



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Education in Wales - Our national mission: update October 2020

Our strategy on how we aim to improve the school system by 2021.

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Ministerial foreword

We have come a long way in the last 4 years. We have set new ambitions and expectations of all learners and teachers. We have reduced the attainment gap, giving more support to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds so they can fulfil their potential. Our improved examination results and international performance means that there is a new respect for Wales and a new confidence at home. But there is still unfinished business as we continue on our national

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mission to raise standards for all, and deliver our new curriculum – Curriculum for Wales.

We could not have anticipated that we would be turning this page of history in Welsh education under these circumstances. The national effort against coronavirus (COVID-19) has involved a team of 3.2 million and the education family has met the challenge together, stepping up to ensure that our children and young people are supported with their wellbeing, and with their ability to learn and to grow.

Our continuing education reforms, with Curriculum for Wales at the centre, is also a shared national endeavour. I am immensely proud to be working with teachers, academics, practitioners, businesses, unions and many others who are building this future for our learners, our schools and our nation.

The OECD has worked with us every step of the way and recognises our progress. Their recent report gives us good challenge and recommendations for the period to come. This update on 'Our national mission' shows how we are already responding, and mapping a clear way forward.

Taken together, our reforms and new curriculum will support young people to develop higher standards of literacy and numeracy, to become more digitally and bilingually competent, and to be confident, capable and compassionate citizens – citizens of Wales and citizens of the world.

The four purposes of the curriculum are the shared vision and aspiration for every young person. In fulfilling these, we set high expectations for all, promote individual and national wellbeing, tackle ignorance and misinformation, and encourage critical and civic engagement. Every school will have the opportunity to design and implement their own curriculum within the national approach that secures consistency for learners across the country.

We are moving into a new era where each learner benefits from a broad and balanced education. We must never ever lower our expectations for any of our young people, no matter what their background. It is a fundamental matter of equity and excellence for all, and that's why thousands and thousands more learners in Wales now enter and gain a science GCSE. It's why we now

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outperform other nations of the United Kingdom in our A level results, and it's why thousands more are studying and succeeding at higher education levels.

We are succeeding in raising standards and delivering on a system that can enjoy public confidence. That is the foundation that allows us to move forward with our new curriculum. A curriculum for Wales, of Wales, by Wales, and we have moved forward together to reach this point.

Ours is a system where everyone has a shared stake, where we set high standards for all and where we truly combine knowledge, skills and experience, where no-one, nowhere is written off, and where we can take the next steps in our national mission of education reform.

Kirsty Williams MS

Minister for Education

“We are succeeding in raising standards and delivering on a system that can enjoy public confidence.” Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education.

Our journey so far

Introduction

Education in Wales is changing. The prospects and life chances of our young people are improving thanks to our shared national mission of education reform.

It is changing for the better, thanks to the hard work of thousands of teachers, school staff, headteachers and education partners across the country.

All of us, and especially our young people, have faced challenges over recent months.

It has also shown how important – academically, socially and emotionally – it is for children to be in a safe and secure school environment. There is a joy in

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being in the classroom, being challenged and motivated to learn, among friends and with teachers who inspire the next generation.

We have built strong foundations for the next step in our journey with our new curriculum – Curriculum for Wales. We can be confident that we will realise the ambition that every learner benefits from a broad and balanced education, with high expectations for all, no matter their background. The strong foundations set over the last four years mean that we are in a good place to achieve this.

Thousands and thousands more learners from low-income backgrounds now achieve science GCSEs and go on to university. We outperform the other UK nations for our top A level results.

Literacy and numeracy standards, at all ages, are at record levels.

There is record investment in professional learning for all teachers informed by our National Education Workforce Survey.

We have a new approach, backed by record funding, to support all learners, whether they have additional needs, are from low-income backgrounds, or have suffered particularly during the recent period away from school.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has recognised this progress, saying:

“ Wales is on the path to transform the way children learn, with a new curriculum aimed to prepare its children and young people to thrive at school and beyond. The new curriculum for Wales is future oriented and intends to create a better learning experience for students and to contribute to the overall improvement of Welsh education. The co-construction process succeeded in engaging many and in developing trust, while systemic adjustments in institutions and other policies are helping set in motion a professionally-led education. ”

They have also given us some recommendations on how to keep on with our journey.

