

Curriculum for Wales
Subordinate Legislation:
Summary of Responses

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Wavehill: Social and Economic Research

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Executive Summary

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the consultation exploring proposals contained within The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021's subordinate legislation on assessment. It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents with regard to the proposals.

Background

As part of the broader reforms contained within the Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government are seeking to create new subordinate legislation and revise some existing legislation so as to bring it in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales. This is to ensure that the legislative framework supports settings and schools in realising the new curriculum, including advancing the key aims and objectives surrounding assessment and progression.

In developing and refining the legislation in relation to assessment arrangements, the Welsh Government set out to gather the views and perspectives of the educational community and broader stakeholders with regard to the proposals. Launched in September 2021, the proposals were put forward for public consultation.

Responses

In total, 78 formal responses were received from a diverse range of individuals and organisations. These included responses from practitioners as well as those supporting them, including governors and school improvement officers. Moreover, they included responses from broader organisations that support settings and schools, such as local authorities, umbrella bodies, and Estyn.

Alongside more formal routes to engagement, seven workshops were held with a range of key stakeholders. These included those who were less likely to engage through more formal consultation, including learners and parents or carers. Furthermore, they included more in-depth conversations with school governors and senior leaders from both primary and secondary schools across Wales.

The respondents who kindly contributed their views and perspectives are not necessarily representative of the wider educational community, including learners, parents, practitioners, and senior leaders. This analysis should therefore be considered to provide an indication of some of the views and perspectives held by people and communities with respect to the subordinate legislation, rather than a definitive account of people and communities across Wales.

Key Findings

Overarching Perceptions

Respondents were, on the whole, positive towards the substantive proposals, including the general orientation and objectives of the legislation. Across different aspects of the subordinate legislation, some felt as though further information and guidance would be helpful in supporting engagement and in the subsequent implementation of the proposals. This included clarification as to certain aspects of the legislation, such as the role of governors in fulfilling their duties surrounding assessment arrangements. Further information, guidance, and support such as exemplars and training were also considered to be valuable in acting on the legislation. Some felt that further guidance on how assessment and progression could be embedded in teaching and learning would support understanding and engagement amongst practitioners. What is more, further information and guidance were often considered to be important in addressing some of the practical challenges raised by settings and schools, including the limited time and resources with which to engage with the proposals and the Curriculum for Wales more broadly.

Assessment Arrangements

In terms of the clarity of the proposals surrounding assessment arrangements, many respondents felt that further information and guidance would be valuable, particularly in understanding the practical implications of the proposals for settings and schools. This included further clarification as to some of the expectations placed on settings and schools, such as who will be responsible for assessment arrangements in funded non-maintained settings. Moreover, further information and guidance were considered to be valuable in supporting the design of assessment arrangements, including in embedding them in teaching and learning.

Learners spoke eloquently of the importance of timely, focused and individualised feedback in support of their progression. Together, learner perspectives appear to support the general orientation of the proposals, including the emphasis placed on continuous, individualised formative assessment embedded in teaching and learning. More broadly, some practitioners and broader stakeholders welcomed the approach to assessment as contained within the Curriculum for Wales, which they felt would effectively support learner progression. Meanwhile, others felt that in order to effectively embed assessment arrangements in teaching and learning, further information, resources and support would be valuable in building understanding and addressing the practical challenges and barriers facing settings and schools.

Within assessment arrangements, the majority of respondents offered positive sentiments towards the proposals surrounding on entry assessments. These included the general consensus that on entry assessments were an appropriate way in which to begin to understand and support the progress of an individual learner. Respondents also raised a range of practical considerations, including of the workload implications of designing and completing the assessment.

Shared Understanding of Progression

Many respondents stated that the expectations surrounding the development of a shared understanding of progression were clearly laid out in the proposals. Again, respondents offered suggestions as to where further information and guidance could be valuable, both in strengthening the proposals and in supporting engagement and professional dialogue. This included information and guidance on how progression itself should be embedded in teaching and learning. From these perspectives, guidance or exemplars would support practitioners in visualising how assessment arrangements support progression and facilitate the development of a shared understanding of progression within and across settings and schools.

Alongside practical considerations such as workload, some respondents felt that in-depth communication and collaboration would be essential to developing a meaningful and coherent shared understanding of progression. Respondents stated that mutual commitment and respect would be needed, particularly between primary and secondary schools and other settings, in order to build successful relationships. Respondents also highlighted broader support that would be helpful, including in facilitating dialogue between schools.

The proposal to meet termly, both internally and across different settings and schools), was considered by the majority of respondents to be appropriate and realistic. From these perspectives, continuing professional dialogue facilitated by termly meetings would be important in developing a shared understanding of progression and in driving improvements in schools.

Transition Plans

Respondents, on the whole, found the proposals and expectations on schools surrounding transition plans to be clear and effective. They often recognised the value and importance of more individualised, nonlinear approaches to supporting the continuity of learning and progression, including across transitions. Furthermore, some felt that the proposals should extend to learners transitioning from nursery settings to primary schools.

In terms of the information to be included in transition plans, there was hesitation amongst some respondents with respect to the inclusion of information surrounding the well-being of learners within transition plans, particularly regarding mental health. Some felt that it was not appropriate for practitioners with no formal training in understanding and responding to mental health issues to comment on learner well-being. More broadly, capacity constraints were (again) raised as a possible barrier to effective engagement with transition planning. Some felt that further information, including exemplars or pro forma plans, would be helpful.

Reporting to Parents and Carers

Parents and carers consistently spoke of the importance and value of communication from schools. Key themes included the quality, rather than the quantity, of information provided

by settings and schools. Many parents and carers cited that they found practical, timely information to be valuable in engaging in their children's learning.

Learners also expressed the importance of their parents understanding what they were learning at school. They felt that it was important for their parents or carers to understand what they were learning at school because they could then discuss with and support them. There was, however, apparent disagreement regarding the inclusion of broader well-being information in communication with parents from learners. Some welcomed the proposals, whilst others felt that they were inappropriate.

More broadly, a clear majority of respondents felt positively that the proposals were clear and effective. Some respondents asked for further information relating to the mechanisms and approaches with which practitioners and schools should communicate with parents and carers. This included further guidance on effective engagement with parents and carers, including those who are the hardest to reach. Concerns were also raised by practitioners and senior leaders about the appropriateness and implications of reporting to parents and carers with regard to learner well-being, particularly their mental health.

Welsh Language

Many felt that the proposals would have a positive or negligible impact on opportunities to use the Welsh language. In promoting and supporting the Welsh language, a key theme raised by respondents was the importance of timely, bilingual resources and guidance in supporting all schools, including Welsh-medium settings. Respondents also raised considerations surrounding the engagement and communication between Welsh- and English-medium settings and schools, and between practitioners and parents or carers. Facilitation and support may be valuable in supporting effective, bilingual communication, including through transition plans, and in engaging parents and carers.

Conclusions

Overall, there were two distinct perspectives on the proposals set out in the subordinate legislation. The first focused on the clarity of the proposals in communicating the expectations placed on schools. On the whole, respondents highlighted where clarification would be useful, including in determining responsibility and governance arrangements. This tended to represent fairly minor adjustments to the wording of the proposals.

The second perspective focused on the practical implications of the proposals. This suggested that many respondents were going beyond the legislation to consider what assessment and progression would look like in practice. For many, issues such as time, confidence and skills would be central to the effective implementation of the proposals. Respondents often felt that practical constraints, such as the limited time and resources with which to engage with the proposals, could limit engagement, including in the design and implementation of assessment arrangements.

Overall, there was support for the general sentiment and objectives of the proposed legislation, including around the aims of the proposals and how they would support learner

progression. This suggests that there was a level of consensus surrounding the objectives of the legislation, one that was contingent on a broader range of practical questions, including the potential impact on workloads.

Navigating this Report

These findings are explored in more depth throughout the report. In communicating the findings, the report follows the broad structure of the consultation document itself. Each substantive area of the proposals receives in-depth analysis within individual chapters throughout the report. A broad, overarching summary is provided in [Conclusions](#).

1 Introduction

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the consultation exploring proposals contained within The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021's subordinate legislation on assessment. It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents with regard to the proposals.

1.1 Background

As part of the broader reforms contained within the Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government are seeking to create new subordinate legislation and revise some existing legislation surrounding assessment so as to bring it in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales. This is to ensure that the legislative framework supports settings and schools in realising the new curriculum, including key aims and objectives surrounding assessment and progression. Specifically, the proposals set out the Welsh Government's intentions regarding:

- **assessment within settings and schools**, including the importance of developing, implementing and reviewing assessment arrangements.
- strengthening the relationship between assessment and progression through **promoting and maintaining a shared understanding of progression** with colleagues within settings or schools.
- supporting **effective transitions from primary and secondary schools**, including promoting effective communication between schools.
- supporting **the engagement of parents and carers with the new curriculum**, including through promoting effective communication between families and schools.

For more information on the proposed subordinate legislation, please see the [Consultation Document](#) that sets out the proposals in greater detail.

