue between all staff within and between schools with a focus on assessment to enable pupil progress, how to have effective discussions with learners about their learning and approaches to planning and reviewing learners next steps, thus deepening the learning.

How do we go about making those changes?

We need to:

- Involve all stakeholders in developing the vision for assessment and the purpose of the processes.
- Take time to reflect and plan. For example, how best to use the What Matters Statements, principles of progression and descriptions of learning to design assessment processes.
- Carefully consider the purpose/reason for any assessment. For example, is it relevant? What use will be made of the assessment information?

WHO NEEDS WHAT FROM ASSESSMENT?

What do learners need?

Learners need:

- Timely feedback about their current progress and a direction for their next learning steps. For example, in the form of daily feedback from adults, peers, self-assessment in the classroom and also from periodic assessments.
- Celebration and reinforcement of achievements and motivation for further learning.
- Ownership of assessment information and to play a central part in planning for further progress:
  - 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
- A good understanding of how they learn and how they are developing as confident, independent learners.
- A learning environment that enables them to assess their learning effectively, discuss mistakes or misconceptions confidently and to give and receive feedback respectfully.

What do practitioners need?

They need:

- Relevant, practical, accessible information that can be used flexibly to plan for learner progression, both on a daily basis in the classroom and from periodic assessments.
- To make good use of formative assessment and to ensure effective response to feedback.
- To be able to devote their time and energy to teaching, and to recognise that taking time to talk with, and listen to, learners, is valuable assessment.
- To be able to assess the learner using more qualitative data, taking a holistic approach to review progress and inform next steps. There should be a focus on wellbeing and metacognition as well as academic progress.

For example, considering learners' work, their development as a learner and taking input from parents/ support staff /external agencies.
- The time to participate in effective and regular professional dialogue on learner progress with other colleagues and leaders within school and, when relevant, between schools. For example, peer engagement, professional dialogue, transition meetings.

What do school leaders need?
They need:
- Simple, effective processes to identify learner progress to gain a clear picture of teaching and learning. They should then use this information to plan an effective strategic direction for the school and share this information appropriately with different stakeholders and audiences.
- To encourage an environment based on mutual trust and respect, rather than compliance and reporting.
- To ensure continuous and effective professional learning for all staff to develop strong formative assessment practices.
- Regular and informed discussions and information on assessment and learner progress between middle and senior leaders and governors, in order to support strategic planning for school development.

What do parents/carers need?
They need to:
- To be well informed and reassured about their child/children's progress and to celebrate their successes both academically and as a young person.
- Be involved in varied and regular communication with the school to share information about their child/ children's progress and to know how best to support further learning and progress.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Which current assessment practices do you need to keep/rethink/ change/elimininate?
- What impact will feedback have on learner progress and teaching?
- *E.g. How will learners improve their work based on verbal, in the moment feedback and written feedback?*
  How will teachers adapt their teaching in response to learner feedback/understanding?
- How will your assessment practices inform teaching and learning?
- How will you ensure that learners are fully involved in assessing and planning their progress?
- How will your assessment approaches support the four purposes?
- How will you ensure a shared undertsanding of progression – within your school and between a cluster of schools?
- How will you ensure that the main purpose of assessment is for information on learner progress rather than for accountability?
- What information will you need and when? What use you will make of the information?
- How will the information be helpful for learners/stakeholders?
- How will you ensure that parents are involved in an effective learning partnership?
- How do you plan to move along the continuum from quantitative assessment to qualtitative assessment?
- How might you create the space and capacity to develop and to use assessment effectively?

Further reading:

- Curriculum for Wales Guidance
  https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/
- Curriculum for Wales - Supporting Learner Progression Assessment Guidance
  https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/supporting-learner-progression-assessment-guidance/#the-purpose-of-assessment
- Assessment for Learning: Using the right tools and resources to notice and respond to progress across the curriculum (New Zealand Curriculum)
  https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Strengthening-local-curriculum/Leading-local-curriculum-guide-series/Assessment-for-learning
- Assessing and monitoring Pupil Progress EEF
  https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/assessing-and-monitoring-pupil-progress/
- Rethinking Assessment (bigeducation.org)
  https://bigeducation.org/blogs-ra/

