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Consultation – summary of responses

Curriculum for Wales: Draft Statements of What Matters Code

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This document is also available in Welsh.

Curriculum for Wales: Statements of What Matters Code

Audience	Education practitioners; maintained schools; funded non-maintained nursery settings; pupil referral units (PRU); education other than at school (EOTAS) settings; local authorities; regional education consortia; governing bodies of maintained schools; PRU management committees diocesan authorities; trade unions and Estyn.
Overview	A summary of responses to the consultation on the draft Statements of What Matters Code.
Action required	For information.
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Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at Statements of what matters code GOV.WALES
Related documents	The consultation documentation can be found at Statements of what matters code GOV.WALES The Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance can be found at: Curriculum for Wales - Hwb (gov.wales)

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Curriculum for Wales

1. The [Curriculum for Wales Framework](#) (Framework) is determined nationally and includes both the curriculum requirements, as set out in legislation, and a range of supporting guidance. It was published in January 2020, including 27 draft statements of what matters in learning.
2. The Curriculum for Wales guidance, and the other guidance published alongside it, is the result of co-construction. It has been developed in Wales, by practitioners for practitioners, bringing together educational expertise and wider research and evidence. It has been published primarily to help schools to design their own curriculum and to meet requirements set out in legislation.
3. The Framework is designed to help practitioners to develop a more integrated approach to learning. The six areas of learning and experience (Areas) bring together familiar disciplines and encourage strong and meaningful links across different disciplines. Those individual disciplines still play an important role especially as learners progress and begin to specialise.
4. The Curriculum for Wales guidance promotes collaboration and cross-disciplinary planning, learning and teaching, both within and across Areas. This enables learners to build connections across their learning and combine different experiences, knowledge and skills.
5. There are 27 statements of what matters in this Framework. These ensure a level of consistency in curriculum design across settings and schools, as learners must develop an understanding of all statements. The process of exploring and revisiting these statements enables learners to develop ever deeper knowledge over the learning continuum and to progress to a more sophisticated understanding of the key knowledge, ideas and principles in each Area.

6. This more sophisticated understanding allows learners to value how their learning contributes to these ideas and why it is important, rather than simply being able to recall isolated facts without understanding the context. This progression, supported by a variety of assessment approaches, enables the learner and the practitioner to understand where a learner is and what they need to do next.

The statements of what matters code

7. The statements of what matters Code is subordinate legislation developed under section 6 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act). It sets out the 27 statements of what matters across the Areas on which all maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings must base their curriculum. These statements of what matters form part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework.
8. The Act requires that Welsh Ministers produce the Code, consult on its content and review it periodically. The requirement on schools and settings to use the statements of what matters set out in the Code aligns with other requirements regarding the design and development of their curriculum under the Curriculum for Wales Framework.

The consultation process

9. Earlier versions of the statements of what matters were subject to a 12 week consultation as part of the consultation covering the whole draft Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance in 2019. During that consultation, views on the proposed 27 statements of what matters were explicitly sought. This represented a significant consultation with over 2,000 wide ranging responses from practitioners, school leaders, parents, special interest groups, public sector and children and young people. Alongside input from focus groups, we received 1,680 digital submissions, plus feedback from 423 learners. A series of [reports covering that consultation](#) and responses to it have been published by Welsh Government.