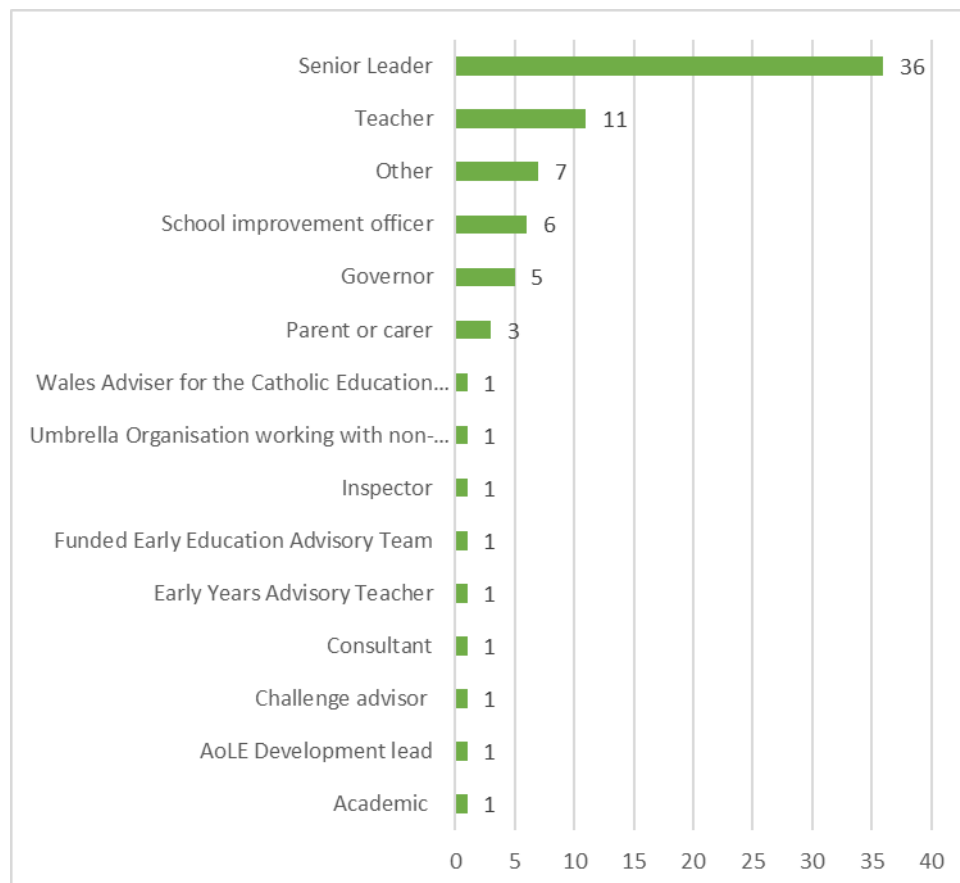
In developing and refining the legislation, the Welsh Government set out to gather the views and perspectives of the educational community and broader stakeholders with respect to the proposals. Launched in September 2021, the proposals were put forward for public consultation. Learners, parents, practitioners, senior leaders, and other stakeholder groups were invited to share their views. A range of opportunities were offered to respondents to feed back their views, including completing an online questionnaire and through workshops. This analysis presents a summary of the conversations and perspectives offered by respondents.

1.2 Responses

Respondents were invited to share their views in a variety of ways, including through the formal consultation, workshops, and stakeholder engagement events.

Formal Consultation Responses

In total, 78 formal responses were received from a diverse range of individuals and organisations. These included from senior leaders, teachers, and school improvement officers:



Respondents also represented a diverse range of organisations throughout the educational community. Responses were received from, for instance, practitioners working in early years settings and in primary, secondary and special schools. Furthermore, they were received from broader organisations that support settings and schools, such as local authorities, umbrella bodies, and Estyn.

Workshops

Alongside more formal routes to engagement, seven workshops were held with a range of key stakeholders. These included those who were less likely to engage through more formal consultation, including learners and parents or carers. What is more, they included more in-depth conversations with school governors and senior leaders from both primary and secondary schools across Wales.

In engaging learners, two schools kindly supported the research. This included a Welsh-medium secondary school and an English-medium primary school. Senior leaders kindly convened workshops with learners from across the school. Within a learner voice session, learners were presented with a range of questions, including the value and importance that

they placed on feedback from their teachers. The sessions also explored learners' views on sharing information with their parents. Thereafter, senior leaders wrote up the issues and themes conveyed by learners, which were then incorporated within the analysis presented in this report.

1.3 Analytical Approach

In order to understand the issues and themes raised by respondents during the consultation, Wavehill, an independent research organisation, conducted an analysis of the responses. The analysis set out to understand and map the range of views and perspectives held by respondents with regard to the proposals contained within the subordinate legislation.

To analyse the perspectives expressed by respondents, the authors conducted detailed thematic analysis. This approach systematically examines each response and highlights the themes and issues that are raised. From this analysis, the team are then able to explore how widely held particular views and perspectives are.

1.4 Limitations

There are a number of limitations with regard to this analysis that are important to note. The respondents who kindly contributed their views and perspectives are not necessarily representative of the wider educational community, including learners, parents, practitioners, and senior leaders. The high likelihood of self-selection and the relatively small number of responses from key stakeholder groups increase the possibility that those who responded hold qualitatively different views and perspectives from those found amongst practitioners, organisations and communities from across Wales more broadly.

Taken together, therefore, this analysis should be considered to provide an indication of some of the views and perspectives held by people and communities towards the subordinate legislation, rather than a definitive account of people and communities across Wales.

We now turn to outlining the substantive themes raised across responses against the substantive legislative proposals highlighted in the consultation.

2 Assessment Arrangements

The proposals surrounding the subordinate legislation seek to replace a range of existing statutory instruments surrounding assessment arrangements in settings and schools.

Summary of Proposals

The Curriculum for Wales Framework moves away from a National Curriculum prescribed by Programmes of Study, Phases and Key Stages. Instead, the proposals give every setting and school in Wales the opportunity to design its own curriculum within a national framework that ensures a level of consistency.

Under the Curriculum for Wales, learner progression occurs along a single continuum of learning. The purpose of assessment within the Curriculum for Wales is to support and enable each individual learner to make progress at an appropriate pace along the continuum, ensuring that they are supported and challenged accordingly.

As a continuum of learning will replace the current phases and key stages, the intention is to move away from end-of-phase and end-of-key-stage summative teacher assessments taking place at the end of every year and towards a system in which assessment is embedded in day-to-day practice and indistinguishable from teaching and learning.

It will be for individual schools to determine the assessment arrangements that are the most appropriate for supporting the delivery of their curriculum. The proposed statutory guidance sets out that this should be done as part of curriculum design to ensure that the progression that learners are making is appropriately planned, understood and supported.

2.1 Clarity of Proposals

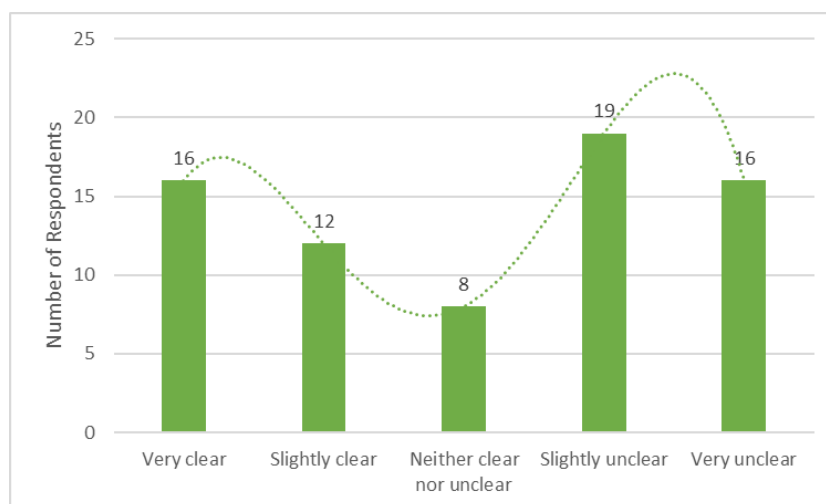
Respondents were first asked for their views on whether the proposed legislation was clear in terms of the expectations that it places on settings and schools with respect to assessment arrangements.¹

2.1.1 General Perceptions

In terms of the clarity of the proposals, many respondents felt that further information would be valuable, particularly in understanding the practical implications of the proposals for settings and schools. This suggested that many respondents were interpreting and reflecting on the proposals from the perspective of what they could mean for their settings or schools, including in practically implementing them. When asked about the extent to

¹ Question 4: Are the expectations placed on settings and schools towards assessment arrangements clear?

which the expectations placed on settings and schools with regard to assessment arrangements were clear, respondents were split, with the majority reporting that they were unclear:



Q4: N=71

Those expressing that they felt as though the proposals were unclear tended to highlight that they would like to see additional information or guidance, either within the proposals and more broadly. This included information that could support practitioners' engagement with the proposals, such as in practically planning, designing and embedding assessment arrangements in teaching and learning.

2.1.2 Key Themes

Respondents were then asked to expand on their views surrounding the clarity of the proposals. The range of themes raised in responses included feedback and suggestions regarding the proposals themselves, as well as broader considerations surrounding the practical implementation of assessment arrangements.

Clear Expectations

A slight minority of respondents felt as though the proposals were clear. From these perspectives, the proposals were effective in communicating the breadth of expectations placed on settings and schools with regard to assessment arrangements:

The information is clear and identifies key differences between current and new arrangements.

Headteacher, Primary School

The assessment arrangements and ownership of the processes are clearly articulated in the points made on the consultation document.

Early Years Wales

Some respondents went further and expressed broader support for the overall approach to assessment as outlined in the proposals. From these perspectives, the general orientation and direction of the proposals were welcomed and would be effective in supporting learners:

I feel that all areas are taken into consideration and will work well towards the pupils' learning and education.

Governor, Governing Body

Further Information and Guidance

Many respondents, including those who felt that the proposals were unclear, suggested that it would be valuable to include further information within the proposals or in supplementary guidance. From these perspectives, further information and guidance would be valuable in helping practitioners, settings and schools to visualise and act on the proposals:

The expectations are clear, but how they are to be achieved is not clear at all.

Headteacher, Primary School

Some felt that clarification as to the substantive statutory expectations placed on settings and schools would be helpful. This would enable settings and schools to accurately determine the overall responsibility for assessment arrangements within governance arrangements:

The expectations regarding assessment arrangements are clear [...]. The focus on the learner as an individual is also clearly established, as is the necessity for a holistic approach, and there are clear expectations for review and revision. However, the following additional detail also needs to be included: clarity is required regarding the expectations of the role of governors in fulfilling their duties in terms of the assessment arrangements, especially as the governing body is the employer in a Catholic school.

Catholic Education Service

In general, the consultation is clear in its meaning and wording, although there are a few areas where further clarity is required [...]. The guidance needs to be clearer about who will be responsible for assessment arrangements in a funded non-maintained setting. The term 'provider' is not specific enough and leaves a lack of clarity about who has responsibility for the assessment arrangements. For example, in a privately owned setting, does this responsibility lie with the owner, the responsible person or the setting leader?

Estyn

Meanwhile, others felt that further information could be provided on the ways in which settings and schools could approach assessment arrangements. From these perspectives, the proposals were understood to provide a high-level account of what assessment arrangements would look like in practice. Some felt that greater detail in relation to the ways in which assessment arrangements could be embedded in teaching and learning could be valuable. This would support the development of effective curriculum and assessment arrangements that were in compliance with the expectations placed on settings and schools:

Some elements are clear; however, it is hard to have a full understanding without the finalised mandatory progression code to refer to. For example, 4.6 refers to ensuring learners make 'appropriate progress', but this is not clearly defined in the document. Who decides what is 'appropriate progress' for a learner? What should they take into account when deciding what is 'appropriate progress'? How will it be ensured that there is equity across the system, such that learners deemed to make 'appropriate progress' in one setting are not disadvantaged compared to another where a different understanding of what is appropriate has been agreed?

