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Analysis of Consultations on Additional Curriculum for Wales Guidance

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Wavehill: social and economic research

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1 Introduction

This report presents a summary of the views and perspectives held by respondents with regard to draft guidance and documentation that surrounds the Curriculum for Wales. In order to support settings and schools in engaging with elements of the new curriculum, practitioners and stakeholders have been co-designing the following draft guidance and documentation:

- [Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks](#)

In understanding how helpful and clear these documents were, the Welsh Government sought the views and perspectives of the educational community. Each element of the guidance and documentation was put to consultation. The feedback and perspectives have informed the continued development of the documents and guidance, before the Curriculum for Wales is rolled out to settings and schools in September 2022.

Respondents' views towards each element of the draft guidance are explored in this report. This includes a summary of the responses, followed by a detailed examination of the views and perspectives expressed by respondents.

2 Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks

A consultation was held which sought the views and perspectives of practitioners and broader stakeholders with regard to the revised ABC Steps within and across the Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks.

Executive Summary

Respondents were consulted on the revisions to the ABC Steps within the Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks. The frameworks and the ABC Steps are intended to support those engaged in supporting the development of literacy, numeracy, and digital competence for learners working towards progression step 1. In total, 21 respondents kindly contributed their views towards the revisions.

Findings

Respondents were (on the whole) very positive towards the revisions to the ABC Steps. This included towards the documents themselves as well as the broader objectives that they seek to advance. There was general consensus surrounding the importance of supporting all learners, for example, including those with additional learning needs. Many respondents also welcomed the general sentiment and orientation of the approach. This included the importance placed on personalised learning and progression, as well as the recognition and role of professional judgement in supporting learners.

Overall, the frameworks themselves were considered to be helpful for practitioners. Many felt that elements such as the Routes for Learning (RfL) and ABC Steps were clear and accessible. These would effectively support practitioners' engagement with teaching and learning, including in planning and supporting learner progression.


Where respondents offered suggestions on strengthening the frameworks, these tended to focus on precision and detail within the RfL and the ABC Steps. These included tightening the consistency within and across statements, as well as where they could be amended or expanded. Moreover, some respondents wished to see more explicit mention of certain elements within the ABC Steps, such as children's rights and the Welsh language. Respondents also raised the potential value of further information such as exemplars and a glossary. From these perspectives, further precision and detail within the ABC Steps would support and ensure learner progression.

Overall, suggestions on where the ABC Steps could be strengthened represented minor adjustments to the revised ABC Steps. Respondents (again) largely welcomed the revisions and felt that they provided a valuable resource in supporting all learners.

2.1 Background

Literacy, numeracy, and digital competence are mandatory cross-curricular skills within the Curriculum for Wales Framework. They are the essential building blocks that underpin all learning and enable learners to access the breadth of the curriculum.

In supporting settings and schools in engaging all learners, including those who have additional learning needs, the ABC Steps have been refined within the [National Literacy and Numeracy Framework](#) (LNF) and the [Digital Competence Framework](#) (DCF). The frameworks are for all learners, and the ABC Steps reflect important early precursors to literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. The RfL and the ABC Steps describe the progression that learners may make as they consolidate and apply their skills towards progression step 1 and beyond:

Routes to ...				Progression Step 1	Progression Step 2	Progression Step 3	Progression Step 4	Progression Step 5
RfL <i>routemap</i>	A Steps	B Steps	C Steps					
								

To reflect the spirit of the Curriculum for Wales Framework, the ABC Steps statements have been revised and are now expressed from the point of view of the learner. The draft revised ABC Steps have been developed by practitioners from across Wales through a process of co-construction. Feedback from this consultation is intended to inform further refinements to the ABC Steps.

More information, including links to the revised ABC Steps themselves, can be found [here](#).

