



## Curriculum for Wales Update - January 2017

Momentum is growing in the development of a new curriculum for Wales. The 'big questions' in curriculum design have been considered by Pioneer Schools in the Strategic Design (Strand 1) groups, and 25 new Pioneer Schools joined the network this month to help with the next phase of development.

The findings from the Strategic Design groups will now inform the design and development of the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs, Strand 2). AoLE groups were announced recently, and membership of each group features below.

Welsh Government, Regional Education Consortia, Estyn and practitioners continue to work closely in partnership as the work evolves. Working groups are co-facilitated and representation in all areas is comprehensive in a true 'Team Wales' approach.

### In this newsletter you will find updates on:

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## **Strategic Design Groups (Strand 1) – summaries of activity so far**

Over the past 8 months, Curriculum Pioneers have been busy working in 4 Strategic design working groups to identify and develop shared responses to ‘big questions’ in overall curriculum design. All groups have conducted academic and expert-based research, taken discussions back to schools and teachers, and tried, tested and assessed ideas.

The groups presented their reports to the advisory ‘Curriculum and Assessment Panel’, which commented on the contents and made recommendations. The papers are ‘live’ documents and will continue to evolve before publication later in the year, however summaries of the work leading up to January 2017 feature below:

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### **1. Cross-curriculum Responsibilities (CCRs)**

This group has looked at how literacy, numeracy and digital competence can be taken forward across the curriculum, with due consideration for pedagogy, planning and timetabling. They say skills should be taught explicitly before being consolidated more widely.

- The group has been looking at ways in which the three Cross-curriculum Responsibilities can be promoted and taken forward within the new curriculum and, in particular, within the AoLEs.
- Challenging early discussions included the question of how much ‘wiggle room’ there would be in relation to the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), and how to take forward the work without knowing what AoLEs would look like.
- Strengths and weaknesses in the current system were reviewed in relation to the teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Some evidence came from an Estyn inspection database. Estyn leads on literacy, numeracy and ICT have all led discussions on these aspects.
- Experiences of trialling learning and teaching models based on ‘Successful Futures’ were shared.

Some of the key recommendations from the group include:

- Consideration should be given to renaming the CCRs so that a new name acknowledges that they should be at the heart of the curriculum and not an ‘add on’. The term CCR suggests that these skills are overarching but they should underpin the new curriculum.

- Each of the CCRs should be viewed as being equally important and this should be reflected in any related legislation.
- Whilst the CCRs should be integrated into each AoLE, consideration should also be given to retaining the CCRs as separate published documents. This could help to demonstrate a clearer line of progression in each skill. However, this would be dependent on the level of prescription in the AoLEs.
- The CCRs should be based on the LNF and DCF but those frameworks should be amended and refined as the development work on the overall architecture and the AoLEs progresses.
- The CCRs should include statements on how they contribute to the four purposes. These could, potentially, be quite broad or could include specific examples.
- Skills, including the CCRs, need to be taught explicitly before being consolidated and revisited in various contexts through the AoLEs.
- Progression in the CCRs can only be achieved through detailed planning and collaboration between all those involved in guiding pupils' learning. Only through effective planning can the development of these skills, at the right level, be achieved. This planning is critical as pupils move settings e.g. from primary to secondary school.

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## 2. Enrichment and Experiences (E and E)

This group has evolved a 'Successful Futures' view of what E and E should look like in the new curriculum, emphasising the need for experiential learning, breadth of opportunity, partnership working and relevance to a school's local environment.

- Drawing on innovative practice, international examples, and expertise from across the UK they have evolved a 'successful futures' view of what enrichment and experience should look like in the new curriculum.
- Their definition includes the bold statement that *Pupil voice, fun, relevant and real-world learning resources lie at the heart of creating an environment where the desire to learn comes from individuals themselves.*
- The implications for pedagogy are clear in that a much stronger emphasis on experiential learning (of the kind used in Foundation Phase and Welsh Baccalaureate) requires teachers to adapt their approaches.
- There will be a need to work with a wide range of partners to develop a breadth of opportunities and activities that expand horizons within and beyond the classroom. The group recognise that schools and teachers will need to be given the tools to help them develop these partnerships
- Delivering learning strategies relevant to a school's situation and context will mean practitioners need to be intimately acquainted with the environment of their school and local community.

- The group will consider whether E&E guidance and a toolkit should be developed.
- Further work will take place on transition arrangements and facilitating the development of partnerships in the current curriculum (taking account of time and capacity issues).