Senior Leader, Primary School

We believe that the expectations [in relation to non-maintained settings] are defined within the consultation document; however, the detail of this still needs to be developed alongside the non-maintained curriculum. Once these are published, we will have a clearer idea again around clarity and expectations and impact on the sector.

PACEY Cymru, Representative Body

Some also suggested the use of exemplars to describe what assessment arrangements would look like in practice, and to generate discussion and ideas amongst colleagues. Exemplars of good practice would give practitioners opportunities to visualise how assessment arrangements could work in practice and to build on tried and tested approaches. From these perspectives, exemplars could help schools and settings, especially those less familiar with the Curriculum for Wales more generally. Further guidance and exemplars were also seen to be potentially cutting down on workloads, and leading to more effective practice:

The duties and expectations have shifted massively from the current arrangements, with all the onus on the school to devise a new system without any clear examples already in place. This is placing a huge emphasis on schools as learning organisations to upskill staff and allow them all to be involved in securing progression for learners without set steps for progression. There is no reference point for schools who are trying to take a huge guidance document and create their own curriculum with progression and assessment built in. It is a daunting job, particularly as teachers are busy planning and teaching each day.

Senior Leader, Primary School

Capturing Progression

Within this theme, an area in which further detail was considered to be valuable concerned how settings and schools could practically capture progression. There was a level of uncertainty within these responses with regard to how progression should be understood and measured:

[There is] no real sense of how schools can assess progress against the current progression steps, given the move away from levels and the explicit direction not to use these descriptors for levelling.

Senior Leader, Secondary School

The assessment of progression and a continuum is welcomed. Children do progress at different rates and they all can't reach the same outcomes at the same time. What is unclear is the mixed messages out there to break down the progression steps and what-matters statement for individual year groups and to be written in child speak. If this is the requirement, why are we all doing it individually?

Headteacher, Primary School

Formative and Summative Assessment

Another area in which greater detail was considered to be valuable concerned the role and nature of formative and summative assessment. Within this theme there were a diverse range of perspectives. Some respondents interpreted the proposals, for example, as containing an imbalance between formative and summative assessment. These respondents felt that the proposals which would implement some national requirements would not necessarily result in greater use of formative assessment in teaching and learning. Such an emphasis on formative assessment was felt to be important in reflecting the broader orientation and objectives of the Curriculum for Wales:

The entire document is somewhat unclear on expectations. This is due to the tension between advocating in statute both localised autonomy as opposed to mandating particular approaches. The language of the document is heavily characterised by notions of mandate, compulsion and prescription [...]. This does not coincide with the spirit of [the Curriculum for Wales] [...]. This is contradictory to the concept of day-to-day assessment embedded in learning, which would be heavily weighted towards the formative [assessment].

Headteacher, Secondary School

Conversely, others felt that the proposals were not explicit enough in communicating the role of summative assessment within assessment arrangements. From these perspectives, further detail regarding how summative assessment should work could be clarified and strengthened within the proposals:

The role of summative assessment is not described anywhere in the document, but will clearly dominate Key Stage 4 as those learners prepare to take external examinations. Unless the qualification offer is clear and the relevant assessment processes defined, this set of proposals deals with an important part, rather than the whole of assessment. The document, therefore, does not describe assessment arrangements.

Teaching Union

Variation in Assessment Arrangements

A key implication of the proposals surrounding assessment arrangements was the understanding that greater autonomy and subsidiarity would result in greater variation in practice. This suggested that some respondents were moving beyond the proposals themselves to consider the potential impacts. Some respondents expressed concern that considerable local variation would create further challenges, including in aligning coherently with other schools and settings, effectively supporting transitions, and ensuring quality and equity in teaching and learning:

The consultation states that the degree of variation will be mitigated by the mandatory progression code and statutory guidance. Both the code and the guidance are very broad and subjective and open to interpretation, which is going to result in variation. As individual schools will be determining assessment arrangements, there will be considerable variation and [this] will make comparisons between learners' achievements in different settings difficult.

Senior Leader, Secondary School

We are unclear as to how the assessment arrangements will ensure fairness and equality. The assessment arrangements indicate the importance of ongoing assessment in order to support learning and teaching. The arrangements do not set out clearly how equality and fairness will be ensured, i.e. that children and young people with different protected characteristics, including those children and young people who use British Sign Language, and those from [socioeconomically] disadvantaged areas, will be assessed in a fair and equitable way.

Regulatory Body

2.2 Supporting Learner Progression

Supporting learner progression is a key objective of the Curriculum for Wales. Within the proposals, assessment arrangements are considered to be intrinsic to curriculum design and an indistinguishable part of teaching and learning. The proposals understand that assessment should contribute to developing a holistic picture of the learner. This includes their strengths, the ways in which they learn, and their areas for development in order to inform the next steps in learning and teaching.

2.2.1 Learner Perspectives

As part of the consultation, learners were invited for their views on feedback and assessment. Three workshops were held with learners from years 6 and 8 from across two schools.

Across all groups, learners spoke eloquently of the importance of timely, focused and individualised feedback in support of their progression. They talked about the different ways in which feedback was presented to them, including through written comments and in conversation with peers or teachers. Learners highlighted examples of feedback that they had found to be useful. A recurring theme was the importance of detailed, personalised and discursive feedback:

I like one-to-ones with my teacher because she can tell me what is good and what needs to get better.

Learner, Workshop Session

I like it when my teacher gives me face-to-face feedback because then I can ask questions — if it is a comment in the book, sometimes they just say ‘well done’ and I don’t know what I need to do to improve.

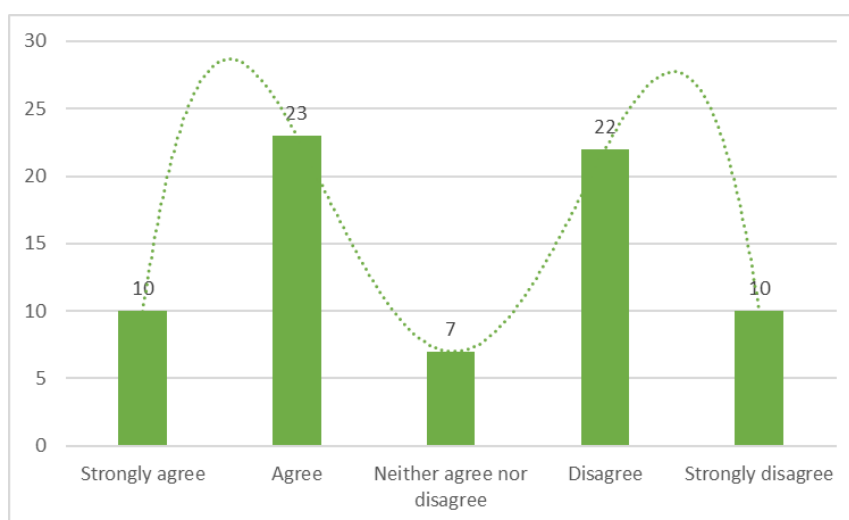
Learner, Workshop Session

Alongside personalised feedback, learners also talked of the importance of different types of feedback in supporting progression. With written work, for example, some highlighted that they found written comments to be helpful in identifying any mistakes. Furthermore, they found the opportunity to discuss feedback with teachers to be valuable, including what they could do to improve. Alongside specific and tailored feedback, many learners also raised the importance of knowing what they had done well as much as knowing where they could improve. This included messages that highlight and reinforce the progress that learners are making.

Together, learner perspectives appear to support the general orientation of the proposals, including the emphasis placed on continuous, individualised formative assessment embedded in teaching and learning. Learners often described instances of feedback that they had found to be useful in supporting their progression that were broadly synonymous with the approach outlined in the Curriculum for Wales.

2.2.2 General Perceptions

More broadly, respondents to the formal consultation were asked whether they felt that the duties and expectations surrounding assessment arrangements would effectively support learner progression.² Respondents were broadly divided on the extent to which the proposed assessment arrangements would effectively support learner progression. Those who offered conditional support or more negative perceptions tended to highlight the possible variation in approach as presenting challenges to supporting learner progression:



Q4: N=72

2.2.3 Key Themes

Respondents were then asked to expand on their views surrounding the extent to which assessment arrangements would support learner progression.

An Effective Approach

Those who were more positive towards the proposals tended to also signal broader support for the approach to assessment as outlined within the Curriculum for Wales. From these perspectives, the greater emphasis on individual learners and on the needs of individual learners, amongst other principles, was welcomed by some respondents:

We will be able to develop systems which meet the needs of our learners, rather than having to complete some assessments which are either not necessary or do not tell us what we need to know to forward-plan and assess.

Headteacher, Primary School

² Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the duties and expectations placed on settings and schools will effectively support learner progression in line with the Curriculum for Wales?

Designing assessment arrangements at the same time as designing the curriculum is vital and should be clearly communicated; however, this is difficult at secondary level until assessment at the end of KS4 is clear and unequivocal. Continual assessment of where learners are in their learning to inform teaching, rather than levels at a specific point in time, is very much welcomed. Furthermore, the move to practitioners using a wider variety of assessment approaches to determine whether progress is being made is also welcomed, as is the message that schools should not break descriptions of learning down into 'tick lists'. We also welcome the clear message that there is no substitute for excellent day-to-day assessment of and for learning to inform teaching and planning for progression for all learners.

Regional Consortium

We welcome the Welsh Government's moves to ensure that the focus of assessment is to support each individual learner to make effective progress. The consultation identifies that assessment arrangements are described on 'the face of the 2021 Act as arrangements for assessing the progress of individual learners against a relevant curriculum, the next steps in their progression and the teaching and learning needed to make the progression to the next step'. This clear message about the purpose of assessment under the Curriculum for Wales will help provide schools and settings with clear direction when deciding on assessment arrangements.

Estyn

Variation across Settings and Schools

Those offering more cautious interpretations of the proposals tended to highlight the possible variation in approach across settings and schools. From these perspectives, respondents were concerned that the focus on subsidiarity and flexibility within the proposals could lead to significant variation in the approaches to assessment within and across settings and schools. This could have unintended consequences, including in identifying and promoting effective teaching and in determining whether learners are progressing at an appropriate pace relative to their peers. Some respondents also highlighted the role of assessment in ensuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning both within and across settings and schools:

I think that learner progression will vary from school to school due to the lack of clear and consistent national guidance. Schools should no longer take specific judgements about a learner's progress via summative assessments at a set point in time. How then are we to know whether children are progressing at an appropriate pace in relation to their peers throughout the country and more widely across the world? When these children do sit a test, which will happen in some point of their life (but much later than before), how will they fare in such an alien situation?