2.2 Responses

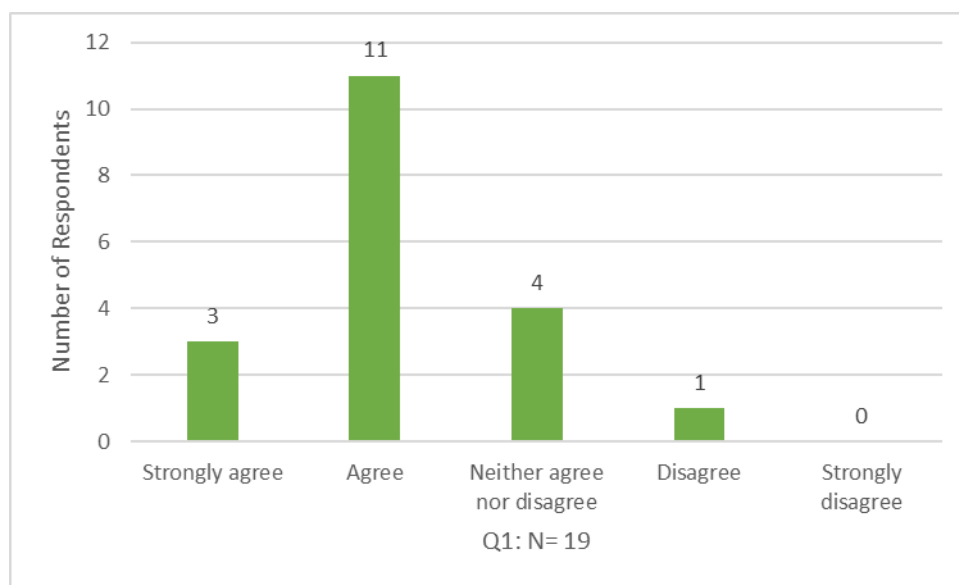
Between May and July 2021, 21 respondents kindly took the time to respond to the consultation. These included a diverse range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the frameworks. Respondents included parents/carers, practitioners, senior leaders, and governors. Furthermore, they included those supporting settings and schools, such as challenge advisors and school improvement officers. Responses were also received from organisations including regional consortia, umbrella bodies, teaching unions, and Estyn. Advocacy groups including the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru and the Children's Commissioner for Wales also kindly took the time to respond to the consultation.

2.3 Changes to the ABC Steps

Respondents were first asked whether they agreed with the changes to the ABC Steps.¹

General Perceptions

Overall, respondents broadly welcomed the revisions to the ABC Steps. Together, 73 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed changes:



Many respondents expressing more positive views towards the changes did not offer any further reflections. Of those respondents who were either unsure or in disagreement with the changes, only one offered further thoughts as to why. This respondent focused on greater clarity and consistency within the ABC Steps, sentiments that were shared with some other respondents expressing more positive views.

Key Themes

Level of Detail

There was apparent disagreement amongst some respondents concerning the level of detail that should be offered within the ABC Steps. A few respondents, for example, highlighted that greater detail and depth in places would make the ABC Steps more valuable and informative. Respondents outlined specific areas in which they felt as though the guidance could be strengthened:

Literacy: More detail required for the phonological awareness strand. Additional small steppingstones in B step.

Challenge Advisor, Local authority

¹ Do you agree with the changes to the ABC Steps within the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and the Digital Competence Framework? Please expand where you do not agree, explaining why.

Conversely, some others felt that in order to promote and encourage greater personalised learning, the frameworks and ABC Steps should provide an overview (rather than information which is too detailed or prescriptive). From these perspectives, this would enable and empower practitioners to exercise their professional judgement in keeping with the general sentiment of the Curriculum for Wales, and may also prevent the ABC Steps from becoming a tick-box exercise:

[I] agree with [the] wording from [a] pupil point of view but feel that it would be better to reduce the number of indicators and have more of a developmental route with key markers. The detail can be used by teachers if required but in keeping with the new curriculum. I feel we should have main pathway indicators for progression which teachers can use to support planning, [using] their professional judgement and their knowledge of child development or other tools to give them the detail where required for particular aspects to meet pupil needs.

Regional consortium

Consistency

Those wishing to see a greater level of detail within the ABC Steps tended to also highlight the importance of consistency across and within different frameworks. This included specific examples of where statements within and across steps A, B and C could be tightened or made more consistent:

Generally, yes, but [there are] concerns about progression in some strands. Listening for meaning, [e.g.] 'I can show [...]' in [A] and [C] but not [B] — consistency? Is the progression between 'I can show I understand [...]' [A] and 'I can listen [...]' [B] appropriate?