CURRICULUM DESIGN

THINK PIECE: CURRICULUM DESIGN

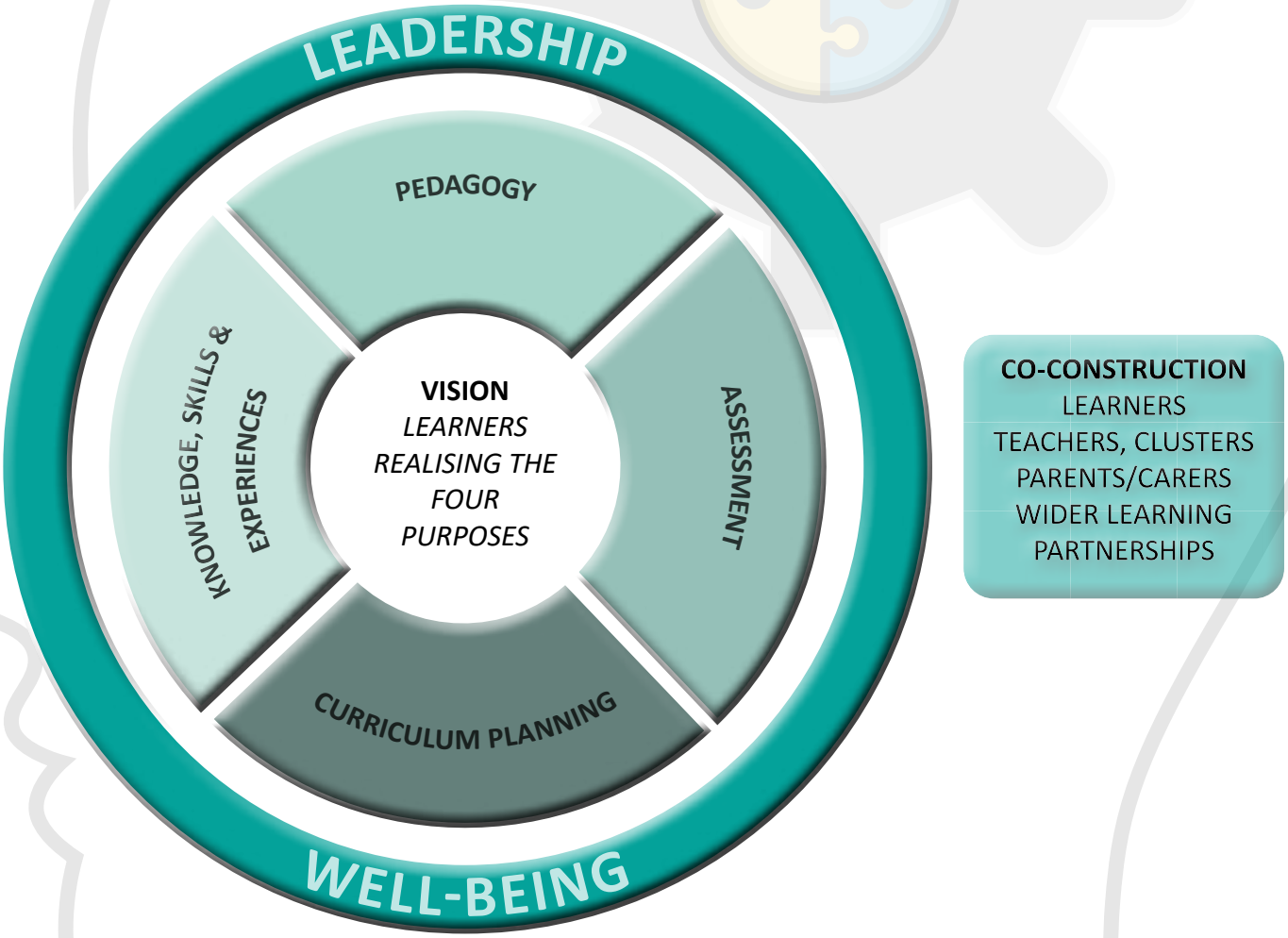
What is Curriculum Design?

Curriculum design is a process. The important principles and considerations that should inform that process include developing:

- a vision for curriculum in a school
- a curriculum structure to make that vision a reality

Why do we need to change our current curriculum design?

Evidence from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys, the relative performance of children and young people in Wales in national qualifications, and evaluations in Estyn reports all demonstrate that levels of achievement are not as high as they should be – Successful Futures.



Why Curriculum Design?

It is essential that each child and young person in Wales should be able to benefit from curriculum and assessment arrangements that will best meet their needs and equip them for their future lives. Our children and young people only have a relatively short time at school so we must use that time judiciously

and productively to help each and every one to grow as capable, healthy, well-rounded individual who can thrive in the face of unknown future challenges.