Senior Leader, Primary School

It is clear that it is for schools and headteachers to decide upon assessment arrangements, but it is unclear as to how consistency will be in place across schools and from primary to secondary.

Teacher, Secondary School

2.3 Assessment Arrangements in Practice

Respondents were then asked whether there were practical considerations surrounding the proposed assessment arrangements.³

2.3.1 Key Themes

Workload

In acting on the proposals, a key concern raised by many respondents was that of the workload implications of the proposals. It was felt that implementation of the Curriculum for Wales would be a significant undertaking that would require time and thought. Many respondents understood that schools would need significant time and resources in order to engage in developing and implementing curriculum and assessment arrangements, including the time with which to upskill staff and to work together to ensure consistency within and across settings and schools. In the shorter term, implementing the old and new curricula simultaneously was also highlighted as a concern in terms of the workload:

This is a huge undertaking for schools and a daunting task for many involved. This will be achievable with whole-cluster thinking and school-to-school support, but it will take time.

Senior Leader, Primary School

[There is the] time to prepare for the new Curriculum for Wales, including assessment. We are nine school months away from implementation, in the middle of a global pandemic [and with] high staff absence levels, and we need thinking time. Currently we do not have this — this is a major concern.

Senior Leader, Secondary School

This issue was raised in more open discussions with practitioners and senior leaders in workshops. Some felt that the scale of change surrounding the Curriculum for Wales more generally was significant, and that without devoting sufficient time and attention, there were risks that the quality and coherence of teaching and learning would suffer. Meanwhile, others highlighted that without sufficient time and thought, some settings and schools may

³ Question 6: In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding assessment, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

defer to assessment arrangements and strategies that are not aligned with the spirit of the proposals:

There is a concern that some schools will default to 'tick box' criteria to ascertain progress, particularly with some external companies encouraging schools to buy assessment packages which advocate the use of 'tick lists'.

Regional Consortium

Continuing Professional Development

Some felt that broader training would be important in supporting practitioners in engaging with the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. From these perspectives, confidence, familiarity with the new curriculum, and practical strategies surrounding assessment in learning would be central to the effectiveness of the reforms:

It must be recognised that these strategies will require considerable professional learning and support for schools and practitioners to ensure high-quality teaching and assessment arrangements are embedded and used effectively.

Estyn

Training, guidance and development [will be important] for those working in the non-maintained sector and those working in the wider childcare sector in relation to assessment arrangements [...]. [This would] support quality improvement, better outcomes for children, and continuity of approach. Training would need to be at an accessible time and location — virtual training can be more easily accessed.

PACEY Cymru

Communicating and Evidencing Progression

Some respondents raised the concern that parents, carers, and other stakeholders would want clear, quantifiable indications of learner progression. From these perspectives, the nature of assessment within the proposals could lead to challenges in communicating and evidencing progression, including in how learners are progressing relative to their peers:

Stakeholders will want to know where they are now, but, ultimately, they will want to know if this is where the learner is expected to be at this moment in time. They'll also want to know whether they have made strong progress over a year/term etc. But my query would be "how [to] qualify that progress" in a meaningful way for that parent when they ask "How do you know that they've made strong/poor progress?". We need to be careful that we don't have an assessment system that will produce 'woolly' answers with regards to progress made.

Senior Leader, Special School

This also linked to broader concerns surrounding accountability and the level and extent of data that settings and schools would need to provide for inspection and assurance:

Stakeholders will want to know where they are now, but, ultimately, they will want to know what data [the Welsh Government] and Estyn [are] going to be asking for. Does this link with [the] progression code or [will] it just draw from national testing? This aspect is really important because it drives everything, although I don't believe it should.

Headteacher, Primary School

Collaboration

Being able to collaborate across school clusters and educational settings, and from primary to secondary, was highlighted as a key concern in ensuring effective progression for pupils. Respondents felt that collaboration would be an important factor in developing methods of assessment and ensuring best practice. Furthermore, it was felt that collaborative relationships with the various statutory bodies would be an important factor in providing schools with the support that they needed:

Practically, I hope there is maximum opportunity to share methods of carrying out and communicating these duties. I am concerned that any 'silo' of local authority, group of schools, or type of education delivery might find a method that fits 'close enough'. There might be a better idea being underutilised or a trigger for innovation beyond a provider's immediate contact, and time is a recourse scant for all professionals.

Parent or Carer

2.4 On Entry Assessments

The proposed legislation also sets out expectations on settings and schools to undertake on entry assessments with regard to the education of learners.

Summary of Proposals

The intention of the on entry assessment is to gain an understanding of a learner's needs. They are intended to be the first step towards developing an understanding of a learner in considering their strengths, their areas of improvement, and where more focus or support is needed. Thereafter, this information can be used to tailor teaching and learning so as to ensure and support progress for the learner.

Respondents were then asked whether they felt as though the proposals surrounding on entry assessments were appropriate and realistic.⁴

2.4.1 Key Themes

Appropriate and Realistic

The majority of respondents offered positive sentiments surrounding the proposals. These included the general consensus that on entry assessments were an appropriate way in which to begin to understand and support the progress of an individual learner. This was also considered to be a broadly realistic expectation in terms of the implementation of such an approach:

A baseline assessment should not only happen on entry to compulsory school-age education, as is now the case, but should also ensure a practitioner can assess where a child is in respect of the 3–16 continuum at any point on entry to a school or setting. We believe this will bring the non-maintained sector much needed respect and recognition. It will have to be ensured that the school recognises the work undertaken within the non-maintained sector before school age and values this.

PACEY Cymru

Yes, and good schools have been doing this for many years. Incerts enables us to set 'on entry' as each child starts nursery, so the progress they make in early years is tracked from the day they start school.

Headteacher, Primary School

It is appropriate and schools already do it. The concern is that making it too prescriptive will make it unrealistically bureaucratic.

Governor, Governing Body

We think it appropriate and realistic to ask schools and settings to undertake an on entry assessment. We have identified a few areas in this section which need clarification [...]. Schools should be able to accept an assessment done by a setting or other school when it is in line with the school's own assessment procedures, e.g. if learners in the setting normally transition onto the school.

Estyn

Respondents offering more positive reflections tended to also think that the approach was effective, providing a useful baseline against which to tailor support and ensure progress:

⁴ Question 7: Is the duty placed on settings and schools to undertake an entry assessment appropriate and realistic?

Many schools have conducted on entry assessments for some time now and [they] are useful to identify a learner's skills and abilities and areas to develop. They form a useful baseline from which to track progress. There is a danger that this will simply become a test that any 'new starter' is required to sit, rather than [a] meaningful observation and use of professional judgement and expertise.

School Improvement Officer, Local Authority

Practical Considerations

Respondents also raised a range of practical considerations, including restating issues that they felt to be important in approaching assessment arrangements more generally. These included capacity constraints and workloads, especially in finding the time with which to collaborate between settings and schools, developing a common approach to assessment, and completing on entry assessments. This was felt to be a significant challenge by those schools drawing large numbers of learners from a catchment that included a significant number of feeder schools:

For new or growing schools, on entry assessments could become unmanageable and take away from day-to-day teaching and learning. I also think that on entry assessments for pupils starting education should be standard across the board for consistency of starting point (in the same way that qualifications at 16 should be standard).

Headteacher, Primary School

Standardisation

Responding to the issue of variation in approach, some respondents were of the view that a shared national standard, possibly with shared assessment and progression documents, would provide the basis for a more consistent and seamless approach to supporting transitions:

On entry assessments are sensible and appropriate, but they need to be centrally devised so [that] the measure is fair across all schools.

Senior Leader, Primary School

Effective Transitions

Allied to the theme of consistency, there was also a concern that children moving between settings and schools could face difficulty in adapting to a new curriculum which may be significantly different from what they were studying previously. Ensuring effective transitions was a concern for some, both in terms of the period during which schools are moving to new arrangements and in terms of moving pupils from one school to another under the new system:

Until GCSE exams change in line with the curriculum, school assessments and curriculums will have to continue to prepare learners for these. As such, assessments will have to continue to reflect the GCSE exams at secondary level. Primary assessments will also need to be in line with secondary assessments to ensure that data for year 7 pupils is more accurate and to ease [the] transition.

Teacher, Secondary School

Further Guidance

Meanwhile, other respondents also highlighted the potential value of greater detail and guidance, including further clarity as to what on entry assessments should look like. This was felt to be important to ensuring a level of consistency, supporting practitioners' engagement with on entry assessments, and addressing any specific challenges or considerations:

Yes, [the proposals are appropriate and realistic] but with clear guidelines of expectations. The document discusses requirements at a high level — the detail will allow a real opinion to be formed.

Headteacher, Secondary School

Broadly speaking, an entry assessment is appropriate and it is desirable to gain an understanding of where the learner sits on the 3–16 continuum. However, it will be essential to clarify the range of information to be transferred from the previous school to support the entry assessment. Very clear guidance is required regarding the well-being assessment, with specific [criteria] for making this judgement. Headteachers are not mental health specialists, and judgements of this type may leave schools open to challenge. This requirement may become unrealistic when learners may be transferring from different education systems within the UK or outside the UK.

Catholic Education Service

3 Shared Understanding of Progression

Another aspect of the proposals centres on expectations regarding developing a shared understanding of progression within and across settings and schools.

Summary of Proposals

The Curriculum for Wales places responsibility on individual settings and schools to design their own curriculum with discretion surrounding the topics and content of learning. It is therefore important to ensure that there is equity for learners across Wales in the education that they receive, as well as ensuring a level of consistency for learners in terms of their progression.

To support this, the proposals set out the expectations that settings and schools will facilitate the development of a shared understanding and approach to progression. These include the expectations regarding what progression may look like and the pace at which learners may progress, and that these should be taking account of when a setting or school designs and delivers their individual curriculum.

The proposals consider that this shared understanding of progression should be developed both through professional learning and as an ongoing process of professional dialogue. It is recognised that professional dialogue can provide opportunities for leaders and practitioners to share and reflect on the impact of their setting or school curriculum. Professional dialogue also presents opportunities to share experiences and learning.