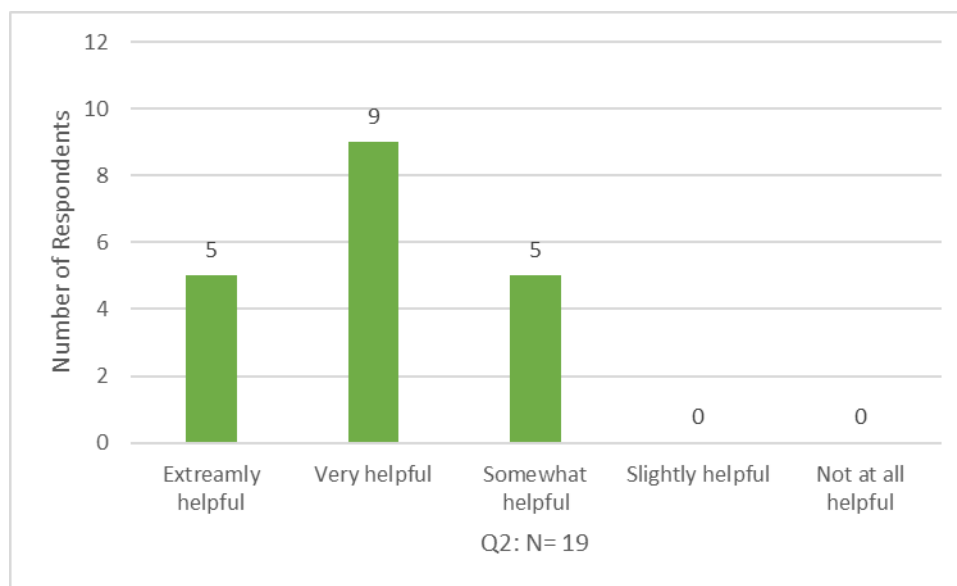
School Improvement Officer, Regional consortium

2.4 Routes for Learning Milestones

Respondents were then asked for their views on how helpful the Routes for Learning (RfL) milestones are for practitioners.²

General Perceptions

In keeping with the general positive sentiments expressed by respondents with regard to the frameworks and ABC Steps, 73 per cent found the RfL to be very or extremely helpful:



Key Themes

Supporting Practitioner Engagement

A key theme raised by respondents was the value and importance of RfL in supporting practitioners' engagement with the ABC Steps. From these perspectives, the RfL provided important contextual information conveying prerequisite learning and overall learning objectives:

The inclusion of the key Routes for Learning milestones within the ABC Steps documents for literacy, numeracy, and digital competency could be extremely helpful for supporting practitioners with understanding the prerequisite learning required for learners. The addition of this information could support practitioners in identifying any gaps in learning which could hinder the development of these skills. This would allow practitioners the opportunity to target skill areas which need to be developed further. Also, the addition of the key Routes [for] Learning milestones [supports] the understanding of progress as a continuum and [supports] the consistent small steps of progress which should be made by learners.

² The frameworks include the key Routes for Learning milestones. The intention is to provide practitioners with an understanding of prior prerequisite learning. Is this helpful?

Positive perceptions were often underscored by the understanding that the RfL provided a clear and accessible account that would support engagement with learners. Some respondents highlighted the importance and value of presenting the RfL and the ABC Steps within a single document:

[It] provides information within the Routes for Learning and enables staff to see progression as a continuum. It is a good point of reference for staff where they have concerns with specific learners. To see the framework in its entirety in one document [which] includes the RfL, ABC Steps, and progression step will help to see the pathway.

Challenge Advisor, Local authority

It is important that progression (albeit from ABC Steps to progression step 1, or RfL to ABC Steps) is accessible to practitioners. Keeping the RfL steps within the same document will help practitioners plan with far greater ease and to understand progression.

School Improvement Officer, Local authority

There was also implicit and explicit agreement with the general sentiment and objectives of the RfL, ABC Steps, and frameworks more generally. These included the perceived emphasis on empowering practitioners within the frameworks more broadly and in encouraging greater and more meaningful engagement with supporting every child's development:

This enables practitioners to understand early child development cognition and how early understandings of mathematics begin and develop. This raises the professional learning for all staff supporting learners to make progress.

Regional consortium

Greater Detail and Consistency

Again, some respondents highlighted areas in which greater detail and consistency would be valuable. These included specific examples of where the RfL and ABC Steps could be strengthened:

Literacy: The steps progress through the skills but some are open to interpretation and are not specific enough. Numeracy: Yes, helpful, although links would give further support and clarity [...]. DCF: Yes, very helpful to identify prior learning which will be needed [while] moving on through steps A, B and C. Some strands of the DCF ABC Steps do not have [the] RfL. The statements are often vague and do not provide the clarity required. There are a number of features missing across the board. [The] frequency of 'I can [...]' statements [is] too varied. In some instances, it states regularly, 'I can [...]'.

In other statements it is not mentioned. This ideally needs to underpin a strong assessment statement. Details of independence are omitted; this needs to be specified.