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This section looks back on how we've moved forward together in 'Our national mission' and identifies some of the next steps for those key areas of reform.

Teacher education and development, and our engagement internationally

We have reformed teacher training, changing how it's done, who provides it, what is studied and where it happens. No institution has a divine right to train the next generation of teachers, it's far too important for that. That meant some difficult decisions, but we are now in a better place and have set a high bar for the future.

We are guaranteeing six INSET days for every teacher, as part of our commitment to professional learning and curriculum implementation. We have also delivered record levels of investment in professional learning. From 2018/19 to 2020/21 we have invested £31 million into school budgets to allow them to create the time and space needed for professional learning and we will continue to prioritise funding for professional learning in future.

We've established the Welsh Pay Review Body. To show the high regard we have for the teaching profession, and to attract the very best, we have also delivered record increases in teachers' pay, raising the starting salary for new teachers.

Curriculum for Wales will also enable greater involvement from universities, public services, business, sporting and community organisations in and out of the classroom, working with teachers, parents/carers and learners.

We have started this work by supporting many hundreds of our university students, in key subjects such as science and modern languages, to get into the classroom and inspire learners in those subjects, as well as get a taste of teaching themselves. In those schools where this has happened, we have seen record take-up of those subjects.

Our colleges and universities are a bridge to the world, and we have expanded the international dimension of our entire education system in the last few years.

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We have brought students from the world's number one university – the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) – to spend time working with learners and teachers in Welsh schools on science and technology.

Hundreds of learners from Wales, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, now get a life-changing experience through summer schools at universities such as Yale, Chicago and Harvard, with record numbers going on to study undergraduate at Ivy League universities and Oxbridge in the UK. This has been a key part of Wales' first ever More Able and Talented Strategy.

We have put in place incentives and funding so that students can return to Wales to complete their postgraduate study and bring back the experiences and benefits from studying at some of the world's top universities.

Working with the OECD and the Atlantic Rim Collaboratory (ARC), we are benefiting from advice and challenge from the world's top education systems, and are now in a position where administrations and educationalists from across the globe look to Wales to learn how we are raising standards, using technology and reforming the curriculum.

There is a newfound respect for Wales, and we have worked hard to earn it. Encouraging and supporting collaboration rather than competition has been instrumental in building trust and has led to our joint achievements.

Our improved performance in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) – going up in each domain for the first time ever – was welcome. There was a significant increase in learners reaching higher levels, which was a target in *Our national mission*. We achieved our highest ever mathematics and reading scores. For the first time ever Wales was in the OECD mainstream across all domains. The Minister for Education has said it is 'progress not perfect' and PISA should continue to be an important yardstick for public confidence and national pride.

“ Encouraging and supporting collaboration rather than competition has been instrumental in building trust and has led to our joint achievements. ”

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Equity

In expanding the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) we are tackling the impact of deprivation and breaking the link between disadvantage and destiny. We have achieved much but there is still more to do. Estyn is encouraged by the improvements across Wales.

Outcomes for looked after children remain consistently below what we should expect. There will be a renewed focus on this over the coming months. We also expanded the early years PDG to give children a better start, and guaranteed additional funding to support the purchase of school uniforms and equipment to help deal with those extra costs for parents and carers.

Raising standards for all is about more than money and we must keep tackling examples of low expectations and excuses. Back in 2016, the majority of learners in too many schools were incorrectly entered for vocational science qualifications, leading to almost 100 per cent pass rates. The performance measures at the time enabled, even encouraged, this.

Vocational qualifications at ages 15 and 16 are right for some learners, but it cannot be right where more than 90 per cent of learners enter. It lowered expectations and progression opportunities, and disproportionately affected learners from low-income backgrounds.