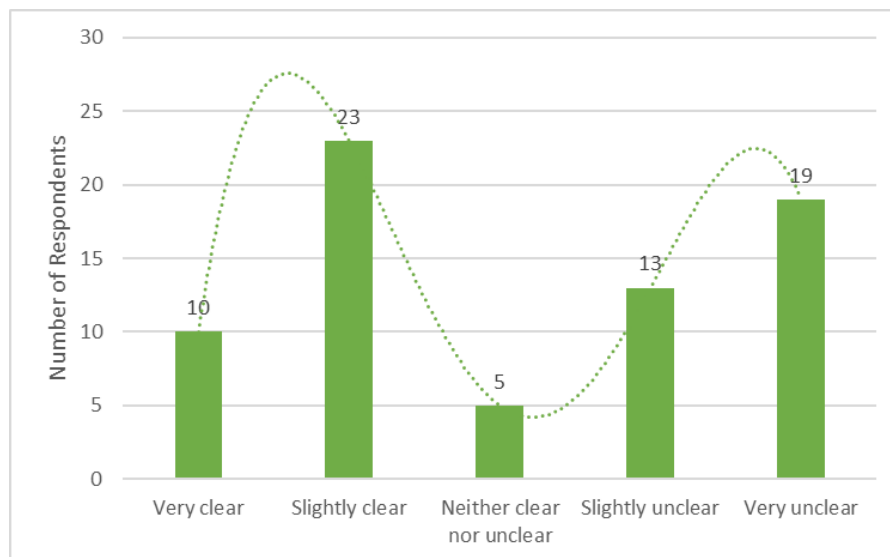
3.1 Clarity of Proposals

Respondents were first asked whether they felt as though the proposals surrounding the development of a shared understanding of progression were clear.⁵

⁵ Question 8: Are the expectations placed on settings and schools towards developing a shared understanding of progression clear?

3.1.1 General Perceptions

Overall, a slight majority of respondents felt that the proposals were clear. Those who felt that the proposals were unclear tended to highlight broader considerations, including the importance of further information and guidance that could support the development of a shared understanding of progression:



3.1.2 Key Themes

Clear Expectations

Many respondents stated that the expectations surrounding the development of a shared understanding of progression were clearly laid out in the proposals:

The expectations are clear but, again, place a huge burden and extra workload on schools and senior leaders.

Senior Leader, Primary School

These perspectives were also based on an implicit and explicit agreement with the overall approach, including the understanding that developing a shared understanding of progression would be beneficial in supporting learner progression. What is more, respondents highlighted the importance of a shared understanding of progression across schools and settings. From these perspectives, a common, consistent approach was important in terms of ensuring parity, reducing inequalities in education, and supporting effective transitions:

This section clearly states that it is the expectation that headteachers will be proactive in making links with settings — very positive for NM [non-maintained] settings. Assessment arrangements will be kept under review — again a positive

move. Being too rigid in the past has been an issue. [It is] good to know it can be revised if need be.

Funded Early Education Advisory Team

Further Information and Guidance

Respondents also felt that further detail would be necessary in supporting schools in understanding and acting on the requirements. This included some respondents who felt as though clarification as to how schools should practically approach developing a shared understanding of progression was needed:

We recognise the positive moves within guidance to ensure that schools develop a shared understanding of progression. We have identified a few points that need further clarity [...]. The first few paragraphs in the section on a 'shared understanding of progression' outline arrangements within schools, and the subsequent paragraphs focus on arrangements 'across schools'. The guidance should be clear whether there is an expectation that there are, or are not, links between these meetings and groups.

Estyn

Alongside how schools could practically approach the development of a shared understanding of progression, some respondents also highlighted further information that could support substantive discussions. This included information and guidance on how progression itself should be embedded in teaching and learning. From these perspectives, guidance or exemplars would support practitioners in visualising how assessment arrangements support progression and facilitate the development of a shared understanding of progression within and across settings and schools.

3.2 Supporting a Shared Understanding of Progression

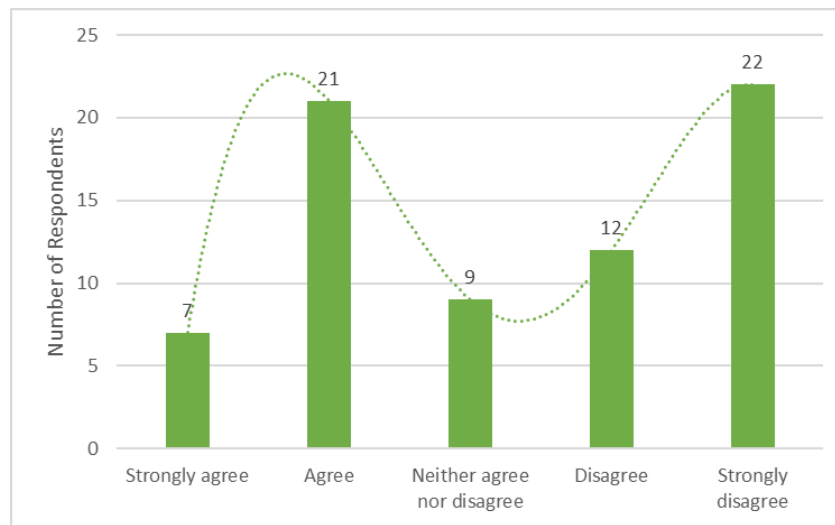
Respondents were then asked whether the proposals would be effective in supporting the development of a shared understanding of progression.⁶

3.2.1 General Perceptions

In response, there was a slight majority that disagreed that the proposals would lead to the development of a shared understanding of progression. Those expressing more negative perceptions again tended to highlight broader issues and considerations, including further information and guidance with which to support them in interpreting and understanding progression within the Curriculum for Wales. Some respondents also raised practical

⁶ Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the duties and expectations placed on settings and schools will effectively support the development and implementation of a shared approach to progression?

considerations and challenges in implementing the proposals. The practical issues are examined in the next section.



3.2.2 Key Themes

Effective Approach

Respondents expressed general agreement with the notion that the duties and expectations would be effective in supporting the development of a shared understanding of progression, with a number of respondents seeing it as positive that schools will lead on this. These perspectives were often premised by the importance of professional dialogue and its potential to advance coherent and effective approaches to understanding and supporting learner progression:

The strong emphasis on professional dialogue involving all [members] within and between schools will effectively support the development and implementation of a shared approach to progression. As mentioned earlier, there are many practical challenges that need clarification as well as further guidance on the dilemma facing schools of how to record progression concisely and effectively, as they currently 'second-guess' the requirements of external accountability.

Regional Consortium

3.3 Shared Understanding of Progression in Practice

In considering the practical implications of the proposals, respondents were asked for their views on any considerations or challenges in developing a shared understanding of progression.⁷

3.3.1 Key Themes

Capacity Constraints

As highlighted in other areas of the proposals, limited capacity and the implications for practitioners' workload were cited as major challenges in responding to the duties and expectations surrounding the development of a shared understanding of progression. This was particularly evident amongst respondents who felt that settings and schools were already under pressure. Meanwhile, others felt that the proposals could also have budgetary implications, including in releasing staff to participate in professional dialogue. There was also the concern surrounding how time would be made available to staff at all levels for both collaboration and professional development:

Time and funding will be required to facilitate meaningful engagement. It will also need some degree of coordination in clusters and beyond (in LAs and regional partnerships). Again, this requires dedicated time and funding.

School Improvement Officer, Local Authority

This needs staffing and capacity on a large scale to involve all staff and stakeholders. Admin staff to support this are vital, yet budgets are limited. The timescale is tight for September 22 whilst running covid catch-up, staff absence cover, and developing [year] 7 and 8 curriculum and full classes and blended learning. This needs workload assessing urgently. It takes no account of differences in primary or secondary settings, subjects, workloads, and sizes. Nowhere is there any tangible support proposed for schools.

Senior Leader

Communication between Settings and Schools

It was felt that in-depth communication and collaboration would be essential to developing a meaningful and coherent shared understanding of progression. Respondents stated that mutual commitment and respect would be needed, particularly between primary and secondary schools and other settings, in order to build successful relationships:

⁷ Question 10: In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding the promotion of a shared understanding of progression, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

There needs to be mutual respect as well as shared understanding between all stakeholders. Valuing what has come before is so important to progression, e.g. primary schools to value what children have learned and experienced before nursery class (e.g. early education in the non-maintained sector, Flying Start, child minder input, etc.) or what children have learned at home, and also for secondary schools to value what has been achieved in primary school.

Early Years Advisor, Local Authority

Broader Support

Some respondents also felt that schools would need broader support, including in facilitating dialogue across settings and schools. It was suggested that ongoing practical support would be needed from local authorities and other stakeholders, including in guiding and informing professional dialogue between settings and schools. From these perspectives, broader support would be valuable in supporting and encouraging collaboration and discussion between settings and schools.

Continuing Professional Development

Alongside guidance and broader support, respondents also highlighted the importance of access to accessible, high-quality learning opportunities. This would serve to reinforce professional dialogue, as well as building the confidence and skills of staff with respect to the new curriculum generally and assessment and progression specifically:

Professional development provided by the regional consortia would ensure consistency of training and promotion of shared understanding. All schools should be expected to engage in the training so that there is consistency across Wales.

Teacher

3.4 Additional Information and Shared Understanding of Progression

Respondents were also asked for their views on whether any additional information would be helpful in informing professional dialogue within and across schools and settings.⁸

3.4.1 Key Themes

Further Guidance and Exemplars

Again, the importance of further information and guidance in informing practice was considered to be valuable. There was a concern that if schools were unsure as to how to

⁸ Question 11: What additional information would be beneficial to support the overall process of developing a shared understanding of progression?

proceed, they could be cautious due to broader concerns such as accountability. It was felt that exemplars could be valuable in directing professional dialogue, as well as giving settings and schools an idea of what to aim for:

We understand and support the Welsh Government's desire to develop a methodology where meetings between schools become a positive vehicle for the development of a strong understanding of progression and [to] promote subsequent improvement. In order to do this, we believe that more guidance will be required to help schools to follow the timescales and to ensure that the substance of these meetings is beneficial for schools [...]. It would be helpful if there were further guidance to primary schools on the best way for them to ensure a shared understanding of progression from their curriculum to the different numbers of secondary schools they partner with (other than the school with whom they have a transition plan).

Estyn

The key theme raised by respondents was the inclusion of more practically oriented guidance, including exemplars, with which to support and inform professional dialogue within and across settings and schools. This was felt to be a valuable discussion point, as well as working towards a coherent and consistent shared understanding of progression:

Good communication, training, and collaborative work of schools/school clusters in sharing, seeing exemplar practice of what [the] Curriculum for Wales is.

Teacher

Examples of how it would look in different settings and schools.

Senior Leader, Primary School

Simple case studies/examples of good practice of how different settings undertake these processes effectively would be beneficial for others to 'picture' how it could/will work in practice. These could be in the form of a short, written report, videos, blogs, etc. Also, examples of timetables, minutes of meetings, etc. of how schools effectively capture information succinctly would be useful.