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### **3. Welsh Dimension, International Perspectives and Wider Skills**

This group has been developing guidance for embedding these attributes across the new curriculum, with achievement outcomes for each progression reference point. Early work has focussed on 'developing ethical, informed citizens' as per the four purposes.

- A series of workshops has been held since establishing the group in April 2016, with input from a variety of Welsh and international experts.
- The group has developed a definition of the Welsh dimension and international perspectives, in relation to the new curriculum framework. It focuses on the relationship between the self, the local, the national and the global.
- The wider skills, as outlined in 'Successful Futures' are: critical thinking and problem solving; planning and organising; creativity and innovation; personal effectiveness
- The group has produced key messages in relation to the wider skills for the AoLE working groups to consider as they begin their work. They have also outlined the characters, attributes and values of the wider skills thus emphasising the link between the wider skills and the four purposes of the new curriculum framework.

Group members are currently considering strategies and teaching methods used in lessons to ensure that the characters, attributes and values identified by the group are developed effectively.

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### **4. Assessment and Progression**

This group has reviewed best practice at home and abroad, stressed the proven value of formative assessment, and confirmed that assessment for learning must not be directly linked to school accountability. The group makes a number of recommendations for the AoLE groups to consider.

- The group's research and latest thinking stresses the proven value of formative assessment.
- The group has reviewed and tested:
  - What is currently working well in schools
  - International models of assessment
  - Growth mindset and vision & principles of assessment
  - e-Portfolios
- Significant in early discussions were the related – but separate – issues of school accountability and the qualifications system. The group was clear that assessment for learning must not be directly linked to school accountability.
- Alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment was seen as vital in ensuring assessment complements the learning process rather than potentially narrowing the curriculum.
- Formative assessment was considered first - given its prime status in *Successful Futures* - reflecting the thinking that its role is fundamental to supporting and enhancing pedagogy rather than 'subverting' it.
- The curriculum structure and assessment arrangements should give expression to the four curriculum purposes. This would be achieved by using the six Areas of Learning and Experience as vehicles for organising relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions. It is proposed that it is the AoLEs that will be assessed. The four purposes, wider skills and cross-curriculum responsibilities will be embedded in those AoLEs and it is through broader assessment that they could be satisfied. It is proposed that no extra assessment frameworks will exist.
- Assessment should not be about levels / outcomes / numbers used to generate data, although it should provide information on learning and teaching in schools. It is suggested that the integrity of achievement outcomes will depend on this.
- Achievement outcomes should inform next steps and be framed as broad expectations achievable over a period of time. Setting year on year expectations runs the risk of narrowing the scope of learning at each year group.
- Achievement Outcomes should use 'I can' and 'I have' statements to describe progression however we need to be careful that we find the balance so criteria are not over specified and likewise not overly vague.
- Initial and career-long professional learning programmes should include elements that build teachers' capacity to assess the full range of curriculum purposes and Achievement Outcomes.

- We must move away from collecting and documenting evidence in order to track progression. We need a shift towards depending on professional judgement.
- E-portfolios - Personal e-portfolios and 'e-badges' would be 'owned' by the children and young people for their benefit, both in recognising achievements and for their own assessments. Parents and children should be involved in their development. They should not add to teachers' workloads.

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## **Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) groups start work at Llandudno event**

Two days of discussion and workshops in Llandudno on 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> January kick-started work on the Areas of Learning and Experience. Coming together for the first time, the six groups included 25 new Pioneer schools.

After awareness sessions on strategic design work to date, the groups looked at the essence of an 'AoLE' and approaches to developing them. They set out work plans and building blocks for the coming term, with a view to developing AoLE frameworks by June 2017.

The six AoLEs are: Expressive Arts; Health and Well-Being; Humanities; Languages, Literacy and Communication; Mathematics and Numeracy, and Science and Technology.

[See the list of AoLE groups and their membership here](#)

## **New Pioneer Schools join the fold**

Twenty-five more schools joined the Pioneer Network in January to help create the new curriculum for Wales. [See the list here](#)

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## Curriculum for Wales Blog

Kirsty Williams A.M., Professor Graham Donaldson, and the DCF team are all contributing to the blog this month. What do you think of what they have to say? See the posts and comment at <https://curriculumforwales.gov.wales/>

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## Feedback – Let us know what you think!

Please let us know if you found this newsletter useful, if there's something you would like to see in the next edition, or if you have any suggestions as to how we can improve it for you. [We're at CurriculumReformEnquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CurriculumReformEnquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk) .

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