In response, we reformed school performance measures, challenged a culture of coasting and raised expectations to make this happen. Now tens of thousands more learners who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) are entered for, and gain, good science GCSEs (as well as English literature and other academic qualifications), improving their life chances and progression. This is what it means to tackle the attainment and aspiration gap.

Setting high expectations for all means tackling barriers wherever they exist. We published the first ever 'Rural education action plan' (2018), delivered a new grant so that small and rural schools could innovate and collaborate, established a presumption against rural school closures, and invested in broadband and new technology.

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One such innovation is the E-sgol Project, which is delivering school-based bilingual distance learning, ensuring access to a wide curriculum for more learners. Going from strength to strength and expanding across the country, this is a great example of a project that was initially focused on meeting challenges for rural and Welsh-medium learners that is now benefitting even more learners, teachers and schools.

Ensuring equality for all learners in the availability of resources remains a priority and we continue to support the development of Welsh-medium resources and improve the bilingual provision. The Minister for Education convened a summit on this in April 2017, followed by a new stakeholder group which has identified a way forward for the provision of relevant, quality-assured resources in both languages at the same time in future. We are already planning ahead of Curriculum for Wales, and an exciting new way to approach this and draw up on the expertise of teachers, academics and publishers will be announced soon.

2020 has shown how important the school environment continues to be as the place where children learn, grow, and feel safe and secure. We have also been reminded of its importance to the wider community. We need to make more of this, and push forward with a greater emphasis on community-focused schools, co-location of key services, stronger engagement with parents/carers, education outside traditional hours and so on.

The period away from school this year showed a lot of good things, but also some inequity, in using online resources and learning. We can be very proud of Hwb and the millions of log-ins, as well as the strong educational relationships we have nurtured with the likes of Google, Microsoft and Adobe, meaning free resources for families and teachers across the nation.

We delivered free equipment to learners from low-income backgrounds, but it is clear that we need to do more with teachers, schools and parents and carers in better understanding how to make the most of digital resources and learning. This will be a priority as we continue to rollout our ambitious professional learning programme for teachers.

Digital learning supports classroom learning, it cannot replace that experience. We have reduced infant class sizes, targeted at those who will most benefit,

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supporting teachers to raise standards for all. In prioritising the funding, the £36 million of the Reducing Infant Class Sizes Grant has gone towards those largest classes where there are high levels of deprivation, where learning and teaching needs to improve, and where English or Welsh is not the first language. Around 6,000 learners in over a 100 schools have benefited from this funding, with over 165 extra school staff employed.

Having passed the additional learning needs (ALN) legislation, the challenge now is full and proper implementation. The whole education system must be committed to transforming the expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with ALN. We must continue to work together on this for the period to come as it is a true test of our collective commitment to raise standards for all.

“ We must continue to work together for the period to come as it is a true test of our collective commitment to raise standards for all. ”

Wellbeing

In 'Our national mission' we brought a new focus to wellbeing, ensuring equity and excellence for all. Taking forward that work, and recommendations by the Senedd Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee, we are now close to securing an all-Wales framework for a whole-school approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

This will build on the progress already made, such as the successful school counselling service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The challenges of recent months have shown that we must continue with this work, but also the importance of children being in school and enjoying an environment that is safe, secure and welcoming for all.

We know that significant learning loss can happen when children are away from school for a long period. We have commissioned work to review the school day and year, and greater use of schools beyond normal hours.

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Since 2017, the Welsh Government has provided funding to support the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP). Managed and joint-funded by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and participating local authorities, the programme enriches the school holiday experience of children in areas of high deprivation, with participating schools providing free meals, physical activity and educational support to tackle 'learning loss' during the summer break. The success of SHEP has grown steadily, reaching over 3,000 children in 76 SHEP schemes across Wales during 2019.

Learning loss can also happen when children are denied access to the full curriculum. We are legislating to ensure universal access to the curriculum, for example ensuring that all children benefit from modern, sensitive and improved relationships education. This will help ensure that they are supported to discuss and understand their rights and the rights of others, as well as being provided with access to information that keeps them safe from harm, including online safety.

