

# Progress Report on the Reform Journey

## AUTUMN TERM 2021





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## PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change is possible. In North Wales, GwE, the Local Authorities, Schools and PRUs have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working. Schools have delivered meaningful teaching and learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences need to be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time and preparing for the future. The four transversal themes of the learning organisation of time, trust, thinking together and technology have developed as strong foundations of a collaborative way of working as we move forward with the renew and reform agenda.

The response to COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on schools and is likely to have disrupted some of their plans for preparation and implementing the new curriculum. This report provides an outline of where schools and PRUs are currently at as they address the renew and reform agenda and is based on evidence gathered by GwE Supporting Improvement Advisers as part of their work in supporting schools during the autumn term 2021.

For each school and PRU, Supporting Improvement Adviser reported on:

### Pupil Progress

#### Primary and special sectors

- *How does the school capture and measure progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy, basic skills, well-being, learners who are vulnerable to learning?*
- *What is the information that comes out of this summative or qualitative data?*

#### Secondary sector including relevant special schools and PRUs

- *How have secondary schools used 2021 Centre Determined Grades for GCSE and A level to undertake self-evaluation to support continuous improvement?*

#### Curriculum for Wales (CfW)

- *What are your school priorities for CfW during the Autumn term?*
- *What are your cluster priorities for CfW during the Autumn term?*
- *How are you engaging further with the resources from the CfW professional learning offer?*
  - *Leading change*
  - *Developing a shared vision*
  - *Curriculum reform*
- *What will be the role and contribution of your SIA and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?*
- *What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design within your school and across your cluster?*

#### ALN Reform and Progress Towards Implementation

- *How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?*
- *What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?*

#### Professional Learning

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*



## Accountability

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

The report also summarises the **GWE Professional Learning Offer and support provided to schools**.

The **areas for further development and support** and the **high-level regional priorities** are summarised below:

## AREAS THAT NEEDED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

School across all sectors have identified the following areas where they would like further support for development:

- Curriculum for Wales implementation - especially curriculum design and planning the Areas of Learning and Experience;
- Approaches to assessments and the concept of progression in preparation for the new curriculum;
- Implementing the 12 pedagogical principles to improve teaching and learning, differentiation and formative assessment;
- Using quality enhancement processes including the use of qualitative and quantitative data as evidence to support improvement;
- Further strengthen primary cluster collaboration and continue establishing and facilitating secondary alliances to agree on the principles and functions of their collaborative work;
- Further establishing and developing peer review through the School Partnership Programme
- Improving Welsh Language skills and especially oracy;
- Strengthening transition arrangements and provision between primary and secondary/ special and developing a 3-16 continuum;
- Developing parental engagement to support the learning;
- Supporting secondary school to prepare for the 2022 summer examination and their contingency arrangements should there be further disruptions.

## REGIONAL PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED

The evaluation process has identified the following high-level regional priorities:

1. Ensure that all school will be ready to roll out the curriculum and are addressing mandatory/statutory requirements for planned delivery in 2022 or 2023 (secondary sector option).

The rollout will be supported by:

- Providing regional and local networks with clear guidance on curriculum design, planning, assessment and progression through modelling and exemplifying curriculum practice;
- Promoting learner transition by ensuring effective direct engagement between secondary and primary schools;
- Working in tandem with leaders to ensure that all settings have a clear plan to effectively respond to the guidance delivered in the Curriculum for Wales Professional Learning Programme;
- Ensuring all settings adopt and publish a summary for key stakeholders of their curriculum and assessment arrangements as outlined by the 'Journey to Rollout' guidance.

2. Implement processes addressing schools causing concern and work with Local Authorities to ensure



schools have the appropriate level of support and challenge for their improvement.

3. Further strengthen and embed peer review especially within secondary alliances to strengthen self-evaluation and the improvement planning.
4. Support the Local Authorities in the delivery of ALN Transformation by providing Professional Learning to improve teaching and learning.



## MAIN FINDINGS

### PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SECTORS INCLUDING RELEVANT PRUs

#### MEASURING LEARNER PROGRESS

- *How does the school capture and measure progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy, basic skills, well-being, learners who are vulnerable to learning?*
- *What is the information that comes out of this summative or qualitative data?*

Nearly all primary and special schools have prioritised pupil wellbeing engaging with several schemes/ activities such as 'Trauma Informed Schools', 'PASS', 'Nurture Groups', 'Talkabout', 'Mind Mechanics', 'Lego Therapy' and 'Seasons for Growth'. This has enabled them to better support and track their pupils' wellbeing. There are many examples of good practise across the region where an effective approach to monitoring well-being has been developed. These include schools who have carried out a baseline assessment for learners' well-being to identify those vulnerable to learning on return to school. Some schools have been supported by Universities to carry research on how best to identify wellbeing needs. This has allowed them to identify Individuals and groups of learners for the most appropriate intervention such as 'ELSA'. Teachers and school staff have been trained in a variety of specialist interventions, e.g., mental health practitioners, 'Seasons for Growth' and 'Mindfulness' while school-based counselling, 'NICOS' and Educational Psychologist input is also being used effectively within many schools. There is no doubt that pupil wellbeing remains a high priority for most schools as they continue to address the impact of COVID on their pupils.