Regional Consortium

3.5 Meetings and Shared Understanding of Progression

In developing a shared understanding of progression, the proposals set out the expectation that settings and schools would meet internally and between settings and schools once per

term to discuss approaches to progression and share learning. Respondents were asked whether they felt that the approach was appropriate and realistic.⁹

3.5.1 Key Themes

Appropriate and Realistic

The proposal to meet termly was considered by the majority of respondents to be appropriate and realistic. From these perspectives, continuing professional dialogue would be important in developing a shared understanding of progression and in driving improvements in schools:

It has to be a must. I am concerned [that] without clear guidance of the purpose, it might become a talking shop. We need critical friends that will support but also challenge us. We need to push excellence. The children of Wales demand and deserve nothing less.

Headteacher, Secondary School

Capacity Constraints

The limited time available to practitioners was considered to be a potential barrier to professional dialogue by some. This was the key reason offered by those respondents who felt as though the proposals were unrealistic:

In an ideal world it is appropriate and realistic, but the reality needs organising and resourcing. Who attends? Who leads? Whose curriculum takes primacy? Who coordinates? When do they feed back? Who pays to cover costs and at the expense of what? [...] Every duty, partnership and initiative required by current law is drawing on school capacity and [they] are all reasonable and laudable in isolation, but in totality they are overloading a system where capacity and funding [have] shrunk in real terms.

Senior Leader

Not really. It's not enough time, but we don't have more. Being out of the classroom at all at the moment is very difficult.

Teacher

⁹ Question 12: Is the suggestion to meet on a termly basis appropriate and realistic?

4 Transition Plans

The proposals also set out expectations surrounding the development of transition plans for learners moving between primary and secondary schools.

Summary of Proposals

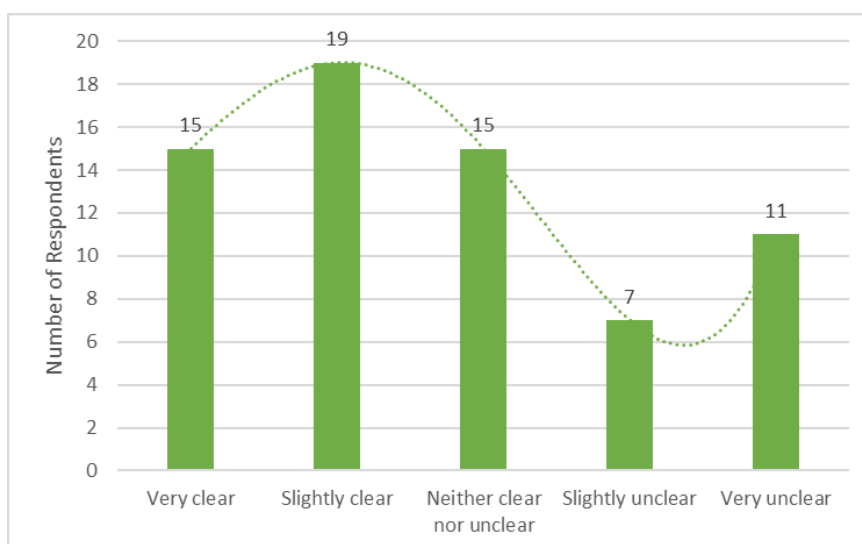
In order to ensure continuity of learning and continued appropriate and supported progression for learners between primary and secondary schools, effective planning is considered to be crucial. The Welsh Government are seeking to revise existing statutory requirements in respect of transition plans to ensure that they are in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales, as well as seeking to make new transition plans with respect to the new curriculum. This would include a range of information with which to support practitioners in understanding and supporting learner progression as they enter secondary school.

4.1 Clarity of Proposals

Respondents were asked whether the proposals were clear as to which schools would be required to undertake transition plans.¹⁰

4.1.1 General Perceptions

A broad majority of respondents were clear as to which schools would be required to complete transition plans.



¹⁰ Question 13: Are the proposals clear on which schools will be required to undertake transition plans?

4.1.2 Key Themes

Clear Expectations

Respondents, on the whole, found the proposals and expectations on schools regarding transition plans to be clear and effective. They often recognised the value and importance of more individualised, nonlinear approaches to supporting progression, including across transitions:

The proposals are clear in what they ask for and there is enough flexibility within them to enable schools and clusters to innovate. The proposals give scope for clusters to personalise their transition arrangements. Reviewing the proposals every three years gives scope for change. Clarity around the role of staff should be included including how their transition positively impacts the transition of learners

Regional Consortium

Transitions from Non-maintained Sector

Some felt that transition planning could extend to learners transitioning from nursery, non-maintained settings, and into primary schools. From these perspectives, this approach could be effective in supporting broader transitions, and more explicit reference could be made of the requirements on non-maintained sector with respect of transition planning.

In relation to pages 14-16 [of the guidance] this is only focused on transition from primary to secondary school. There are no proposals around transition into school from non-maintained settings or by children who are just accessing school for the first time without having attended a non-maintained setting. This section needs to have a title change or the wording needs to be changed to reflect wider transitions.

PACEY Cymru

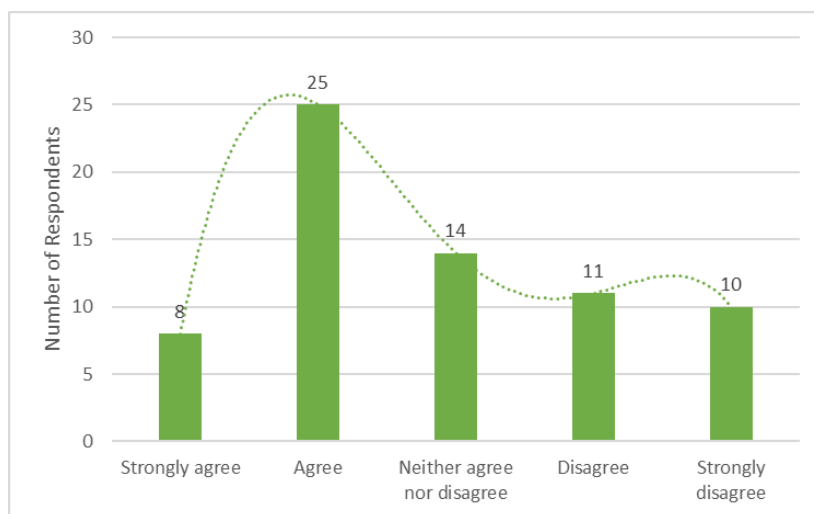
4.2 Information and Processes surrounding Transition Plans

Respondents were then asked for the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the new proposals for information within transition plans and the processes feeding into their development would effectively support continuity of learning and progression.¹¹

¹¹ Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the new proposals for information proposed within transition plans and the processes feeding into their development will effectively support continuity of learning and progression?

4.2.1 General Perceptions

Again, a clear majority of respondents felt that the proposals would effectively support continuity of learning and progression:



4.2.2 Key Themes

Effective Transition Plans

The importance of supporting transitions was recognised in ensuring and supporting continuity of learning and progression. Explicitly and implicitly from these perspectives, practitioners and senior leaders recognised the important role not only of communication between schools but also of its potential to effectively support learning and progression.

Well-Being and Transition Plans

There was hesitation amongst some respondents regarding the inclusion of information surrounding the well-being of learners within transition plans, particularly their mental health. From these perspectives, practitioners felt as though they were not necessarily well placed to make informed judgements concerning the mental health of learners:

What does “the mental and emotional well-being impacts” mean and what skills, tools and detail will accompany this to explain it? Teachers can describe the symptoms they see as educational practitioners, but I don’t believe they are trained to make judgements on mental health without the input of trained practitioners. The concept is sound, but to deliver in an education setting without support would be narrow and superficial.

Headteacher, Secondary School

How each individual learner’s needs and mental health and emotional well-being will be considered and supported as they transition from primary to secondary school, this is a huge statement where educationalists are being asked to assess and plan for

mental health diagnosis and treatment. Is this what is really meant? If so, how can it be done safely and appropriately within a system that does not have trained individuals in post? How can primary partners deliver this without the infrastructure to do so? I think this is a really moral step, but I think the impact of getting it wrong due to [a] lack of training or resources has not been covered.

Teacher

Others, however, felt that broader information on learner well-being could be valuable in supporting effective transitions:

It's good to see there is an expectation to share information on well-being and with a learner-centred approach — teachers will all be aware of how each child learns best, as well as what they can do. A lot will depend on the quality of the transition plans and how well and willing schools and settings are to work together. It will be a big time issue for both schools and settings.

Funded Early Education Advisory Teacher Team

4.3 Transition Plans in Practice

Respondents were asked if there were any practical considerations surrounding the proposals on transition plans.¹²

4.3.1 Key Themes

Capacity Constraints

Again, capacity constraints were seen to be a major potential barrier to the effective development and implementation of transition arrangements. Respondents were concerned about the time needed and whether there would be financial support for transition planning. This included time spent outside of the classroom for year 6 teachers, time for accommodating the reporting of large numbers of pupils, and time for cultivating relationships with numerous feeder schools and settings, all of which were cited as concerns. What is more, it was highlighted that professional development may be needed in order to effectively engage with the proposals:

Time will be a challenge. Secondary schools will need to accommodate the reporting of hundreds of pupils at transition. We do manage this well at the moment in our own cluster, but it has taken time to develop a satisfactory process.

Teacher

¹² Question 15: In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding transitions, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Consistency between Schools

Another area of concern related to the consistency in approach. From these perspectives, a lack of consistency in approach could raise a range of practical challenges, including undermining the effectiveness of the approach:

The accuracy of CTF [(Common transfer file)] systems so that pupil information is transferred accurately to schools, [and] consistency in relation to the summative and formative data being shared. Schools need to adopt a consistent approach to one-page profiles so that the transition processes can be strengthened. Will there be a more robust process in the reporting of mental and emotional well-being for transition?

Senior Leader, Secondary School

Meanwhile, others felt that further information and guidance, such as exemplars, would be beneficial in understanding the approaches and information that would be included in transition plans. From these perspectives, further guidance and exemplars were considered to be valuable in acting on the proposals:

The rationale is clear, but more detail would be helpful on what good practice might look like.

Senior Leader, Primary School

Number of Feeder Schools

Linked to the theme of the importance of consistency, some respondents also expressed the challenge that some schools may have a large number of feeder schools. This presents challenges in developing relationships and ensuring consistent and effective communication across multiple settings and schools to support transitions. This may require secondary schools to make sense of a diverse range of styles and formats in understanding learner progression. Others, meanwhile, raised the possibility that learners could transition from non-feeder schools, whereby adding to the complexity:

Also, the casual references to transition plans for pupils arriving from non-feeder schools need to be addressed. This could easily extend to 20+ primary schools, including outside of our LA [(local authority)].