Our education system

Before we embarked on 'Our national mission', the OECD told us that leadership needed to be a driver for our reform and that Wales had ignored this for too long.

We now have a national approach to leadership, including our own leadership academy – National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales. It has started well, alongside our teacher professional learning, to ensure high-quality leadership development for leaders and aspiring leaders. We will need to go further and faster to ensure we keep changing the culture, support different leadership opportunities and expand the pool of potential leaders, so that learners across the country can benefit.

Getting all schools and teachers ready for Curriculum for Wales rollout from 2022 demands strong personal and professional leadership in every classroom and staff room. It needs a renewed commitment from all partners in Welsh education to work together, recognise roles and responsibilities, and support schools with curriculum design and realisation.

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The OECD has seen this positive culture change over recent years. They have provided us with a set of recommendations to build on the strong foundations we have put in place. This document gives further clarity and coherence on the tasks ahead over the coming months during this crucial period.

The OECD said:

“ Wales has to strike a balance between showing continuity on this reform journey and acknowledging that the next steps of implementation have to place schools and their communities at the centre. Striking this balance implies continuing to pursue the reform course detailed in Education in Wales: Our national mission with a new emphasis: adopting a school’s perspective and giving schools capacity and even more room in the next steps. ”

Every teacher, in reading this document, will understand where we have come from, where we are going and how we will get there together, as we move forward with our reforms and curriculum realisation.

A school’s curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes of the curriculum. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and, crucially, why we teach it.

This next period for 'Our national mission' will succeed through a shared understanding of how each of us, working together, are supporting schools, teachers, parents/carers and learners.

It demands that all partners fully appreciate the school’s perspective on the right support, at the right time, in the right place, so that teachers can support all learners in reaching the highest standards. We are investing in the wellbeing of the workforce in responding to these demands.

Through our shared commitment to a culture of high standards, combining equity with excellence, we can be confident of success for all schools, all teachers and, most importantly, every single learner.

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“ A school’s curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes of the curriculum. ”

Our achievements

More than 11,000 young people are improving their digital skills through more than 700 code clubs. Over the last three years the number of young people taking part has increased by 75 per cent.

Between 2016 and 2019, the number of eFSM learners achieving at least one science GCSE qualification has increased by 60 per cent. The number achieving at least one grade C or above in a science GCSE has increased by over 30 per cent.

Of all A level learners in Wales in 2019, 27 per cent achieved A*–A grades, the highest in the UK. This is up from 23 per cent in 2016, when we were significantly behind England and Northern Ireland and the Minister for Education responded with a dedicated improvement plan.

Eighty-six per cent of Year 9 learners achieve at least the expected assessment level in core subjects. It was 63 per cent at the start of the last decade. The overall eFSM attainment gap has reduced by 4 per cent in the last four years.

In Wales 100 per cent of schools now access super-fast broadband. In 2016 it was just 37 per cent.

There were 950 participants on National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales endorsed leadership programmes in 2019 to 2020.

Over 400 schools and over 40,000 learners are benefiting from the Small and Rural Schools Grant.

Schools with the largest class sizes benefiting from the Reducing Infant Class Sizes Grant have reduced their average infant class size to 23, directly benefiting more than 6,000 children, with an extra 165 staff employed.

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We have developed and are delivering the National Approach to Professional Learning, investing a record £31 million in teachers' development. We have also successfully delivered a 'Made in Wales' pay and conditions framework, raising the starting salary significantly.

We have improved the proportion of top-performing learners in PISA, and achieved our best ever scores in reading and mathematics, for the first time being in the OECD mainstream across all domains. In the last PISA results, Wales was the only national in the UK to improve all three domains.

Over 90,000 learners, across 176 settings, are benefitting from new and improved learning environments since 2016 thanks to our 21st Century School and Colleges Programme.

We have reformed initial teacher education and have seen a 50 per cent increase in applications and an overall increase in the number of student teachers.

More than 10,000 learners have been supported through our two Seren Programmes, at the heart of Wales' first ever More Able and Talented Strategy. Record levels of students from disadvantaged and non-traditional backgrounds now go on to higher education.