Over the last year, almost all schools have continued with their internal assessment systems to track progress. These tracking and assessment systems include:

- Tracking of performance following individual interventions;
- Using standardised scores from national tests;
- Using reading and spelling tests such as 'Salford reading tests' and 'Youngs spelling tests';
- Undertaking 'CAT 4 tests';
- Undertaking 'White Rose' maths assessments to inform planning;
- Undertaking baseline assessments with both nursery and reception;
- Using 'Incerts' to track levels from baseline onwards;
- Individual teachers' using tracking notes effectively;
- Teachers keeping 'Read Write Inc' records;
- Leaders using 'Building Blocks', 'Maestro' and 'Taith 360';
- Schools beginning to trial the GwE tracker for tracking Curriculum for Wales Areas of Learning and Experience progress'
- Using wellbeing questionnaires such as 'PASS' and 'Boxhall';
- Using pupil portfolios for standardising and moderation.

Many schools stated that the support and close rapport with families ensured that most pupils returned to education ready for learning after the lockdown. However, they also acknowledged challenges with the school's youngest pupils and the most vulnerable individuals.

There is therefore a significant variation reported by schools regarding pupil progress. Many primary schools report that good progress is being made overall whilst others identify limited progress by cohorts of pupils. Many schools have focused targeted schemes to support groups of pupils as deemed necessary. For example, there is a consensus that lockdown has impacted more at the lower end of the school. Most schools have identified the need to prioritise support in foundation phase to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Key Stage 2 pupils have tended to 'catch-up' sooner after returning from lockdown.



However, most schools have identified the need to maintain a focus on improving pupils' fine motor skills, including presentation of their work, social interaction, writing stamina and perseverance. Most schools, including Welsh medium schools, acknowledge the need to improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills.

Nearly all schools are continuing to deliver effective intervention strategies for pupils, e.g. through daily precision teaching sessions, 'SAFMEDS' sessions to develop Welsh and English reading/spelling skills, 'Tric a Chlic' sessions to develop literacy skills in the Foundation Phase. Nearly all schools report that this focused targeting has had a positive impact on standards.

Most schools are continuing to monitor the progress made by learners from different groups such as vulnerable learners, entitlement to Free School Meals (eFSM), ALN pupils, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. Most schools provide appropriate and purposeful support for these pupils and are seeing the impact of this work through their assessment processes and are reporting that vulnerable pupils can then deal much better in mainstream class and with various social challenges.

## CURRICULUM FOR WALES (CfW)

### • *What are your school priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?*

All primary schools have School Development Plan priorities linked to the Curriculum for Wales in 2021-22, and these are linked to head teachers' performance management. These priorities are in line with the national professional learning journey and journey to roll-out, and include aspects of developing vision, familiarisation with content and planning and trialling.

Throughout the autumn term, examples of areas implemented by our regional primary and special schools include:

- Focussing upon the Four Purposes of the new curriculum, e.g., pupils describing what they mean to them, staff auditing where current provision addresses these. All primary schools now have access to GwE's 'Quality Assessment Framework' which supports primary schools in this audit, a minority of primary schools have already begun to use this tool effectively.
- Trialling with planning, e.g., referring to Areas of Learning and Experience in the planning and highlighting coverage;
- Developing parents' information sheets/ communications to inform them about the Curriculum for Wales;
- Teaching subjects and relabelling books around the Areas of Learning and Experience;
- Trialling with the progression statements in planning;
- Staff are attending relevant professional learning;
- Leaders are considering ways to track and assess the Curriculum for Wales;
- Regular updates to governors and governor monitoring of progress in the Curriculum for Wales;
- Developing appropriate whole school themes and topics;
- Including more pupil voice in planning;
- Auditing against the GwE Pedagogical Principles tracker;
- Revisiting feedback and formative assessment work;
- Continuing to develop outdoor learning – embedding wellbeing through exciting and engaging outdoor experiences;
- Continuing to focus upon wellbeing including learners, their families and staff wellbeing;
- Implementing physical fitness initiatives;
- Continuing to develop digital skills.

Nearly all schools have made initial preparations for the implementation of the new curriculum, i.e., the Four Purposes and 12 Pedagogical Principles have received appropriate consideration and are now



becoming a natural part of their teaching and learning provision.

Across the region, there are numerous examples of innovative practice with various approaches to planning themes, tasks and activities to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. Many schools are also collaborating well and are sharing successful practice.

Most schools are planning a suitable Professional Learning provision to develop effective teaching and learning considering Curriculum for Wales principles and requirements. Schools have arranged a variety of professional learning opportunities to enrich teaching, learning and pedagogy to further support Curriculum for Wales development.

Nearly all schools have planned their grant expenditure to support their work in meeting September 2022 statutory requirements. In general, this expenditure has been earmarked to improve staffing ratios, to target pupils, purchase additional resources and to release staff to attend training.