Association of School and College Leaders Cymru, Teaching union

The identified RfL target doesn't always have a clear link to the associated ABC Step thread.

Senior Leader, Special school

2.5 Supporting Learner Progression

Respondents were then asked whether the revised ABC Steps supported practitioners in planning for progression along a personalised continuum of learning between steps.³

General Perceptions

In response, 68 per cent of respondents agreed that the revised ABC Steps effectively supported practitioners' engagement with planning and progression. The remaining 32 per cent of respondents were unsure.

Key Themes

Supporting Practitioner Engagement

Those in agreement often felt that the information was presented in an accessible and engaging way. From these perspectives, the ABC Steps offered sufficient information to act on the guidance in support of learner progression:

The steps are broken down and show clear progression at an early stage of learning.

Teacher, Special school

It is logical, straightforward and progressive.

Governors Consultative Committee

Another feature of this theme was (again) the balance between detail and flexibility within the revised ABC Steps. Some respondents felt that the frameworks had achieved the right balance, offering enough information to support planning and progression without being prescriptive:

The ABC Steps give practitioners a framework to monitor the development of learners. These steps are broad, showing learning as a continuum, allowing the opportunity for

³ Do the revised ABC Steps support practitioners in planning for progression along a continuum of learning and personalisation of learning between steps?

planning a variety of activities to support progress between steps. The steps are not prescriptive — they allow practitioners the freedom to plan activities appropriate to the individual needs of learners.

Estyn

Practical Application

Some highlighted the importance of understanding how the ABC Steps are applied to teaching and learning in practice. From these perspectives, the effectiveness of the frameworks would be located in how they are interpreted and applied:

Mae cofnod o gynnydd mewn camau pendant ym medrau'r dysgwr, fel sy'n cael ei gofnodi yn y cerrig milltir, yn gymorth i ymarferwyr i weld beth sy'n ddisgwyliedig i gyrraedd y cam nesaf. Mae 'sut' mae hynny'n digwydd, i'w weld, yn benderfyniad i'r ymarferydd a'i broffesiynoldeb ei hun.

They will help practitioners to see what is expected to reach the next stage, by presenting a record of progress in tangible steps in a learner's skills, as highlighted in the ABC Steps. How that happens, it seems, is a matter for the practitioner and their own professionalism.

Challenge Advisor, Local authority (translated from the original)

Some raised concerns that the frameworks could be interpreted and applied narrowly to teaching and learning. This included the perception the the ABC Steps and frameworks could be applied as checklists. This is where practitioners observe certain skills or attributes highlighted within the frameworks without necessarily considering progression more holistically in planning and teaching:

In my view, there are too many features in this and [it] can almost become a checklist, which it is not intended for. It should be a planning tool and, hence, key pathway markers to support teachers. The explanation of what this looks like could be in a guidance booklet (like in Routes for Learning) to exemplify what that marker looks like.

Regional consortium

Further Information

Another theme raised by respondents included the potential value of further information within the overall guidance that surrounds the frameworks. This included making a clearer distinction as to the learners who are the focus of the ABC Steps and the support that they should receive:

In referring to the ABC Steps, it is important to make the distinction that not all learners with [additional learning needs] will be working to these steps. Many learners with [additional learning needs] are capable of achieving [on] par with their peers (given

the appropriate support). Practitioners should work with specialist professionals, such as teachers of the deaf, in order to establish which progression steps are suitable and support learners to reach their full potential.