We have delivered the ALN legislation in readiness for the ALN Code and regulations for the new ALN system to start in September 2021.

We have delivered Curriculum for Wales guidance, introducing new legislation to embed the four purposes of the curriculum and ensure that all are focused on higher standards of literacy and numeracy, and that our young people are more digitally and bilingually competent.

OECD recommendations and how we are responding

Even before we began our journey towards curriculum reform the OECD had

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identified the key role that leadership needed to play in school and system improvement.

The OECD has continued to work with us in partnership and has observed for itself the culture of collaboration, co-construction and mutual respect that exists across the whole Welsh education system.

The significant partnership working developed over recent years has been instrumental to our response to their report on our development and implementation of Curriculum for Wales.

Early in 2020 the OECD were finalising their report, **Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales**, and it was published on 5 October 2020. The report sets out their recommendations to enable Wales to maintain momentum and to realise our shared ambitions for all learners, schools and the system.

As is to be expected, the challenges of COVID-19 delayed the publication. However, we have been applying our learning from the OECD's feedback in our interventions as we continue to respond to the impact of the pandemic on our education system.

With children and young people having now returned to school and our education system embracing new ways of working, the OECD has published the report and we welcome it.

Together we have risen to every challenge this pandemic posed and we have been able to continue our journey towards curriculum reform through many of the actions we have undertaken over the last six months. The OECD has made a number of recommendations. Our collective actions since March 2020 and the great work we are continuing with our key partners is set out in the **appendix** to this document.

Despite all we have experienced since March 2020 we continue to be on track and have a clear vision and plan for curriculum realisation. The next 12 months will undoubtedly be challenging but together, with our energy, enthusiasm and commitment, we can embed the education system that our learners in Wales can expect.

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Our transformational curriculum

Improving education is our national mission. Nothing is so essential as universal access to, and acquisition of, the experiences, knowledge and skills that our young people need for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship.

Realising the four purposes of the curriculum for every child

The Curriculum for Wales framework is a clear statement of what is important in delivering a broad and balanced education.

The four purposes of the curriculum are the shared vision and aspiration for every child and young person. They should guide and direct everything we do as a system. In fulfilling these, we set high expectations for all – to raise standards, tackle the attainment gap, and ensure our education system enjoys public confidence.

The aim of all of our reforms and of our education system is to enable all children and young people in Wales to become:

- ambitious, capable learners
- enterprising, creative contributors
- ethical, informed citizens
- healthy, confident individuals

In order to realise this, every school will need to develop its own, excellent curriculum. Curriculum for Wales guidance sets out how schools should do this. The Welsh Government and strategic partners have a critical role in supporting and enabling schools. This will require a new approach as schools prepare for Curriculum for Wales and develop their own curriculum.

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Building on co-construction

The Curriculum for Wales guidance is the result of co-construction. It has been developed by practitioners for practitioners, bringing together educational expertise and wider research and evidence. For the reforms to be a success, we must continue this process of co-construction in everything we do, at every level.

Co-construction means sharing problems so that solutions are owned by everyone. As schools develop their curricula, partners will develop and deliver support. All involved will be valued and understand why things are done. Co-construction requires people to work across traditional boundaries: between tiers of education as well as between disciplines, schools, phases and with stakeholders beyond the education system. This ensures solutions are tested with different perspectives, using understanding from different experiences and expertise.

To support co-construction at every level and the realisation of Curriculum for Wales, we will publish our curriculum implementation plan and establish a national network to support delivery. This curriculum implementation plan will set out:

- our expectations for realising Curriculum for Wales and how schools, strategic partners and the Welsh Government will all contribute to that
- how we as a system will develop support for schools through co-construction with practitioners and stakeholders in the national network
- how we will ensure the system creates space and provides support to enable schools to realise Curriculum for Wales
- how we will use system-wide learning and feedback to understand how the reforms are working

During autumn 2021 we will expect schools to be developing their new curricula, to have an understanding of how the wider education system will support them in this, and to have clarity as to our national aspirations to align with regional, local and community priorities.