- **What are your cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?**

Most clusters across the region work well together and genuinely collaborate. This collaboration strengthened during lockdown when the clusters met regularly on-line.

Clusters across the region have agreed on a variety of priorities. These include:

- Ensuring all staff in all schools within the cluster have a good understanding of Curriculum for Wales and the principles that underpin it;
- Further developing the pedagogical aspects and how that transfers itself into classroom practice;
- Developing high level curriculum design;
- Exploring pedagogy and enquiry-based learning model for the Gymraeg aspect Language Learning and Communication Area of Learning and Experience;
- Building on Outdoor Learning Experiences training and putting the principles and methodology into practice.

Nearly all school leaders have collaborated to co-create priorities and to set a direction for the Curriculum for Wales developments. The work is progressing well and is beginning to show impact e.g. a cluster planning format is in place, common cluster visioning sessions, cluster newsletters etc.

Primary/Secondary collaboration is also developing well in some areas; however, this currently varies in effectiveness from cluster to cluster. Further work remains to be done by leaders in some clusters to create and agree a vision and specific direction for the cluster. In general, the clusters are only just beginning to plan for a shared, 3-16 curriculum which includes strengthening transition. This is a next step for many clusters. Many have planned next term to:

- Share ideas and models for curriculum design including links to the local Curriculum for Wales networks;
- Share planning of similar age groups between schools;
- Share topics/themes to support 3-16 transition work, including work on integral and cross curriculum skills;
- Begin to develop a shared approach to assessment;
- Begin to develop modern languages 3-16;

Twelve primary clusters and all special schools have engaged in peer review training to support their improvement journey. During the autumn term 33 additional clusters, comprising 193 regional schools and 6 PRUs, have applied to participate in peer review through the Schools Partnership Programme.





- **How are you engaging further with the resources from the Curriculum for Wales professional learning offer?**
  - **Leading change**
  - **Developing a shared vision**
  - **Curriculum reform**

In most primary and special schools, leaders have made effective use of these resources to develop staff skills in planning for the curriculum for Wales. In other schools, SIAs have re-familiarised leaders with the resources and they plan to use them in the spring term. Where the resources have been used effectively, leaders have planned practical and engaging ways to utilise the regional Curriculum for Wales resources, such as think pieces, PowerPoints, and webinars, through regular weekly staff meetings, often supported by the Supporting Improvement Advisers.

Most Head teachers attended all the Curriculum for Wales workshops and engaged very well with the process, providing thoughtful insights. Many are implementing the approach from this professional learning with their schools, e.g., writing to stakeholders to develop a truly local curriculum vision; and holding stakeholder groups to participate in developing a shared vision. Governors are very much part of this process and in general very well informed and beginning to lead curriculum change in their schools.

- **What will be the role and contribution of your Supporting Improvement Adviser (SIA) and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?**

Across the region, school leaders have requested the following from their SIAs:

- Staff meeting support on the GwE resources and support centre;
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning support;
- Support for monitoring curriculum developments;
- Support and advice on assessment and progression and how to plan for these;
- Bespoke support where appropriate for staff;
- Support to develop the cluster's Curriculum for Wales plan;
- Support for 3-16 planning and transition;
- Facilitating School Partnership Programme projects;
- Sharing examples and models of how to design the curriculum;
- Disseminating information and resources from the regional networks and raise awareness of the programme;
- Continued pastoral care.

- **What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design**
  - **within your school?**
  - **across your cluster?**

Most schools across the region have plans in place to develop curriculum design through the academic year through their School Development Plans. These are linked to the regional and national reform journey stages. Staff will continue to redesign their curriculum in line with these as the year progresses. However, curriculum design remains a key area for support and guidance.

Schools noted that teachers have trialled planning approaches to support the Curriculum for Wales and are continuing to do so through:

- Planning on new formats including references to Areas of Learning and Experience and the Four Purposes;



- Whole school topics have been planned including the local curriculum;
- Topics and themes include pupil voice planning – especially at the start of topics;
- Immersion activities to engage learners in their new topics and themes;
- Planning taking consideration of the cross-curricular and integral skills and cross cutting themes;
- Developing the learning environment to support work in the Curriculum for Wales, which includes significantly developing outdoor learning, relevant to the locality;
- Continuing to build upon digital learning.

Most clusters are planning to develop a shared approach to planning for 3-16 progression during the spring term.

Many schools have already developed systems for collaborating within teams and jointly experimenting with and sharing successful practices in planning for the arrival of the new curriculum. Work undertaken to evaluate the use of the 12 Pedagogical Principles is also effective groundwork for this work.

- **How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?**

There are 228 primary and special schools with 533 practitioners involved in the Regional and Local Networks. The networks have established a system for sharing the work at a regional and local authority level. Through these and through collaborating with cluster colleagues in other Areas of learning and Experience areas, schools are already improving their knowledge of specific areas of the Curriculum for Wales and are already beginning to share ideas and planning. Throughout the term they have been involved in the development of shared resources and approaches and have developed learning through working with other colleagues in other Areas of learning and Experience areas within the authority and across the region.

## ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

- **What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?**

Cluster area priorities to develop ALN have been compiled in every cluster, and schools are currently refining and taking ownership of these priorities.

Most schools appear to be responding successfully to the act and statutory requirements overall across the region and regularly updating members of staff on developments.

The ALN Coordinator (ALNCO) role in schools is developing. Most schools have used G6 milestones to review the school's progress and to see whether there are further aspects that need attention, with the remainder in the process of completing this work before the end of the autumn term.

Key ALN staff have received 'Eclipse' training and are ready to develop the system across the school. Examples of School priorities for this term include:

- Policies will be updated to reflect ALN reform once these become available from the Local Authority;
- Trialling with Individual Development Plans (IDPs) is taking place – new learners will have an IDP;
- All children will have a one-page profile by the end of term
- ALNCo, governors and teachers to undertake relevant professional learning, including whole school Pupil Centred Training (PCP) training and 'Eliesha'.
- Schools will update families on their rights to appeal and tribunal;
- Continue to implement universal and targeted provision working in clusters;



- Develop practice of children planning and co-constructing their own IDP style review meetings.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*

All schools are committed to professional learning for developing staff on the journey towards Curriculum for Wales and are following a national and regional timescale. Regional and local networks will be a key driver for this work.

Overall, schools' Professional Learning plans have been purposefully aligned with their Performance Management processes. This ensures that they provide developmental opportunities that respond to the requirements of the school's priorities in an effective and structured manner.

There are numerous examples of Professional Learning opportunities in schools across the region to develop and upskill staff. Some specific examples involve upskilling the workforce to support pupil wellbeing through the 'Trauma Informed Schools' diploma, 'Seasons for Growth', 'ELSA' and 'MAPA'. Most schools are continuing to address the development of Assessment for Learning aspects too by attending Shirley Clarke training. Over a hundred schools are committed to developing the Welsh language oracy skills via the 'Ein Llais Ni' project. Leadership development remains a priority through the GwE's Leadership Programmes.

Most leaders, teachers and staff participate well in professional learning and, in most schools, information is shared with colleagues following training opportunities. Professional learning is clearly identified in nearly all schools through the School Development Plan. Many leaders have requested support to plan and develop their own and staff skills through:

- SIA input in staff meetings, especially for Curriculum for Wales developments;
- Continued staff development through national and regional programmes, e.g., Teaching Assistants, Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), Leadership, etc;
- Cluster and joint collaborative working;
- Regional and local networks;
- Input for developing 3-16 planning across the cluster.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

Nearly all primary head teachers produce regular, detailed reports for governors, these are created through whole school self-evaluation. Accountability procedures include a variety of stakeholders including children and parents. Many schools have a draft monitoring timetable in place, linked to School Development Plans' priorities, which include a range of monitoring strategies such as:

- Pupil and staff learning walks;
- Book looks;
- Interviews and questionnaires;
- Lesson observations in line with performance management;
- Peer observations and triads.

Clusters' working with the School's Partnership Programme will further develop cluster monitoring,



contributing towards developing joint accountability across the cluster. ALN provision is monitored through self-evaluation against the 'G6' milestones and through the ALN cluster group.

Leaders' capacity to develop monitoring and accountability has been hindered by the pandemic during the term, and many have not yet fully implemented book scrutiny and performance management processes across their schools.

Curriculum for Wales is a key priority for all schools this year and will be monitored through self-evaluation and monitoring systems. In addition, the cluster aspects of these priorities will be monitored in regular cluster meetings with the link SIA involved in discussions.

Most school leaders ensure that their teachers are accountable for adapting, fine tuning and experimenting with their teaching while considering Curriculum for Wales principles and requirements through regular staff meetings and lesson monitoring procedures. In doing so, leaders ensure consistency of pace in responding to the reform journey across their schools whilst encouraging individuals to experiment and trial new teaching and learning strategies.

A large number of schools ensure opportunities for staff to share their work through focused professional dialogue, e.g., in staff meetings. This helps when ensuring consistency and identifying best practice.

All schools report to governors and stakeholders on the reform journey, including the impact of any actions or trialling over the coming year.





## SECONDARY SECTOR INCLUDING RELEVANT SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND PRUs

### 2021 CENTRE DETERMINED GRADES FOR GCSE AND A LEVEL

*In his written statement (dated 21 June 2021) the Education Minister confirmed 'that the suspension of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures will be extended to the 2021/22 academic year. Qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.' He also confirmed that 'all schools and post-16 providers will continue to be required to undertake effective self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. Our evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements require consideration of a broad range of information, relevant to a school's own context, when undertaking self-evaluation and identifying improvement priorities. This will involve schools, with support from local authorities and regional consortia, using the learner level information they have to reflect on and improve their existing arrangements.'*

All schools and settings ensured internal procedures met the requirements for the awarding of qualifications set out by Qualifications Wales and WJEC in 2021 for the Centre-Determined Grade process. Assessment plans were submitted and – following amendments in some cases – all accepted by the awarding body. All schools and settings engaged in pre-preparatory sessions run by the region with Qualifications Wales and WJEC.