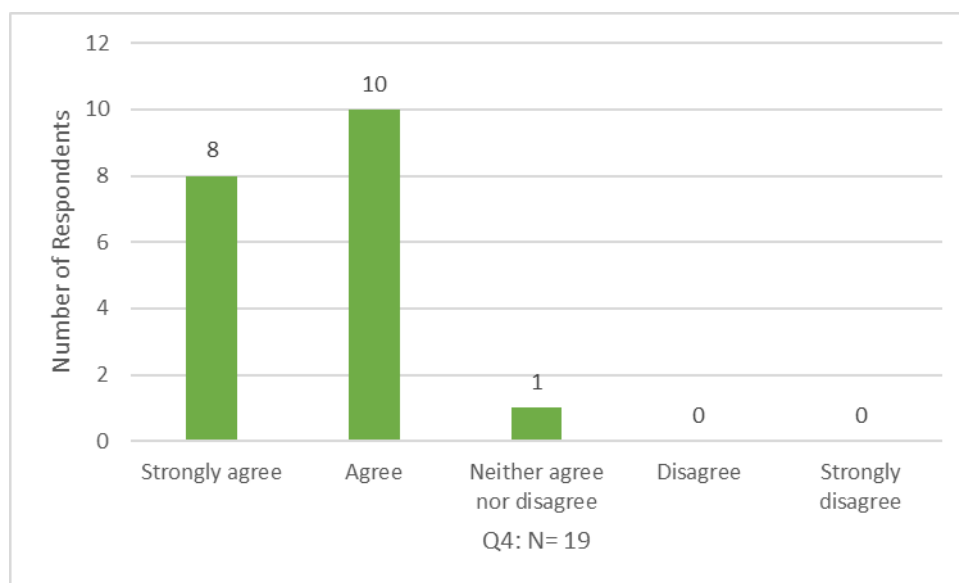
National Deaf Children’s Society Cymru

2.6 Motor Function Development

In exploring supporting motor function development, respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with its inclusion within the ABC Steps of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.⁴

General Perceptions

Overall, 94 per cent of respondents agreed that it should be included, with no respondents disagreeing:



Key Themes

There was general consensus in more open reflections with regard to the importance of acknowledging, including and supporting motor function development. This was felt to be valuable in ensuring learner progression:

For too long we have followed a “one size fits all” curriculum and it never has. Now, with inclusions such as this, we can accommodate for the needs of all learners.

Regional consortium

⁴ Do you agree with the inclusion of motor function development from gross motor to fine motor skills within the Literacy and Numeracy Framework ABC Steps?

The inclusion of the development from gross motor to fine motor skills is vitally important and needs to be assessed and monitored effectively.

Association of School and College Leaders Cymru, Teaching union

The inclusion of motor function development from gross to fine motor skills within these documents is helpful and an accurate reflection of progress steps during this phase of learning. These skills underpin the development of many steps throughout these documents and should be considered across the curriculum. For many learners, the development of these skills can delay the development of further skills. For example, delays in the acquisition of gross motor skills can impact on developing writing skills. In addition to this, many learners who will be assessed on the ABC Steps may have additional learning needs. For these learners, specialist provision, such as occupational therapy, may be in place to support their development. The inclusion of motor skills in these steps will support close working between class teachers and specialist staff for the holistic development of learners' skills.

Estyn

Further Information

Others qualified their agreement with the inclusion of motor function in the frameworks. This included the importance of offering a more holistic understanding of motor function in the context of individual learners' physical and sensory development:

There is so much more than gross and fine motor skills within literacy and numeracy, and [the ABC Steps] should reflect beyond just that.

Parent/carer

From these perspectives, greater detail would be valuable in supporting practitioners' engagement with supporting motor function development. This included further information and guidance, including on signposting materials and support:

This area is very important but should have its own section and not be included in vocabulary, spelling and grammar. A "preparation for writing" section could be included that includes all of the gross and fine motor skills and core stability, posture, etc. included. Handwriting Motorway is an excellent programme that develops all of these areas and could be used as reference.

Senior Leader, Special school

2.7 Handwriting and the Literacy Framework

Respondents were then asked whether an additional element should be included within the writing strand of the Literacy Framework. This included the recognition of physical sensory difficulties that may impact on learners' ability to develop their handwriting skills.⁵

General Perceptions

In total, 15 respondents (79 per cent) agreed that physical sensory difficulties should be included. A further two respondents felt unsure or that they should not be included respectively.

Key Themes

Those expressing more positive sentiments towards the inclusion of physical sensory difficulties within the framework tended to highlight the potential to support practitioners and learners. From these perspectives, acknowledging alternative approaches to supporting those with physical sensory difficulties would encourage more effective support:

[It would be] helpful for those providing for pupils needing to take this approach. Even though this is very specific and affects few, it would be helpful information for those supporting pupils.

School Improvement Officer, Regional consortium

We believe that the addition of this element of writing would be beneficial for both learners and practitioners. Some learners may never be able to develop the skills to write with a pencil; however, they may be able to acquire skills allowing them to write fluently through other means, e.g. typing. The addition of these skills will ensure that teachers consider that physical sensory difficulties need not be a barrier to the development of good writing skills. In addition to this, it will provide practitioners with the means to monitor the development of these skills in line with their peer group (as it is important to note that some pupils who struggle with physical sensory difficulties may not have a learning disability).