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During the period to September 2021, we will:

- promote learning in all forms and all scenarios in a COVID-19 context – to enable assessment to underpin progression we will look to the independent review of qualifications to recommend considerations for the qualifications series in 2021
- publish shared expectations to support schools in the steps they must take to prepare for rollout of Curriculum for Wales in October 2020
- work with partners to develop and publish a curriculum implementation plan which sets out steps for government and strategic partners from autumn 2020
- establish a national network of practitioners and stakeholders to share understanding across the profession, gather intelligence and co-construct support and solutions to problems, and work together to deliver the implementation plan, by January 2021
- support the Curriculum and Assessment Bill to achieve Royal Assent by spring 2021
- develop the first resources and supporting materials by summer 2021 to help practitioners realise Curriculum for Wales
- develop and publish additional curriculum guidance to support practitioners in specific key areas by September 2021

2022 and beyond

- 2022 – All schools will be moving towards the new curriculum with the introduction of Curriculum for Wales from Nursery to Year 7.
- 2022 – Development of new GCSEs.
- 2023 – Curriculum for Wales introduced to Year 8.
- 2024 – Curriculum for Wales introduced to Year 9.
- 2025 – Curriculum for Wales introduced to Year 10.
- 2025 – First teaching of new GCSEs.
- 2026 – Curriculum for Wales introduced to Year 11.

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The four enabling objectives

'Our national mission' set out a plan of action and included four enabling objectives that would help in developing our transformational curriculum. As this curriculum reform has progressed, the four enabling objectives have evolved and developed to reflect our changing education system.

Enabling objective 1: Professional learning

The Welsh Government and our strategic partners are committed to supporting teachers through professional learning from the time they decide to become teachers through their whole career.

For this reason we have made significant changes to initial teacher education (ITE) and to our approach to the recruitment of teachers and other adults supporting learning in our schools. We have refreshed the induction and early career support arrangements for teachers in their first years of teaching, and our regional consortia continue to support teaching assistants as well as teachers.

Our investments in our national approach to professional learning, educational research and enquiry, and coaching and mentoring will enable teachers to experience a wide range of forms of learning and development, and our new national Masters in Education will enable them to receive academic recognition of their work.

As well as these activities and investments, we continue to support the development of teaching practice in our schools through the Professional Standards, and through our support for collaborative learning and the national exploration of pedagogy. We have made and will continue to make significant investments in digital learning resources to support teachers' and others' professional learning journeys, and will continue to provide financial resources to support schools' engagement in professional learning and additional INSET time.

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To support the realisation of Curriculum for Wales in schools, we will:

- ensure that our ITE is agile and responsive to the opportunities presented by Curriculum for Wales and that our teachers explore and exploit these opportunities
- review and re-plan our induction and early career support arrangements and update our approach to professional learning and INSET for teachers, teaching assistants in schools and the non-maintained nursery sector
- formally launch our National Approach to Educational Research and Enquiry, to highlight the importance of enquiry for teachers and learners
- continue to build on the successful resources on Hwb to further explore high-quality blended and remote learning experiences
- working with our regional consortia and universities, launch our national approach to coaching and mentoring and the new national Masters in Education with a focus on early career teachers and headteachers

During the period to September 2021, we will:

- implement the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards (RRRS) Programme
- mobilise the new versions of the ITE programmes (accredited and monitored by the Education Workforce Council) and launch our new strategy for teacher recruitment
- review and re-plan our induction and early career support arrangements, and update our approach to professional learning and INSET for teachers and teaching assistants
- continue to increase the digital access to professional learning and teachers' skills in providing digital learning experiences
- launch the National Approach to Educational Research and Enquiry
- commence the first recruitment to the national Masters in Education and launch our national approach to coaching and mentoring

“ We and our strategic partners are committed to supporting teachers though the most agile professional learning throughout their career. ”

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Enabling objective 2: Leadership

The Welsh Government recognises the scale of the challenge headteachers and other leaders face as we seek to realise Curriculum for Wales and address our schools' needs in relation to COVID-19.