10. More recently, the specific consultation on the draft statements of what matters Code was undertaken between 21 May and 16 July 2021. The consultation was promoted to a wide audience of stakeholders including schools, settings, local authorities, regional consortia, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, children's groups, Estyn, and trade unions.
11. This specific consultation on the draft Code resulted in forty four responses in total, the vast majority of which submitted in English. Responses from practitioners accounted for around a third of submissions, though these were supplemented by a number of submission from practitioner representative bodies, such as education trade unions. Around a quarter responses came from education stakeholders, primarily middle tier organisations (such as Estyn, regional consortia, local authorities).
12. A range of wider stakeholders with an interest in education also made significant submissions, providing around a quarter of total responses to the consultation. These included a range of public sector bodies, the offices of various commissioners and third sector organisations. The remaining responses to the consultation on this Code came from parents, individuals (anonymously) and children and young people – including children and young person's representative groups.
13. The consultation on the statements of what matters Code comprised 6 key questions. The first 2 questions focussed on views regarding the breadth and clarity of the 27 statements; these followed similar questions included in the 2019 Curriculum for Wales consultation.
14. Question 3 and its three sub-sets sought feedback on suggested changes to the statements published in January 2020; proposed following Welsh Government commitments made during the passage of the Act in 2020 and 2021.
15. Questions 4 and 5 were standard Welsh Government consultations questions seeking views on the Welsh language implications of the proposals. While question 6 provided respondents space to submit wider views not already covered by the consultation survey.

16. Analysis of responses to each of these questions is below.

Summary of response findings

17. Key points raised by respondents to the 2021 consultation were:

- broad support for the statements
- the need to explicitly reference both Welsh and English in the Languages, Literacy and Communication statements
- welcoming specific reference to Welsh histories
- need to be more explicit in references to diversity and anti-racism
- welcoming explicit references to the climate and nature emergency
- need for more explicit reference to rights as specified under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

18. Wider feedback was also captured from both consultations; this is now informing policy, programme and guidance development. The main wider points raised were:

- the need for specific, direct and sustained support for schools on realising the Curriculum for Wales, with a range of views regarding the focus of that
- further guidance and support in respect of approaches to assessment
- the need for clear links between progression and assessment, including the development of new qualifications being based on Curriculum for Wales requirements.

Question 1 – priorities for learning

19. Full consultation question:

In response to feedback on the draft Curriculum for Wales guidance in 2019 the statements of what matters are being made mandatory through the development of this Code.

Do the 27 statements as refined through this draft Code sum up the priorities for children and young people's learning throughout the continuum for 3 to 16 year olds?

20. Of the responses, the vast majority of those who answered this question agreed that the twenty seven statements of what matters broadly represents the priorities for learning across the 3 to 16 continuum. Around a quarter of respondents while providing broad support, also suggested ways in which they considered the statements could be strengthened. Only five responses explicitly disagreed, with little insight provided in most of those on the reasons for this.

“The Statements of What Matters reflect current priorities. Practitioners should be encouraged to recognise the rationale beneath to provide further information to the Statements and within the context of the 4 Purposes.”

From an education stakeholder response to Question 1

21. Suggestions for further amends were, in general, submitted by stakeholder organisations rather than practitioners. Feedback was provided in respect of terminology being used, as well as the emphasis being placed on specific aspects of various statements. While recognising existing coverage and proposed further changes to strengthen various references in the Code, there were calls for further explicit references to a wide range of issues. For example, the climate and nature emergency, human rights education, British history, menstrual well-being education, sport and physical activity, specifying specific pedagogies, and the role of trades unions in societal development.

22. Alongside the broad support for the statements, a few practitioners who responded to this question also highlighted the need for ongoing support in schools and settings to help them work with the Curriculum for Wales Framework and the statements of what matters.

Question 2 – clarity and accessibility

23. Full consultation question:

The statements of what matters will become the key organising curriculum structures for each area of learning and experience.

Are the amended statements clear and accessible, providing understanding of the breadth for curriculum development?

24. Of those who responded to this question, again the vast majority agreed that the 27 statements of what matters were clear and accessible for practitioners. Only three responses explicitly disagreed, with little insight provided on the reasons for this.

“I am aware of the years of work that have been undertaken in developing these statements with teaching professionals from a range of education settings, who have also developed and tested approaches using these statements in their education settings. I therefore do feel that Government has taken steps to ensure accessibility.”

From a non-education stakeholder response to Question 2

25. Respondents to this question also highlighted the importance of taking into account feedback of professionals who have not been involved in the pioneer process, as well as involving children and young people in the development of these statements, or the curriculum more generally.