Estyn

Assistive Technology

Others highlighted the value and importance of raising the profile of assistive technology in supporting communication. From these perspectives, the explicit inclusion of technology alongside handwriting may encourage them to be more effectively embedded into teaching and learning:

⁵ Some learners develop alternative methods for handwriting due to physical sensory difficulties. Should an additional element be added to the writing strand of the Literacy Framework to recognise the development and progression of these skills (i.e. producing text without pen and pencil)? Please provide details explaining why.

I have taught many pupils who have needed to rely on other methods of written communication, e.g. laptops [and] iPads, and this has been viewed generally as a poorer relation to writing. Including it in the Literacy Framework would raise the profile of this as a tool for communication, especially given the significance of word processing in future employment.

Senior Leader, Primary school

Alternative technology can be supportive and, therefore, should be noted. We need to be clear [that] this is planning for teaching and progression of skills.

Regional consortium

Further Information

Alongside technology, other respondents also highlighted further information within the framework that could be valuable. This included broader RfL and ABC Steps that encompass alternative learning steps amongst those learners who may require the development of communication skills other than handwriting:

This needs to be broken down into two distinct areas: a) the development of the physical skills required to handwrite (as mentioned in the question above), which we are aware some pupils will never be able to develop due to their physical conditions — we are not sure it is relevant to include alternative targets specifically about developing the physical skills needed for alternative methods to handwriting, as these skills will be different for different pupils (e.g. eye gaze skills, ability to press a switch, etc.); [and] b) the development of the skills involved with composing a piece of “writing”, which can either be handwritten or created using assistive technology and this will involve the ability to sequence, create a narrative, etc. The revised ABC Steps already seem to address this well and [include] the fact [that] pupils may be using IT to create their writing.

Senior Leader, Special school

Not Required

Two respondents felt that the inclusion of physical sensory difficulties was not required. From these perspectives, they felt that the framework (as it stood) was sufficient to support all learners:

It is already stated that speaking [symbols]/visuals can be used.

Teacher, Special school

An argument can be made that pupils [who] progress from mark making to handwriting can be developed with the current framework and that introducing an

additional element will not be of benefit and [will be] overly prescriptive. The medium which pupils use to communicate through mark making and [progress] to handwriting can be at the discretion of the school in order to meet the needs of their learners.

School Improvement, Local authority

2.8 ABC Steps Statements

In exploring the value and communication of the ABC Steps statements, respondents were then asked whether the level of detail provided within the frameworks was sufficient.⁶

Key Themes

Detail and Clarity

Of those respondents who offered thoughts and reflections, the key theme was the inclusion of additional detail or clarification where it was felt that it would strengthen the ABC Steps statements. From these perspectives, further detail and clarification could be valuable in ensuring that practitioners have what they need in order to effectively support learners:

Within ABC Steps, it would be helpful to provide further examples to avoid opportunity for misunderstanding. For example, 'I can interact with others online' [and] '[I can] observe others online' — these statements are quite broad and could be applied to very different levels.

Regional consortium

Respondents tended to highlight very specific statements that they would like to see clarified or included:

'Show awareness of punctuation marks' — C step could be perceived to be more complex than progression step 1. More clarification would be helpful.

School Improvement Officer, Regional consortium

Others felt that some of the statements could be revised slightly. This included the suggestion that specific sequences of RfL and ABC statements were out of step:

Literacy: Collaborative talk: A step is too high and too big a jump from RfL; Questions: A [step] is too high and in C [step] — why? Questions are too difficult.

Senior Leader, Special school

⁶ Are there any ABC Steps statements which you feel are too detailed/not detailed enough? Please provide details explaining why.

Additionally, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales felt that children’s rights could be more explicitly incorporated within the ABC Steps contained within the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) statements:

Within the descriptions of steps, the specific rights of the UNHCR should be included. This means that there is no ambiguity about what these rights are — either for professionals or for children [...]. Using the language of rights is also affirmative and empowering, which may be particularly important for older children with additional learning needs, whose skills development may be guided by this framework.

Children’s Commissioner for Wales

Some respondents went beyond the ABC Steps statements to highlight further information that may be valuable to present to practitioners. This included broader information and guidance that could support practitioners’ engagement with the frameworks. Estyn, for example, suggested that exemplars and other materials such as a glossary could be valuable in helping practitioners to make connections between the frameworks and teaching and learning:

We feel that the steps in these documents are consistent, accurate and appropriately detailed. However, there is scope to strengthen the wider understanding of these steps with the addition of examples and a glossary of key terms. For example, a glossary of key terms to explain certain phrases such as ‘vestibular’ or ‘proprioceptive’ would ensure good understanding for all readers. Also, some steps could be strengthened with the addition of examples to aid understanding, such as literacy steps, reading strategies, B steps, ‘discriminate between symbolic representation’; or within digital competency, data and information literacy, B step, ‘I can understand that one item can be represented by another means’. Exemplification could make the document and guidance more accessible to all, including parents and support staff.