For this reason, we are committed to a range of current and new measures and approaches to support our leaders. We will undertake a rapid review of the support available to leaders across the system and fine-tune it in response to the new challenge. We will continue to provide support to our leaders through the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales, the professional learning offer in the regions and especially the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

Governing bodies play a fundamental role as the first line of the accountability for their schools and communities providing the necessary challenge and support for headteachers to lead their schools effectively. As such, we will ensure the national approach to professional learning includes resources for school governors.

The Schools as Learning Organisations (SLOs) and Professional Standards Frameworks will continue to be developed and add value to leadership in our schools, especially in the areas of collaboration and school self-improvement. We will encourage school leaders to be lead enquirers in their learning communities as part of our National Approach to Educational Research and Enquiry. We will ask them to be as concerned to address their own professional learning needs, through INSET, the dedicated funding for professional learning and higher qualifications as they are about their staff. We will focus a significant part of the national approach to coaching and mentoring on leaders, specifically headteachers new to the role, and we will ensure high levels of sharing of professional and leadership practice through the digital resources we make available on Hwb.

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To support the realisation of Curriculum for Wales in schools, we will:

- undertake a rapid review of support for headteachers in light of the challenge of COVID-19 and the opportunity presented by early adoption/practice of Curriculum for Wales
- continue to fund and support the delivery of a wide range of leadership professional learning and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)
- ensure the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales provides an agile portfolio of services responsive to the demands of Curriculum for Wales
- refresh our approach to schools as learning organisations (SLOs), especially the technology that underpins schools' ability to self-evaluate in this area
- continue to provide resources on Hwb to support leaders in sharing their experiences, and frequently update the resources to ensure they are fit for purpose and of value

During the period to September 2021, we will:

- undertake a rapid review of support for leaders to ensure that the support we have for school leaders across the system will enable them to realise Curriculum for Wales under the challenging conditions that may be present for some time
- review and adjust the delivery of the NPQH so that the September 2021 cohort can apply their leadership experience in the context of the new conditions
- develop further the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales' portfolio of services in light of the support review
- engage the regional consortia to develop their professional learning offer for leaders in light of the findings of the SLO survey
- establish and share resources centred on leadership journeys via Hwb
- work with the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales and regional consortia to equip leaders with skills to strategically plan the development of Welsh within a culture of schools as learning organisations

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“ We will support more leadership opportunities and will expand the pool of potential leaders so learners across the country benefit. ”

Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing

The Welsh Government will work closely with stakeholders to continue to devise and implement a proactive, inclusive educational system. In continuing to raise standards for all, we will prioritise support for children and young people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or have ALN. Through this system, we will quickly identify areas of inequality and adversity and target resources to develop and deliver programmes to alleviate the main causes of inequality and to ensure that those who need help get the support that they need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on all learners, but we acknowledge that the greatest impact is likely to have been felt by the most vulnerable. That is why we invested over £40 million in the provision of free school meals, including provision through the school holidays, increased counselling and support for mental health services in schools, delivered thousands of free digital devices, worked closely with our youth services to provide additional support in partnership with our local authorities and increased flexibility for our schools to use the PDG.

The Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards (RRRS) Programme has also been designed around supporting our most vulnerable learners and will provide additional teaching support to help those who will most benefit.

To support the realisation of Curriculum for Wales in schools, we will:

- work with regional consortia to ensure best use of the PDG to target support where it is needed and highlight the most effective interventions to maximise individual learner progress
- strengthen our commitment around the cost of the school day, which is a particular issue to our most disadvantaged families; this includes guidance for schools and PDG access, which goes directly to families to help with

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- uniform and associated costs of the school day
- progress the integrated approach to improving education outcomes for looked after children
- work with local authorities to ensure best use is made of the Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Grant to ensure education is inclusive and accessible to all learners
- continue to develop systems that increase support available for the provision of healthier food in schools
- publish guidance on safeguarding in education

During the period to September 2021, we will:

- progress the whole-school approach to the physical and mental health and wellbeing framework, and increase capacity of school counselling provision
- ensure the ALN Code and regulations are in place for the ALN system to commence in September 2021
- establish and increase youth work operation within schools and across communities as part of a sustainable delivery model including refreshing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework
- continue to deliver on commitments in the 'Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) Framework for Action'

“ We will work closely with stakeholders to continue to devise and implement a proactive, inclusive education system. ”

Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability

The Welsh Government acknowledges the importance of an evaluation, improvement and accountability system that is aligned to the principles of Curriculum for Wales.