Headteacher, Secondary School

Opportunities for Communication and Collaboration

Respondents highlighted the importance of schools working in partnership concerning transitions and planning. This included providing time and opportunities for schools to come together and work on the curriculum design, progress monitoring, and share information so that transitions are coherent and effective.

Quality of Transition Plans

Linked to capacity constraints, it was felt that much would rest on the quality of the transition plans and the ability and willingness of settings to work on them together in a meaningful way. Estyn pointed out that a successful transition would have to be supported through teaching and that this should be given consideration. It was therefore felt that the quality could vary from school to school and across the country:

We support fully the Welsh Government's aim to ensure that learners are supported effectively in their transition between primary and secondary schools [...]. However, we identify a few issues in the current proposals [...]. Paragraph 6.7 identifies well that transition plans 'should take account of continuity of learning, how that will be supported through teaching and learning when being developed'. This is an important point, as [a] successful transition depends not just upon continuity in planning, but teaching also. However, when paragraph 6.11 itemises the requirements of transition plans, there is no clear mention of teaching as a consideration.

Estyn

5 Reporting to Parents and Carers

The proposals also set out expectations surrounding reporting to parents and carers.

Summary of Proposals

Engagement with the wider school community, particularly parents and carers, is a fundamental principle of the Curriculum for Wales. Communicating effectively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis is an important way in which to foster positive relationships. This can help to aid learner progression by helping parents and carers to develop a clear understanding of how their children are progressing.

The proposals set out suggestions regarding the type of information that schools should seek to communicate with parents and carers. This includes the minimum requirements on the extent of the information communicated with parents. It will be for schools to determine the exact composition and extent of the information that they will provide, reflecting their local circumstances, school curriculum, and learner needs. The information provided should be tailored to the individual learner and focused on supporting their development and progression. Furthermore, the proposals set out the expectation that communication with parents and carers should be termly.

5.1.1 Parent and Carer Perspectives

Within two workshops, parents and carers of children aged 6–15 were engaged for their views. Parents and carers consistently spoke of the importance and value of communication from schools. Key themes included the quality, rather than the quantity, of information provided by settings and schools. Many parents and carers cited that they found practical, timely information to be valuable in engaging with their children's learning.

In terms of information preferences, these included information surrounding upcoming topics in which their children would be engaging so that they could supplement learning at home. Moreover, they included information on progression, including practical advice on where parents and carers could support their children, especially in areas in which they were falling behind. Presented with the list of information that schools should seek to communicate, parents and carers welcomed the proposals. This was especially the case in understanding the broader well-being of children, which parents and carers especially welcomed.

From the perspectives of parents and carers, there appeared to be significant variation in the current quality and consistency of communication from settings and schools. Some parents and carers spoke of instances in which communication was unhelpful. This tended to centre on more generic, formulaic communication that was neither specific to the learner nor actionable.

The importance of dialogue was also considered to be important. The opportunity to ask questions and discuss questions or concerns was especially welcomed by many. From these perspectives, providing parents and carers with a range of opportunities to understand and engage with their children's education was considered to be valuable.

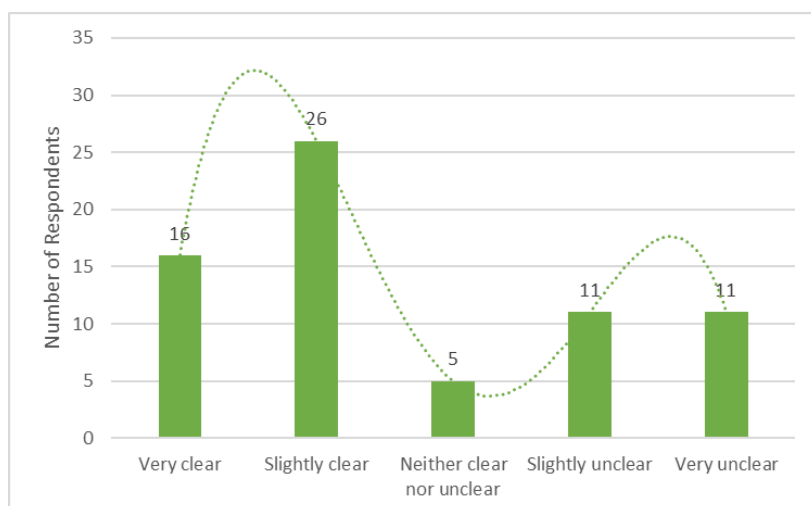
5.1.2 Learner Perspectives

Learners were also asked if they felt that communication with parents and carers was important to them. Consistently, learners expressed the importance of their parents understanding what they were learning at school. They felt as though it was important for their parents or carers to understand what they were learning at school because they could then discuss with and support them. Learners stated that their parents could help them to go over work that they had not understood, and that it was important that they knew what they were good at and what they were not good at.

There was, however, apparent disagreement regarding the inclusion of broader well-being information in communication with parents and carers. Learners often held strong feelings on the subject. Some expressed that they felt it to be really important that their parents and carers knew about their well-being so that they could support them if they needed it. Others felt that a teacher should seek permission from them to share information about their well-being with their parents, as their feelings were 'their private business' and they 'might not want their parents to know'. Meanwhile, others felt that it was not the responsibility of the teacher to comment on it, and that if they wanted to discuss it, they would.

5.2 Clarity of Proposals

Respondents were first asked whether they felt as though the expectations placed on settings and schools were clear.¹³ In response, a clear majority of respondents felt positively that the proposals were clear:



¹³ Question 16: Are the expectations placed on settings and schools around reporting to parents and carers clear?

5.2.1 Key Themes

Clear Expectations

Of those expressing that they felt that the proposals were clear, they often did not cite further reasons for their judgement. Of those who did, key themes included the fact that many settings or schools were already reporting progression regularly, and that they felt as though the proposals represented confirmation of their approach:

We have been reporting on progression at our school for many years, so teachers are used to working in this way.

Headteacher, Primary School

Reporting Mechanisms and Processes

A key area for further clarity as raised by respondents concerned the mechanisms and approaches with which practitioners and schools should communicate with parents and carers. These included further guidance on best-practice approaches and how to engage hard-to-reach parents and carers:

The principle of keeping parents and carers up to date on progress more frequently is a good one. The practicalities (7.11) without vastly increasing staff workload of termly reporting are not clear. What are the “different formats” other than a written report? A written report on email is still a written report.

Governor, Governing Body

Reporting Progress

Some respondents felt that how progress should be communicated to parents and carers was unclear. Parents and carers also stated that they felt that information on progress was important, including where a learner was behind or might require greater support. How progress could be effectively communicated under the new proposals could do with greater detail:

Section 7.8 especially provides a clear breakdown of what sort of information needs to be provided to parents/carers, while timelines for sharing information (i.e. termly, not necessarily written) [are] clear. But what is not clear is how to report progression and how to compare the pace of progression against the cohort (or even in comparison to the learner’s earlier time in the school setting).

Senior Leader, Special School

5.3 Reporting to Parents and Carers in Practice

Respondents were then asked for their views on any practical considerations in acting on the proposals.¹⁴

5.3.1 Key Themes

Communicating with Parents or Carers

Respondents raised the importance of meaningful information and communication that support parental engagement in their children's learning. Some felt that this would require a change in emphasis from standardised communication to a more personalised style of communication with opportunities for dialogue. From these perspectives, changes in approach and culture would be important:

Parents will require a lot of information in order to understand how/why reporting is changing and what the expectations are. However, most parents only want to know about their child's personal/social interactions with others, including their well-being, plus a report on literacy and maths. At a primary level they are not really concerned with how the child performs in every area of the curriculum. Parents often tell us they read the general comments, literacy, and maths and skim-read the rest. We need to listen to this and perhaps spend more time on the general comments, writing them personally and not cutting and pasting from a report-writing program. This will offer a far-greater insight into the child's holistic development. The challenge here is to convince teachers that this is the way forward. There is also a challenge surrounding [the] time required to produce personally recorded reports. Those teachers who are already writing reports of this personal nature spend their entire half-term break producing them. There will be a number of teachers unwilling to spend this time.

Senior Leader, Primary School

Hard-to-Reach Parents or Carers

A key issue centred on communicating effectively with parents and carers who may not be proactive in their children's learning. From these perspectives, the focus needed to be on supporting practitioners and schools in effectively engaging these parents and carers:

This will take release time for staff to ensure that all parents/carers are given good-quality opportunities etc. How do we ensure that those "hard-to-reach" parents also engage for the benefit of their children?

Headteacher, Primary School

¹⁴ Question 17: In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding reporting to parents and carers, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Capacity Constraints

The issue of time and resources with which to extend and deepen communications termly was also raised. From these perspectives, preparing and delivering communications and reports took time, which could potentially divert attention from other activities, including planning and learner feedback:

Having led reporting an assessment in a large high school for the last seven years, my experience is that to do so meaningfully takes a lot of teacher time and effort. The burdensome requirements here to report so often on so many criteria are completely unworkable. The risk here is that it will turn into a comment bank [or] tick-box exercise, rather than a meaningful report to parents, because of the frequency of reporting required. There is no consideration here for teacher well-being or teacher workload.

Senior Leader

The level of communication in each could be a workload issue. Currently, in secondary [school], staff write full reports once and short data reports twice annually for five year groups. If a written report is needed termly, then we have more than doubled the workload involved.

Senior Leader, Secondary School

Communicating Assessment Methods

It was felt that it would be important for parents and carers to understand the rationale behind the assessment methods used: as parents have traditionally been given information about their children's behaviour and quantitative data regarding their progress, the new paradigm would need to be carefully explained. Moreover, it was felt that the new arrangements for reporting would need to be explained and their effectiveness monitored:

Parents have historically been interested in behaviour and quantitative data on their child's progress, e.g. standardised scores, levels/outcomes. This will be tricky to explain to some parents.

Senior Leader, Primary School

5.4 Termly Communications

Respondents were then asked whether they felt as though the expectation of providing termly communications was appropriate and realistic.¹⁵

¹⁵ Question 18: Is the suggestion to provide termly communications with parents and carers appropriate and realistic?

5.4.1 Key Themes

Appropriate and Realistic

The overwhelming majority of respondents thought the suggestion to be both appropriate and realistic, as long as the information could be provided in a variety of formats. It was pointed out that many schools report termly at present through different types of parental consultation, such as at parents' evenings and via other methods:

Many schools already provide termly opportunities for parents to receive an update on their child's progress. As this is not a shift in practice for those schools, this is realistic.