Estyn

Sufficient Detail

A few respondents felt that the ABC Steps statements were sufficient. From these perspectives, they provided sufficient coverage and depth without being too prescriptive and facilitating personalisation:

Schools and settings should have the opportunity to appropriately personalise between steps in order to meet the needs of their learners. The level of detail is sufficient without being overly prescriptive.

School Improvement Officer, Local authority

2.9 Additional Materials

Respondents were then asked whether there were any further materials that they felt it would be valuable to make available to practitioners in supporting learners.⁷

Key Themes

Additional Guidance

Additional guidance was felt to be important in ensuring that specific aspects or considerations are given to the frameworks by practitioners. This included, for example, ensuring that practitioners communicate effectively in supporting learners:

The Cross-Curricular Skills Frameworks should highlight that practitioners need to be aware that some learners may struggle with one area of learning, particularly those with additional learning needs. The guidance should encourage teachers to share information in an individual development plan so that cross-curricular learning does not mean that barriers faced in one subject by a learner [create] barriers in other subjects.

National Deaf Children's Society Cymru

Exemplars

There appeared to be slight disagreement amongst respondents regarding the role and value of exemplars in supporting engagement with the frameworks. Some felt that exemplars would be valuable in providing practitioners with practical suggestions in planning and embedding the ABC Steps into teaching and learning:

[There should be] digital resources and examples of appropriate (and successful) methods being used within various schools across Wales, [particularly] multisensory approaches and video examples of the impact it has upon pupils. This will be helpful for teachers who may not have the ability to network with others or have immediate access (within their own school) to multisensory approaches, resources and expertise.

School Improvement Officer, Local authority

Others felt, however, that exemplars could be counterproductive. From these perspectives, it was important to encourage deeper engagement with learner development and progression, and exemplars could lead to practitioners embedding more simplistic interpretations of the ABC Steps:

We need to be careful that too much exemplification can lead to practitioners copying this. Any further support materials should focus on pedagogy (rather than further exemplification).

⁷ What further support materials would be helpful?

Supporting Development of Broader Skills

Some felt that it was important that practitioners supported the development of a broader range of skills, not merely literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. From these perspectives, broader guidance or frameworks may be valuable in guiding practitioners in supporting learners:

A key area of development when pupils are working at this stage [is that of] personal and life skills such as eating, drinking, toileting, behaviour regulation, and attention control, and yet the mechanism to support teachers with planning these skills is not provided.

Regional consortium

Continuing Professional Development

Across the consultation, a number of respondents highlighted the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) in supporting practitioners' engagement with the frameworks. This included opportunities for practitioners to build the skills and confidence with which to effectively embed the frameworks into teaching and learning:

[There should be] CPD for staff at all levels on how to adapt to the changes.

Regional consortium

2.10 Learning and ABC Steps

Learners may spend a considerable amount of their time learning within the ABC Steps. Respondents were then asked whether the revised ABC Steps captured the learning required of these learners.⁸

General Perceptions

There was greater uncertainty surrounding views towards the changes to the ABC Steps. Eight respondents were in agreement that the ABC Steps were sufficient (44.4 per cent), eight were unsure, and two respondents felt that they were not.

Key Themes

Clear and Effective

⁸ Learners may spend a considerable amount of their time learning within the ABC Steps. Do the revised ABC Steps capture the learning required?

For those respondents who were in agreement, they tended to suggest that the ABC Steps presented a comprehensive and clear account of the skills that practitioners should seek to promote with learners:

They provide small-step progress indicators for younger pupils and for those with [additional learning needs] where there was previously none. Staff I have spoken to have said that this is exactly what they need.

Senior Leader, Primary school

These ABC Steps demonstrate the skills required to make progress across the areas of literacy, numeracy, and digital competency. These steps are clear, consistent, and show what progress in these areas looks like. They also demonstrate that progress happens along a continuum. The steps in the document provide suitable guidance for the learning required to support progression. We feel that it is positive that the guidance is not over-prescriptive and allows practitioners to make decisions based on needs of learners.