26. It was highlighted by a few responses that while the statements work for education professionals (the primary audience for curriculum guidance) they would be less helpful for parents and children and young people. Alternative versions would be needed for different audiences.

27. As reported at paragraph 22 above, some respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing support for schools and settings in realising their curriculum.

Question 3 – suggested changes

28. Full consultation question:

The statements of what matters have been refined following consideration of issues as part of the passage of associated legislation through the Senedd in 2020/21.

- a) Are the amendments to statements in respect of Welsh histories and diversity suitably clear?
- b) Are the amendments to statements in respect of the climate emergency suitably clear?
- c) Are the amendments to statements suitably clear to ensure relevance for the full range of languages that learners may encounter?

29. Again, respondents noted broad support for the proposed changes to the statements of what matters across the three areas highlighted in the question. Some three-quarters of responses considered the proposals for updating the statements strengthened them, with only three respondents disagreeing with the suggested amendments (with little insight provided regarding why). Around a third of overall responses to the survey didn't provide answers to these questions.

30. In addition, some stakeholder responses noted the opportunity to ensure that important developments in global and national understanding of racism, its expression, effects and how to prevent it, are reflected in the Code. For example, there was concern that no explicit mention of addressing racism was evident in the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience (Area). While it may be implied within the original statements and the suggested amendments to them, it was felt by some that explicit reference was needed to support embedding of such learning approaches across the new curriculum and in support of learners embodying the four purposes.

“...priorities also include education on the climate and ecological emergency and social justice including the impact Wales has caused through its colonialist past and the colonialist narratives that continue to be perpetuated today including within the education system.”

From a learner response to Question 3

31. Alongside broad support, some specific suggestions were provided (principally by stakeholder organisations) on how the statements could be amended further. In respect of the suggested amendments covered by question 3(a) regarding histories and diversity, some responses considered that more specific references could be made in the statement relating to literature regarding the need for learners to experience works from a range of diverse authors.

“Yes, we believe Welsh histories and diversity is suitably clear within the amended documents. We believe respects of the climate emergency are suitably clear and can be used throughout each of the AoLEs Yes, because the amended documents clearly mention plurilingualism and BSL. These meet the current needs and issues within our school.”

From a practitioner response to the 3 aspects of Question 3

32. In respect of the suggested amendments regarding the climate emergency covered by question 3(b), stakeholder responses highlighted the need to refer to this as ‘the climate and nature emergency’. Some learner responses called for broader references across more of the statements of what matters on this aspect of learning.
33. With regard to responses to question 3(c) regarding the amendments relating to language learning, there was both broad support for the use of the term ‘plurilingual’ alongside clear calls (in both practitioner and stakeholder responses) to explicit references to learning of the Welsh and English languages. The majority of responses to this question highlighted these aspects in feedback, while also recognising the need for statements to be relevant to learning through visual languages, such as British Sign Language (BSL).
34. It was recognised that guidance on BSL is being added to the Languages, Literacy and Communications (LLC) Area of Learning and Experience in the Curriculum for Wales Framework following Ministerial commitment in January 2020 – which again was welcomed. However, in addition and while having regard to the inclusion of visual languages, a few responses from both practitioners and stakeholder organisations considered the need to ensure the LLC statements also included explicit references to speaking and writing with regard to learning Welsh and English.

Question 4 – effects on Welsh language

35. Full consultation question:

We would like to know your views on the effects that the Statements of What Matters Code would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be?

How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

36. Only half of respondents to this survey answered this question. Five responses to the questions posed were negative. The remaining responses were supportive, with around two thirds of those also offering broader comment and qualification.

“Statement of What Matters present a multilingual approach to languages, providing benefits to the learning of all languages in the curriculum.2

From a practitioner response to Question 4

37. In line with responses to question 3 above, a few respondents who offered further comment felt the use of words ‘bilingual’, ‘multilingual’ and ‘plurilingual’ make the LLC statements less clear for schools. Others, whoever, were supportive of the use of these terms and the general plurilingual approach within the Area. Some respondents suggested returning to original statements explicitly stated that learners would develop their ‘ability to use Welsh, English and international languages’. It was felt that this wording makes clear the importance of developing each language. Others recognised the need for the statements to also reflect the learning of visual languages such as BSL.