Currently, curriculum design often takes the form of a framework of subjects to be taught over a defined period such as key stages. This approach to the curriculum involves defining what all children (or groups of children) should experience. An alternative approach focuses more directly on the expected outcomes of learning. In this approach the curriculum is often framed in terms of the key skills, capabilities or competencies that will be developed in children and young people.

The subject versus skills debate of these two curriculum designs merely creates unhelpful comparisons. An effective e curriculum needs to enthuse children and young people about learning in ways that include both the vital contribution of discipline-based learning and the knowledge, skills and temperament that will help them to meet the needs of today and the challenges of tomorrow.

The school curriculum in Wales should be defined as including all of the learning experiences and assessment activities planned in pursuit of agreed purposes of education. These purposes should directly influence decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Pg. 14 Successful Futures – Principles of Curriculum Design – the curriculum should be: authentic, evidence-based, responsive, inclusive, ambitious, empowering, unified, engaging, based on subsidiarity, manageable.

Key points for designing a local curriculum

- A local curriculum should be unique and responsive to the priorities, preferences, and issues of the school's community, parents and learners.
- What works well, and improving learning for all, should be at the heart of local curriculum design.
- We may not find what works best immediately or for all learners. Understanding that this is a journey means we can continue to challenge and evaluate our ideas, systems, and processes as we learn along the way.

What do schools need to change?

Schools should:

- Build a curriculum that allows learners to pursue the four purposes.
- Work collaboratively to ensure that there is a continuum of learning between phases/sectors.
- Review the structure, distribution and time allocation of disciplines and staffing
- Evaluate and question: why are we doing this and how does it progress the learning?
- Consider the role of accountability measures and performance outcomes. Schools must prepare learners for exams and qualifications. **They should not compromise the curriculum and learning experiences for our learners**
- Ensure equity of access to the curriculum for all learners

Making the vision a reality

In order to create the curriculum from a vision we need to consider the following:

- **What should we teach and why?**
- **How should we teach it?**
- **How will this support our learners to realise the four purposes?**

We need to ask ourselves:

- Are we engaging all stakeholders in a conversation about these three questions?
- Is this curriculum informed by the schools vision, values, ethos, location and surroundings?

- How will assessment support this curriculum as well as the learning?

This freedom of choice should be underpinned by an evidence based process of curriculum design, where the aim is always to help learners realise the four purposes

- How do we select curriculum content?
- How can we support our teachers in choosing the specific experiences, knowledge, skills and context that will best support learning?
- How is the learning best structured?
- What professional learning will our teachers need?
- How does the curriculum contribute to learners' realisation of the four purposes and acquisition of the integral skills which underpin them?
- How does the curriculum support the development of the learners' sense of identity in Wales?
- Is the curriculum broad and balanced?
- Is the curriculum appropriate for the learners with regards to age, ability and aptitude?
- How does the curriculum enable appropriate progression along the continuum of learning?
- How does the curriculum incorporate opportunities for the application of cross-curricular skills?
- How does the curriculum incorporate assessment for learners' progression?
- How does the curriculum draw on learner voice and respond to learners' needs, experiences and input?

What structure should underpin learning and provide the same high expectations for all learners?

We need to ask ourselves:

- How can we best utilise the experiences, expertise, skills and passion of our teachers/team to provide an up to date and relevant curriculum?
- How will we support progression along a continuum of learning and how do we collaborate to ensure effective transition across the 3 to 16 age range?
- Are the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) the most effective delivery structure for achieving the four purposes?
- Is the current conventional structure of the week - in secondary schools 25 x 1 hour lessons or 30 x 50 minutes - and the current allocation of time to different subjects – the most effective vehicle to deliver what is clearly a very different curriculum? Does the distribution of delivery time need to be re-examined alongside the conversations around learning?
- How do we ensure that the principles of progression drive the planning process and not simply the theme within the thematic approach (if a school decides that a thematic curriculum is the most appropriate way forward)?
- Do current school timings and cohort organization best meet the needs of the new curriculum? Do we need to look flexibly at timings of the day and groupings?
- How can we best utilise the non-contact time of teachers/support staff to support curriculum development?

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

- Reflecting on what we have learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic – what can we take from this experience moving forward?
- Do we see the purpose of education differently?