School Improvement Officer, Local Authority

The Importance of Dialogue

Parents and carers reported that they felt as though two-way communication was important. The opportunity to ask questions and the availability and openness of practitioners were felt to be valuable. Parents and carers recognised that practitioners were busy; however, if issues arose, more time at parents' evenings was felt to be really important and valuable in helping their engagement with their children's learning. From these perspectives, parents and carers felt that termly communication was appropriate.

Timeliness of Communications

Parents and carers also felt that the timing of communications was important. There was a balance between giving parents enough time with which to plan and not being too far in advance. Most parents suggested that the start of the term would be ideal, giving them the time with which to think through activities and other learning opportunities that tie in with learning in class.

Flexibility Needed

It was also felt that a certain level of flexibility in communications with parents and carers was important. This included tailoring communications in order to suit different learners' needs as well as the expectations of parents or carers, and for different settings and schools:

In a special school with lower numbers of pupils this is entirely realistic, and regular communication is something we do have with parents (phone/written report). However, termly phone calls may be difficult in larger primary and secondary schools with the time constraints of staff timetables and the larger number of pupils per class. Maybe outside of parents' evening and the end-of-year report, schools may look at producing interim progress reports (which many already do).

Senior Leader, Special School

Flexibility also included the methods of communication, including not only written reports but also verbal communication. Parents and carers especially welcomed different modes of communication under different circumstances.

Frequency of Communications

Some respondents felt that reporting termly was too frequent and that parents would prefer a written report at the end of the year. This is at odds with the communication preferences expressed by parents and carers in workshops. Respondents felt, however, that there was a risk that reporting more frequently would become a tick-box exercise, rather than something meaningful and well thought through. Two respondents suggested that while frequency was a positive thing, it should be emphasised that there could be flexibility in the type of reporting for example that it does not have to be a written report:

Teachers' workload is already overloaded. Reports need to be purposeful and not staggered throughout the year, as it would be unrealistic at secondary level to provide all reports at the end of the year.

Teacher, Secondary School

5.5 Information Shared with Parents and Carers

Alongside the frequency of communications, the proposals set out expectations surrounding the substantive content of communications shared with parents and carers. Respondents were asked whether they felt as though the types of information outlined would support learning and progression.¹⁶

5.5.1 Key Themes

Provision of Good, Clear Information

Parents within workshops stated the importance of the quality of information and communication, rather than simply increasing the quantity. This included the depth of information, as well as clearly articulated information. From these perspectives, dialogue was also important, with opportunities to ask questions and explore issues with practitioners.

Practical Information

It was also felt that practical information with which to support learning at home was really important to some parents and carers. This included information on the topics that learners would be covering in class, as well as feedback on areas on which learners could work in

¹⁶ Question 19: Would sharing the types of information outlined in the proposals with parents and carers support learning and progression?

order to further their progression. Parents and carers also highlighted that it would be valuable to know the sorts of activities with which they could engage their children so as to support their learning.

Reporting on Well-Being

There was a consistent theme amongst respondents with regard to the suitability of responding on the well-being of learners, particularly their mental health. Whilst information regarding the well-being of learners was broadly welcomed by parents, learners' perceptions were somewhat mixed. Some felt it to be important, while others considered it not to be appropriate. Many senior leaders, practitioners, and governors similarly felt that it was not always possible to make accurate, meaningful and appropriate determinations of a learner's broader well-being:

A brief summary about the overall mental health and emotional well-being of a learner, I really don't think the unintended consequence of this has been considered. How could it be measured? How can an educationalist report on this to a parent? What will happen if they get it wrong? In other words, [what if] I report a child has good mental health [but] the child self-harms? Where is the potential for challenge going to lie?

Headteacher, Secondary School

We are not mental health professionals — we should not be commenting. Reports rarely aid progression — teacher actions do.

Teacher, Secondary School

From these perspectives, additional training and support would be needed in order to support teachers in engaging more meaningfully, and safely, with mental health issues.

Some went further, suggesting that it was not the role of practitioners to take sole responsibility for the overall well-being of a learner; rather, it was also the responsibility of parents and carers to monitor and support learners. Within workshops, some practitioners and senior leaders highlighted that the premise of including well-being information could create the perception that schools had sole responsibility for learner well-being. From these perspectives, learner well-being was complex, and all of those supporting them, including parents and carers, had a responsibility to the child.

6 Welsh Language

Respondents were then asked for their views on the proposals and their potential impacts on the Welsh language. Compared to other areas of the proposals, there was relatively little engagement with the questions from respondents.¹⁷

6.1 Treating Welsh Language Equally

6.1.1 Key Themes

Positive Impact

It was generally felt that the integration of Welsh into the curriculum would have a positive impact on the number of opportunities to use Welsh, and would help to embed the Welsh language in education.

No Impact

Meanwhile, others expressed that they felt as though the proposals would have no or a negligible impact on the Welsh language.

Negative Impact

A few respondents thought that they would have a negative impact. The reasons cited included the understanding that shortages of teachers who teach Welsh would be exacerbated by the proposals:

With the decreasing numbers of teachers who teach Welsh, this will be a bad thing (as schools will lessen the provision).

Teacher, Secondary School

Greater Focus

It was suggested that a long-term, integrated strategy was required within the legislation, with planned opportunities for use of the language, including within on entry and progression assessments and the well-being section.

¹⁷ Question 20: We would like to know your views on the effects that this legislation 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?

More Support

It was felt that schools needed external support in order to drive the Welsh language forward, particularly in supporting learners from non-Welsh backgrounds. Furthermore, it was felt that schools needed support from parents.

6.2 Ensuring Positive Impacts

Respondents were then asked how the proposals could be strengthened to ensure positive impacts on the Welsh language.¹⁸

6.2.1 Key Themes

Of the 13 who responded to this question, five stated that they felt as though no changes were needed.

Provision of Bilingual Guidance

Respondents suggested that resources needed to be developed in both languages, and that on entry and other assessments should be developed with the Welsh language as a substantive part and taking Welsh-medium settings into consideration.

Communication between Welsh- and English-Medium Schools

It was felt that meetings between schools to discuss assessment etc. should be encouraged, and it was suggested that partnering between Welsh- and English-medium schools could be a way in which to ensure parity between schools and offer more opportunities for staff and pupils to hear and speak Welsh.

More Support for Parents, Carers and Practitioners

Some respondents highlighted that all practitioners should be given access to Welsh lessons and the time with which to do them. What is more, it was felt that training should be equally available for practitioners in both languages. It was suggested that parents should be given access to training and support in order to engage in the Welsh language with their children.

Individualised Approach

Two respondents suggested that the new approach should allow the development of Welsh-language skills to be considered on a more individualised basis to allow Welsh learners to be

¹⁸ Question 21: Please also explain how you believe this legislation could be formulated or changed so as to have: i) 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 ii) 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.

assessed more fairly (rather than in comparison to other students who are proficient in the language).

7 Conclusions

Overall, there were two distinct perspectives on the proposals set out in the subordinate legislation. The first focused on the clarity of the proposals in communicating the expectations placed on schools. On the whole, respondents highlighted where clarification would be useful, including in determining the responsibility and governance arrangements. This tended to represent fairly minor adjustments to the wording of the proposals.

The second perspective focused on the practical implications of the proposals. This suggested that many respondents were going beyond the legislation to consider what assessment and progression would look like in practice. For many, issues such as time, confidence and skills would be central to the effective implementation of the proposals. Respondents often felt that practical constraints were exacerbated by the perceived lack of specificity and definition in the proposals.

The Curriculum for Wales sets out a vision for the future of education which seeks to empower settings and schools to take a more active role in curriculum and assessment design. Through subsidiarity, it gives settings and schools greater local discretion in the design and implementation of assessment arrangements. Curriculum reform is itself a process through which practitioners interpret, explore and internalise what the Curriculum for Wales means for teaching and learning, which can take time. In conversations with senior leaders and governors, and through the responses, it was apparent that some were still developing an understanding of the reforms, unsure as to how everything would fit together or could work in their setting or school. This includes understanding the breadth of guidance and frameworks that together support the Curriculum for Wales, including with regard to assessment and progression. In order to advance that process, respondents often cited that further guidance, including exemplars, would be valuable in visualising how the Curriculum for Wales and the associated assessment arrangements could take shape.

Overall, there was support for the general sentiment and objectives of the proposed subordinate legislation, including regarding the aims of the proposals and how they would support learner progression. These included, for example, the importance of promoting effective communication and dialogue with parents and carers, as well as developing a shared understanding of progression as a means of improving practice. This suggests that there was a level of consensus surrounding the objectives of the legislation, one that was contingent on a broader range of practical questions, including the potential impact on workloads. Efforts to develop the accompanying guidance, training and support that would be offered to settings and schools could be key in overcoming some of these challenges.

Appendix 1: Consultation Questions

Question 4: Are the expectations placed on settings and schools towards assessment arrangements clear? Please explain your answer:

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the duties and expectations placed on settings and schools will effectively support learner progression in line with the Curriculum for Wales? Please explain your answer:

Question 6 – In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding assessment, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Question 7 – Is the duty placed on settings and schools to undertake an entry assessment appropriate and realistic?

Question 8 – Are the expectations placed on settings and schools towards developing a shared understanding of progression clear? Please explain your answer:

Question 9 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the duties and expectations placed on settings and schools will effectively support the development and implementation of a shared approach to progression? Please explain your answer:

Question 10 – In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding the promotion of a shared understanding of progression, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Question 11 – What additional information would be beneficial to support the overall process of developing a shared understanding of progression?

Question 12 – Is the suggestion to meet on a termly basis appropriate and realistic?

Question 13 – Are the proposals clear on which schools will be required to undertake transition plans? Please explain your answer:

Question 14 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the new proposals for information proposed within transition plans and the processes feeding into their development will effectively support continuity of learning and progression? Please explain your answer:

Question 15 – In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding transitions, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Question 16 – Are the expectations placed on settings and schools around reporting to parents and carers clear? Please explain your answer:

Question 17 – In responding to the duties and expectations surrounding reporting to parents and carers, are there any practical considerations or challenges that you think should be reflected in the proposals?

Question 18 – Is the suggestion to provide termly communications with parents and carers appropriate and realistic?

Question 19 – Would sharing the types of information outlined in the proposals with parents and carers support learning and progression?

Language

Question 20 – We would like to know your views on the effects that this legislation 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?

Question 21: Please also explain how you believe this legislation could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) 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
- ii) 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.

Question 22 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not been specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

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