Many schools reported that Headteachers and staff benefited from working in collaboration within their secondary Alliance to respond to national expectations and develop school level policies and processes. This ensured consistency and shared understanding.

All schools ensured that guidance from awarding bodies was shared quickly and clearly with teaching staff and that clarification was sought when needed. Schools – for the most part- made full use of the recommended WJEC assessments and mark schemes to provide the base of evidence for the Centre Determined Grades. All schools ensured there were appropriate access arrangements in place for learners with ALN and special consideration was considered where applicable. All schools used internal moderation procedures exercises to support the moderation and standardisation of assessments. Several schools built on their work through local alliances and used cross-school moderation to support internal standardisation. This was particularly the case where subjects were taught by one teacher or where subject teams were small; it was less necessary in larger teams within larger schools.

During the process schools were generally strong at communicating and sharing policies and expectations with parents (via written communication and virtual briefing sessions). This was a particular strength of the schools' processes and provided transparency to parents on current performance against targets and expected outcomes.

Effective remote learning assisted the transition back to school for most learners in exam years in April 2021. There were some issues with the engagement of specific groups of learners. Learners from low-income families had been identified as a 'concern' group in relation to engagement and progress. The performance of groups of learners and especially those in receipt of FSM remains a priority area for a number of schools.

A\*-A grades increased significantly. Many schools reported this was due to the diligence of the learners and from making effective use of national resources available to them to prepare for the assessments. In addition, many learners had generally benefitted from having less materials and content to revise, shorter time scales between revision and assessment thus fostering a greater degree of retention of learning, fewer



assessments and assessments that had been presented beforehand to pupils via WJEC website.

Most schools analysed in-school variance using Information Technology platforms and developed an overall review of individual students' grades against their previous year profiles. Many schools looked closely at their target-setting and data collection points to ensure consistency in practice. Target-setting was often based around 'FFT' projections / 'CATS scores' and internal assessments. 'ALPS' was also used to support data collection and evaluation at Sixth Form level. In many schools, actions are being undertaken to address issues that have arisen in specific departments where the base for establishing grades was not as strong or where inconsistencies were identified. Most are working to ensure that departments will be ready to present a strong evidence base of assessments if required to undertake similar processes this year.

Several schools have identified the low levels of literacy among groups of learners and are taking steps to support and further improve this. The Welsh language skills of learners, especially those from non-Welsh speaking homes and in Welsh medium education has clearly been affected by the lockdown periods.

## CURRICULUM FOR WALES (CfW)

### • *What are your school priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?*

At the beginning of the Autumn Term, nearly all 54 secondary/all-through schools indicated their intention to embed Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. However, many secondary schools are finding it increasingly difficult to adhere to the timelines they have set themselves due to the pandemic. Many have struggled during this term due to staff absence and a lack of supply cover. Arrangements for the summer examination series may also further hamper their ability to engage with the new curriculum from September 2022. If the pandemic continues to blight the work of schools post-Christmas, we would envisage an increasing percentage of secondary schools reviewing their position and possibly deferring until 2023. Schools need to confirm arrangements with Welsh Government by April 8th 2022. Ensuring the effective prioritisation of Curriculum for Wales planning has been a challenge for most schools which are in an Estyn statutory follow-up category. Effectively supporting these schools will continue to be prioritised.

In nearly all schools, the Curriculum for Wales is a whole school priority and actions for the autumn term align with the national expectations as set out in the amended document 'Curriculum for Wales: the journey to 2022'. All schools have identified the need for staff in the autumn term to further develop their knowledge and understanding of Curriculum for Wales framework and ensure that teachers are planning for progression within / across AOLES and cross-curriculum skills. Much of the focus this term is on developing their curriculum design, unpacking the statements of what matters and developing a shared understanding of progression within and across the progression steps. Possible processes exemplified in the regional and local Curriculum for Wales networks have been shared with staff in most schools to support their planning.

Amongst the priorities for Curriculum for Wales identified by secondary schools are:

- planning for progression in cross curricular skills and cross-cutting themes;
- high level curriculum design;
- planning and implementing the AOLES;
- assessment and progression;
- further developing the 12 pedagogical principles and digital learning;
- community engagement, particularly around outdoor learning
- pupil voice activities feeding into development planning;
- developing a coherent vision to underpin the new curriculum and share this with stakeholders;



- building on cluster work with partner primary schools and working towards a seamless transition in learning.
- ***What are your cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales during the Autumn term?***

This term nearly all secondary schools have worked in collaboration with their primary clusters to plan for Curriculum for Wales. Most clusters have revisited their vision and shared their experiences with the GwE regional and local networks. In others, secondary teachers are working closely with cluster primaries to develop a common understanding around pedagogy or working effectively together focusing on how to articulate a curriculum that is seamless and where progression is understood and underpinned in their learning plans.