Question 5 – improving the Welsh language

38. Full consultation question:

Please also explain how you believe the proposed Statements of What Matters Code could be formulated or changed so as to have:

1. positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language;
2. no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

39. Less than half of respondents to this survey answered this question. Four responses to the questions posed were negative. The remaining responses were supportive, with only four replies offering broader comment and qualification.

“The wordings are fairly clear - it is the staffing that will be hard.”

From a practitioner response to Question 5

40. Those few responses that offered further comment stressed the need for emphasis on Welsh and English languages, and parity between them. Responses also highlighted challenges relating more to implementation in respect of school staffing Welsh-medium posts, professional learning for language skills, and Welsh language teaching specialists to support Welsh language provision in English-medium schools.

Question 6 – additional information

41. Full consultation question:

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

42. In a number of instances responses to questions 1 to 5 included feedback on matters beyond that being raised by those specific questions. In addition, the majority of survey responses to question 6 in fact repeated points made earlier in individual submissions against specific questions.
43. In reporting against this final question, therefore, we have included a summary of wider issues raised by respondents irrespective of where they were presented in the consultation response forms. We present these wider points of feedback here under common themes for ease.

Support for schools and settings

44. Around a third of respondents (predominantly education stakeholder organisations and practitioners) raised the issue of support for curriculum reform. This either in respect of specific aspects of the Curriculum for Wales as highlighted in the statements of what matters Code, or more generally in respect of the process of curriculum design and development. Some of the aspects of support noted in feedback include:

- practitioner professional learning on the sustainable management of natural resources and outdoor learning across the 3 to 16 learning continuum
- approaches towards realising a plurilingual approach to language learning, including translanguaging
- more hands on support to schools and settings' sense making on the statements of what matters and curriculum design and development more generally
- Welsh language training and professional learning on related pedagogical practice for practitioners
- the need to provide bespoke support for non-maintained settings to understand and realise the expectations on them

- the development of national learning and teaching resources on aspects, such as Welsh history, British history, the climate and nature emergency, etc
- resources for schools to use with parents / carers on curriculum change – and separately – materials for children and young people on the Curriculum for Wales
- further guidance to support those working with pre-school and early years children to ensure alignment with Curriculum for Wales expectations from age 3.

Assessment – including new qualifications

45. Alongside the broad recognition of the priorities for learning set out in the 27 statements of what matters in the draft Code, there were a number of calls in consultation responses to ensure that qualifications change happens to align with, and fully reflect, those priorities for learning. Responses on this theme came from both education stakeholder organisations and practitioner responses. From the responses submitted, there was a general sense that curriculum reform and the priorities set out in the statements of what matters Code could be undermined if qualifications reform did not follow Curriculum for Wales principles.

“We have an opportunity to ensure qualifications truly capture what learners can do, and are not dictating and narrowing the curriculum. It is critical we reflect on the last couple of years and use this opportunity to have a national conversation about the qualifications system.”

From a trade union response to the consultation

Learning and teaching approaches

46. In a few specific instances respondents have set out views on why particular pedagogical approaches to learning in discrete curriculum areas should be made mandatory across schools and settings. These included, for example, references to play across the curriculum and the explicit requirement to teach reading through systemic, synthetic phonics in

learning to read. However, other responses highlighted the need to maintain professional autonomy within the national Framework.

“Whilst we welcome these additions to the WMs it is really important that we retain the spirit of autonomy for education settings to adapt the curriculum for their learners’ needs. This may mean some schools and settings have slightly different priorities than others, and it is critical we get this balance right.”

From a trade union response to the consultation

Curriculum reform

47. Six responses to the consultation expressed general disquiet about the approach being taken towards curriculum reform and the basis on which the reforms have been agreed. One of these responses was submitted by a practitioner.