CURRICULUM DESIGN MODELS

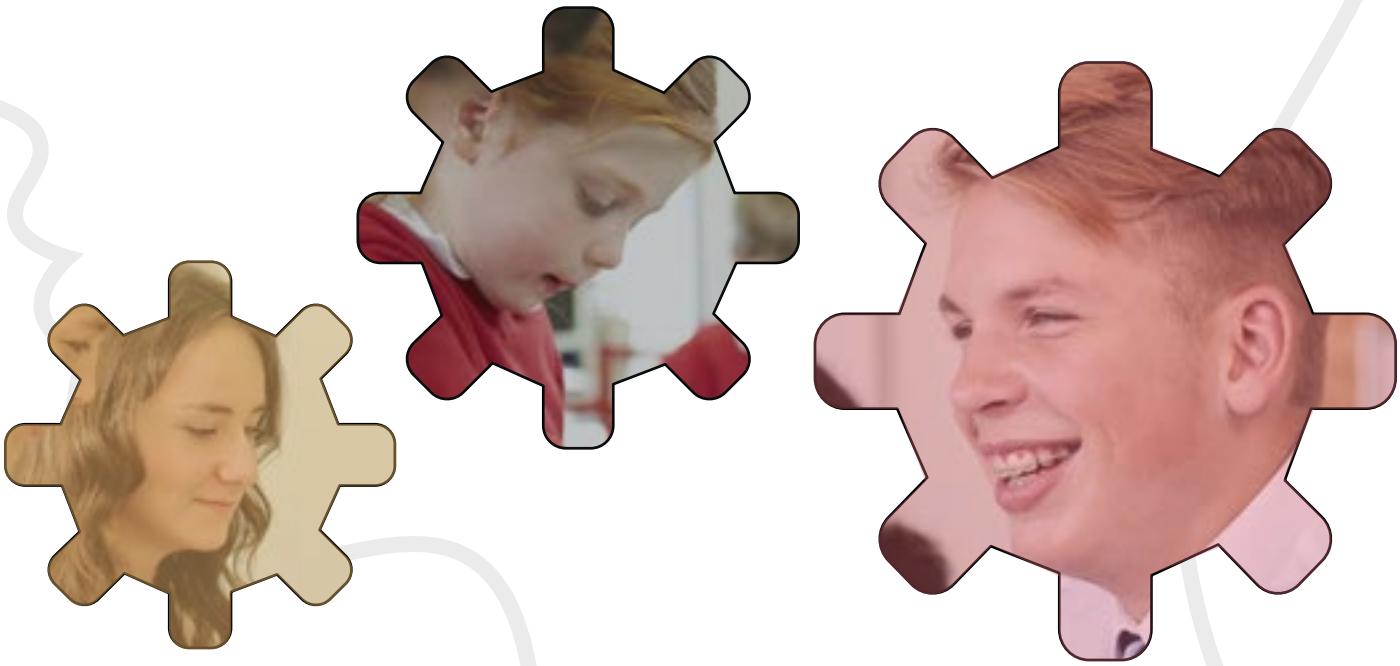
Have you considered different models for curriculum design?

MODEL	DEFINITION
Disciplinary	Specialist teaching within disciplines or subjects

MODEL	DEFINITION
Multidisciplinary	A multidisciplinary curriculum is one in which the same topic is studied from the viewpoint of more than one discipline.
Interdisciplinary	Combines several school subjects into one active project or is organized to cut across subject-matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association. Draws knowledge and skills from two or more disciplines in a more connected way Addresses a complex problem or focus question that cannot be resolved by using a single disciplinary approach e.g. a Global Pandemic
Integrated	Largely an interdisciplinary, organisational approach, which breaks down traditional subject boundaries – either partially (e.g. hybrid subjects) or fully (e.g. the US middle school approach)

Questions for consideration

- How effective would the chosen curriculum model be at making connections within and between knowledge and skills and AoLEs, etc.?
- How well does the model develop the cross-curricular skills?
- How well does each model develop a deep understanding of wellbeing, sustainability, equality and climate change?
- Do the themes or big questions ensure rich and rigorous learning across subject areas?
- How do we ensure progression is built into the curriculum model?
- How do we ensure multidisciplinary or inter-disciplinary approaches provide rich and rigorous learning in all of the connected subjects?
- Would we map this model across the whole curriculum?
- How might this model impact on the sequencing of learning within areas?
- How can we provide the time and space for teachers to undertake collaborative planning?
- How do we support our teachers in transitioning from the old curriculum to the new Curriculum for Wales?
- Is a particular model more suitable to some areas of learning more than others? Why?
- What does each approach look like over the 3-16 continuum?
- How could we sequence the learning to ensure that key concepts were not missed?
- How do we prevent superficial coverage of some key concepts?
- How can we match the different approaches with preparation for exams?



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