Primary/Secondary collaboration is developing well in many clusters; however, this is not consistent across the region and further targeted support will be required to ensure effective engagement at all levels. Further work remains to be done by secondary leaders in some clusters to better engage in creating and agreeing a joint vision and specific direction for the cluster.

Amongst the cluster priorities for Curriculum for Wales identified by secondary schools are:

- Developing effective transition plans;
  - Plan transition activities that fit in with Areas of Learning and Experience design;
  - Focusing on Progression Steps 2 to 4 and a 3-16 continuum;
  - Looking at data and information transfer around learners – what needs to be passed on and understood;
  - Where engagement is as yet under-developed, take steps to move this forward;
  - Sharing and developing a common element to vision, values and behaviours;
  - Looking at assessment methods that can be used as part of teaching and learning; how progression can be evaluated;
  - Joint training day to share plans and progress;
  - Developing work around shared areas within the context of Curriculum for Wales. For example, joint work around trauma-informed schools; pedagogical approaches around Modern Foreign Languages; common approaches to literacy, numeracy and digital skills;
  - Planning for a curriculum focussed joint-cluster training day;
  - Developing a cluster enquiry-based research approach supported by the School Partnership Programme.
- ***How are you engaging further with the resources from the Curriculum for Wales professional learning offer?***
    - ***Leading change***
    - ***Developing a shared vision***
    - ***Curriculum reform***

These sessions were run during a very busy period for secondary schools who were preparing to award Centre Determined Grades. Thus, the level of engagement varied across the region. Most schools attended at least one of these sessions and many accessed recordings of the training at a later date. Many schools shared the resources with SLT members; some found this challenging and re-engaged during the autumn term with support from their SIAs and the recorded sessions. Some resources, e.g., those around the vision or curriculum design, have been effectively used in schools. In one school, for example, each member of the senior staff led a workshop with the whole teaching body; in another, findings were shared and discussed around senior leadership teams to inform decisions. Many schools are continuing to make use of elements of this support, such as for example using the route planner app, and using the visioning ideas



about evaluating current provision against the vision.

- ***What will be the role and contribution of your Supporting Improvement Adviser (SIA) and extended GwE team members in supporting this work?***
- Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) have encouraged designated staff to be part of the Curriculum for Wales regional/local networks and have supported and facilitated the work.
- SIAs have supported school based bespoke Curriculum for Wales developments with guidance and input to training and meetings as per school's needs and capacity.
- Core Lead / SIAs support developments and curriculum design in the secondary schools and the clusters.
- Subject SIAs have supported Heads of Core Subjects with Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLE) planning. As a result, middle leaders have improved their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework and considerations for planning;
- SIA teams continue to deliver staff professional learning, contributing to professional development days and to support the work of Areas of Learning and Experience teams in designing and delivering the new curriculum.
- SIAs are supporting senior leaders and Governors in updating whole school plans for implementing the new curriculum from 2022.
- SIAs are raising awareness of the available resources that have been and are being developed and shared through the GwE Support Centre.
- ***What are your initial approaches to developing curriculum design***
  - *within your school?*
  - *across your cluster?*

Schools are taking a variety of approaches to 'designing' the new curriculum. For example, some schools are looking closely at the development of a clear vision; some have looked at curriculum planning tools and asked departments to plan new schemes with authentic contexts and skills as key elements; others are tackling the curriculum through revised approaches to pedagogy. Some have made changes to staffing structures or made additional appointments to support key initiatives. Some have focussed strongly on developing local and authentic contexts to support learning. During the past few years, many schools have developed and embedded effective pedagogical approaches and progression of skills. Learning in new technologies and digital pedagogies can also be built on and developed to support learning within the new curriculum.

Some schools are building on the work of the consortium workshops delivered in the summer and looking at curriculum design closely, trialling more work in multi-disciplinary areas, across Science and Technology or integrated outcomes in Expressive Arts. One school has appointed a teacher for wellbeing and are developing a bespoke curriculum for the school in that area. Others are looking at curriculum allocations through a critical lens and asking what is fit for purpose for learners moving forward. Some schools now have specific Curriculum for Wales meetings to replace historical departmental meetings. There is an increasing focus in schools on cross-departmental working. Some schools have moved to restructure their staffing based on the AOLE's.

Some schools are also looking at other curriculum elements, e.g., cross curricular skills, integral skills, cross-cutting themes and mapping links across the curriculum.

Many schools are taking advantage of the GwE offer to make use of consortium expertise in supporting this. Ideas are being shared across schools through regional and local networks. However, curriculum design





remains a key area for support and guidance.

- *How will the regional and local networks support your school/cluster?*

All schools are engaged with consortium-led training and development activities. Currently there are 44 secondary schools (88%) and 197 secondary teachers involved in the networks. All four of the 3-16 all-through schools are involved with 22 practitioners participating.

## ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

- *What are your priorities for ALN Transformation as a school/cluster for the Autumn term?*

Most schools reported that they are progressing well towards implementation. In most, there is a good awareness of the reforms and the changes they will bring across staff and governors.