Estyn

Supporting Development of Broader Skills

For those respondents who expressed that they were unsure or felt that the ABC Steps did not accurately capture the learning required, some restated the importance of supporting the development of a broader range of skills. These included skills beyond literacy, numeracy, and digital competence, including (amongst others) broader life skills:

As you state, some learners may spend a lot of time in ABC Steps and they only provide support for planning in three areas of skill development, whereas there are other important skill development areas.

Regional consortium

2.11 Welsh Language

Finally, respondents were asked a series of questions relating to the implications and impact of the revised ABC Steps upon the Welsh language.⁹ Not all respondents offered thoughts and reflections. Of those who did, they raised a range of considerations.

⁹ We would like to know your views on the effects that the revised ABC Steps would have on the Welsh language, specifically on: i) opportunities for people to use Welsh, and 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? Please also explain how you believe the revised ABC Steps 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, and 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.

Key Themes

Positive or No Discernible Impact

Some respondents felt that the frameworks would have a positive or no discernible effect on the Welsh language. Some highlighted, for example, that if the frameworks were effective in improving language acquisition relative to existing levels, then this could have corresponding positive impacts on learners' engagement with Welsh:

As the [Routes for Learning] and ABC Steps are often precursors to language acquisition, it would support the opportunities for people to speak Welsh.

Respondent

Ni ddylai'r camau gael effaith negyddol ar y Gymraeg. Mae sicrhau caffael iaith sy'n ddatblygol ac sy'n cael ei wneud mewn cyd-destun addas a chyffrous yn greiddiol. Os yw'r camau cynnydd yma'n cael eu haddysgu'n dda, yna byddai'r Gymraeg yn elwa. Mae'r pwyslais ar y llafar — siarad a gwranddo yn greiddiol yn hyn o beth er mwyn trochi ieithyddol effeithiol.

The [ABC] Steps should not have a negative impact on the Welsh language. Ensuring the acquisition of a language that is developmental and done in an appropriate and exciting context is central. If the steps are well taught, then the Welsh language would benefit. The emphasis on the oral — speaking and listening — is central to this for effective language immersion.

School Challenge Advisor, Local authority (translated from the original)

Embedding Welsh More Firmly

Other respondents offered suggestions on where Welsh could be strengthened within the frameworks. These included further detail or broader guidance being offered to practitioners on how bilingualism could be embedded within teaching and learning, especially in English-medium settings:

If these are created bilingually, then this should not be an issue. Perhaps exemplification of how Welsh language can be used in both English-medium and Welsh-medium settings could be developed, e.g. suggesting that stories/vocabulary could be both English-medium and Welsh-medium.

School Improvement Officer, Regional consortium

There is limited reference made to the Welsh language in these documents. These documents could be strengthened with the addition of further case studies demonstrating how these ABC Steps could be used across the curriculum. For example, it would be helpful to include case studies about how literacy, numeracy, and digital

skills are developed through the provision of Welsh language learning for English-medium settings.

Estyn

Another consideration was the possibility of making the frameworks themselves bilingual, or weaving Welsh into English versions to promote bilingualism:

[They should] ensure that the documentation for English-medium settings refers to Welsh, e.g. make Welsh visible. [They should] normalise bilingualism [and] enhance expectations of practitioners (if not learners).

School Improvement Officer, Regional consortium

2.12 Conclusions

Respondents were (on the whole) very positive towards the revisions to the ABC Steps. This included towards the documents themselves as well as the broader objectives that they seek to further. There was general consensus surrounding the importance of supporting all learners, for example, including those with additional learning needs. Many respondents also welcomed the general sentiment and orientation of the approach. This included the importance placed on personalised learning and progression, as well as the recognition and role of professional judgement in supporting learners.

Overall, the frameworks themselves were considered to be helpful for practitioners. Many felt that elements such as the RfL and the ABC Steps were clear and accessible. This would effectively support practitioners' engagement with teaching and learning, including in planning and supporting learner progression.

Where respondents offered suggestions on strengthening the frameworks, these tended to focus on precision and detail within the RfL and the ABC Steps. This included tightening the consistency within and across statements, as well as where they could be amended or expanded. Some respondents also wished to see more explicit mention of certain elements within the ABC Steps, such as children's rights and the Welsh language. Furthermore, respondents raised the potential value of further information such as exemplars and a glossary. From these perspectives, further precision and detail within the ABC Steps would support and ensure learner progression.

Overall, suggestions on where the ABC Steps could be strengthened represented minor adjustments to the revised ABC Steps. Respondents (again) largely welcomed the revisions and felt that they provided a valuable resource in supporting all learners.

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