Priorities for ALN Wales Transformation in secondary schools include:

- Developing the role of the ALN Coordinator (ALNCo) as a strategic lead;
- Revising and finalising relevant policies;
- Establishing and confirming rights of appeal procedures and sharing with parents;
- Further developing expertise and training capacity amongst teaching and support staff;
- Developing universal and targeted provision which enables learners to make progress regardless of their starting point;
- Improving differentiation and the universal provision;
- Continuing to develop Person Centred Practice (PCP);
- Undertaking a systematic evaluation of the quality of leaders' and practitioners' knowledge and use of PCP to identify how well it is used to inform teaching and learning;
- Ensuring smooth transition from primary to secondary and that robust transitional plans are in **place**;
- Developing strategies to provide additional learning provision in Welsh (in some Local Authorities).

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- *Have you identified further areas/aspects for professional learning?*

Professional learning needs identified in secondary schools include:

- Curriculum for Wales: deepening understanding; 'unpicking' curriculum design; promoting good teaching and learning; building and understanding assessment and progression;
- Understanding how to develop the skills underpinning the new curriculum, e.g. numeracy, literacy and digital competency;
- Implementing ALN reforms, including further Person Centred Planning (PCP)/ provision mapping work and looking at transition across a cluster;
- ALN reform – regular updates for staff and governors and targeted PL for ALN Coordinators and relevant staff;
- Effective differentiation strategies;
- Further developing current and future leaders through national leadership programmes, e.g., Preparing for NPQH, Senior leaders, Middle leaders, post-16 leaders;
- Supporting effective teaching and learning (pedagogical principles);
- Developing coaching and mentoring for middle leaders;
- Provide training & support for new Core Subject leads;
- Governors – whole school evaluation and improvement planning;
- Support for self-evaluation, monitoring process and improvement planning;



- Support for developing and restoring Welsh Language skills;
- Specialised support to develop wellbeing and attitudes to learning.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- *What should accountability look like?*
- *How will you measure progress and the impact of your work?*
- *What will reporting look like?*

Most schools are concerned about the lack of clarity that remains around the use of national performance measure for accountability and the uncertainty around the design and content of the new suite of qualifications linked to the new curriculum. Support and guidance with understanding the assessment requirements and capturing pupil progress for the new curriculum is a priority for most schools.

Some schools, especially those with a higher eFSM number are uncomfortable with the 'vacuum' created by the removal of benchmarking data and are concerned that the school's performance could be exposed misinterpretation if contextual factors are not duly taken into consideration.

Overall, secondary schools are comfortable with moving to a more intelligent model of accountability, with a focus on 'improving' rather than 'proving'. The schools' use of robust processes to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils is key as is identifying and addressing in-school variation.

Schools are well aware of the need to re-establish quality enhancement processes and are aware of the current challenges in doing this. Many schools have maintained a degree of quality enhancement activities in remote learning during periods of lockdown. Some schools have invited GwE link SIAs and subject SIAs to support senior and middle leaders with quality enhancement activities, e.g., lesson observations, review documentation, book scrutiny, attend and support internal pastoral and subject review meetings. Most schools are by now moving back to a more robust system of Quality Assurance processes and have a clearer picture of the quality of provision and outcomes.

Nearly all schools are in discussions with partners to establish Alliances and all are eager to engage or re-engage with peer review through the School Partnership Programme. The role of and contribution of robust peer challenge and verification is accepted as crucial in moving forward.

Listening to learner voice have generally been strengthened during the pandemic and it remain an important and impactful element of internal measures for nearly all schools.

The Governing Body in nearly all schools have been updated on developments relating to various areas of school improvement including teaching and learning, Curriculum for Wales and its impact on the quality of provision and standards.



## SUMMARY OF GWE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFER AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS

The delivery of effective professional learning programmes has supported schools across all sectors with developing their initial curriculum plans. Leaders and teachers across the vast majority of schools are experimenting with approaches to developing a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences of their pupils. Planning at individual school and cluster levels are supporting a clearer understanding of the 'what matters' statements and how the 12 pedagogical principles should underpin approaches to teaching.

Regional and local networks and forums are effectively supporting practitioners' understanding of what works in curriculum design. Over 700 regional staff and school practitioners are working closely together to address this at whole school and AOLE level. GwE are working in collaboration with partners in Higher Education Institutes in supporting schools to develop the role of enquiry in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. This work is an important aspect of the wider work on developing effective teaching and learning, which in turn builds on the work of developing assessment for learning. For this purpose, GwE have worked with schools across the region over the last three years to develop and share effective practice in formative assessment using evidence-based learning. There are 360 schools across the region participating in this work.

During the last three years, the regional consortia has invested heavily in delivering an ambitious professional learning for all practitioners. The core principle of the offer has been on developing institutional capacity as a 'learning organisation' and allowing leaders to more effectively reflect on the challenges of leading change. Prior to lockdown, in many schools across the GwE region, teachers began trialling with the Curriculum for Wales, initially familiarising themselves with its content. In many primary schools, teachers have begun to experiment with new ways of planning, teaching and learning. During the pandemic, teachers across most schools have supported learners to develop a variety of skills linked to the 4 purposes. For example, an emphasis on skills and wellbeing was strongly continued throughout the lockdown period and learners, parents and school staff's digital skills were revolutionised. Leaders across the region have already made use of resources available via the GwE Resource Centre to develop staff skills in planning for the Curriculum for Wales. Where these resources have been used effectively, leaders have planned practical and engaging ways to utilise them, e.g., Think Pieces, PowerPoints and webinars stimulating discussions in weekly staff meetings and often supported by the link Supporting Improvement Advisor. Across the region, many teachers attended GwE Curriculum for Wales workshops with several schools now implementing the shared ideas and approaches. These professional learning opportunities have also been attended by colleagues from other regions and by north Wales local authority officers.

Below is a brief outline of the GwE Professional Offer to schools and clusters:

- principles of Curriculum for Wales are embedded in all training and the four curriculum purposes are always at the forefront of presenters' minds, as they set about planning relevant, up-to-date and engaging training.
- we have integrated all aspects of the wider reform into our PL offer, including Schools as Learning Organisations, Y Gymraeg (towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050) and the Additional Learning Needs Transformational Bill.
- resources and areas of professional learning includes the 12 Pedagogical Principles within the broader context of teaching and learning, assessment, regional Areas of Learning and Experience networks and curriculum design and planning at school level.
- cross regional offer aims to support all school practitioners, but focused initially on Senior Leaders with the following themes: Leading Change; Leadership for the new curriculum; Developing a Shared Vision; Planning for Curriculum Change – to include curriculum design, progression and assessment; Leading Pedagogy; Time and Space for Professional Learning. These sessions are cluster-based and enable smaller groups of primary schools and their local secondary school to discuss the new curriculum across



the 3-16 learning continuum. Across the region, 832 Senior Leaders attended the Leading Change sessions. During June and July 2021, GwE ran a series of sessions over a three-week period for senior leaders, focused on the themes of developing a shared vision and planning for curriculum change, to include curriculum design. These sessions were hosted digitally on a cluster basis and allowed for breakout opportunities for schools to discuss this work within their local networks. Over 1150 senior leaders attended the sessions across the region.

- as part of the preparations, all Supporting Improvement Advisers have facilitated sessions where schools within a cluster have the opportunity to work collaboratively to strategically plan for the implementation of the curriculum. Activities to support preparations for the new curriculum at school and cluster level have been identified within School Development Plans. Many of the clusters have also developed a Cluster Development Plan for implementing the reform journey.
- in addition to the Professional Learning offer defined above, additional bespoke support from GwE is being made available to schools as they prepare for Curriculum for Wales. This support can be accessed at both cluster and individual school level and tailored according to need.
- supporting resources include a series of 'Think-Pieces' which have been developed by the GwE team as part of the weekly reform sessions with Professor Graham Donaldson. These papers, which cover key aspects of the curriculum reform journey including leadership, vision, pedagogy, assessment and curriculum design, have been shared and refined through consultation with wider partners in Local Authorities, Estyn and Bangor University. All senior leaders were invited to attend a webinar in May 2021 to explain and share this work on the 'Think Pieces'.
- a key aspect of the support offer is the Curriculum for Wales networks established at both a regional and local level. School based practitioners and wider partners from across the region are working collaboratively with a network of peers supporting development of the six Areas of Learning and Experience, assessment and curriculum design. Practitioners communicate and cascade learning and successful practice across the schools within each local authority and contribute to developing planning and design models to support schools in trialling, evaluating and preparing the workforce for first teaching. A regional strategic group, made up of cross-sector representatives from the eight LA groups provides direction and an overview of the work. Networks have access to Professional Learning and work in partnership with Professor Graham Donaldson, GwE and the six North Wales LAs. During the Autumn Term 2021, there have been four regional and over 80 local network meetings involving 272 schools and well over 700 practitioners. All resources produced are shared with all schools through the GwE Support Centre and information cascaded to each secondary/primary cluster group.
- GwE are also working in collaboration with partners in Higher Education Institutes in supporting schools to develop the role of enquiry in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. This work is an important aspect of the wider work on developing effective teaching and learning, which in turn builds on the work of developing assessment for learning. For this purpose, GwE have worked with schools across the region over the last three years to develop and share effective practice in formative assessment using evidence-based learning. There are 360 schools across the region participating in this work.
- schools have access to a series of milestones within the GwE information management system that allows them to reflect on their progress on the reform journey. These milestones have been warmly welcomed by schools
- the GwE Support Centre continues to be a point of referral for all settings and we are currently working to further enhance and enrich the resource bank. By the end of the Autumn Term 2021 there have been over 75,000 'hits' on the site.
- GwE has also worked with practitioners and wider partners to develop a framework of qualitative indicators which will allow schools to reflect and evaluate how they are implementing the four purposes of the new curriculum.







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