We published draft evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements in February 2019 and have engaged widely on those principles.

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These include:

- supporting collaboration rather than competition
- moving away from a disproportionate emphasis on narrow performance measures to a broader range of information
- incentivising and encouraging behaviours which support and enable our vision for curriculum and assessment
- a clear distinction between evaluation and improvement arrangements and the accountability system

Effective self-evaluation and improvement planning will be important within the new system. We will therefore continue to work with partners and schools in developing the National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR). This will promote effective improvement processes, school-to-school collaboration, and provide practical guidance and resources to support evaluation and improvement.

Estyn has embraced the concept of **A Learning Inspectorate**, the independent review of Estyn undertaken by Graham Donaldson, and made good progress on the recommendations arising from the review. Consultation and planning continues ahead of the introduction of new inspection arrangements from September 2021.

To support the realisation of Curriculum for Wales in schools, we will:

- produce non-statutory school improvement guidance for schools, local authorities and regional consortia which sets out how the new evaluation, improvement and accountability framework will work in practice
- continue to support our 'most at need' schools through multi-agency working
- establish an evidence base to determine the data and information that is needed to support effective evaluation, improvement and accountability throughout the school system
- develop a better system of collating and then providing data and information to support system improvement
- work with schools and partners to develop and launch the National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR)

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During the period to September 2021, we will:

- consult on and finalise school improvement guidance ahead of the 2021 to 2022 academic year
- commission research to provide the Welsh Government with an evidence base on data and information needs and uses in the school system
- work with schools to develop digital resources that exemplify and model methods of effective self-evaluation, emphasising the quality of the process, not the documentation
- continue to capture and share effective practice across the system to support schools with effective exemplification of the NEIR
- work with Estyn to determine an appropriate time for their engagement visits with schools to start focussing on preparation for the implementation of Curriculum for Wales

“ We acknowledge the importance of an evaluation, improvement and accountability system aligned to the principles of Curriculum for Wales that models effective self-evaluation. ”

Welsh in education

Ensuring that all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school is important in our ongoing education reforms.

This is part of our national journey towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Our schools are already playing a crucial role in enabling thousands of children each year to begin or continue their journey towards becoming bilingual citizens. We want more children to acquire skills in both languages and to use Welsh in their daily lives. Together with the Education Workforce Council, the National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales and ITE providers, we continue to develop innovative ways of increasing the number of teachers who can work in the Welsh-medium sector. The foundations have been laid through the implementation of 'Our national mission' and our 'Welsh in education, Action

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plan 2017–21'.

We will consult on the designation of schools with regard to their medium of instruction during 2020 to 2021; this will ensure a common understanding of expected progression and outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the important role of parents/ carers in supporting our children's education – but also of the need for a more tailored package of support for parents and carers of children in Welsh-medium education who may not themselves speak Welsh. We will work with partners to develop this support in 2020 to 2021.

To support 'Our national mission' and the role Welsh will play we will continue to work across the education system to achieve the best for our children and young people.

During the period to September 2021, we will:

- investigate immersion techniques currently used alongside the latest national and international academic research in order to support best practice in both Welsh-medium models and bilingual models
- consider the role of late language immersion centres in supporting the Welsh-medium sector and whether such support should be available in all local authorities
- consult on how schools are designated with regard to their medium of instruction
- expand the availability of E-sgol to all Welsh-medium comprehensives
- look at the potential role of National Centre for Learning Welsh to support the teaching of Welsh in schools, and consider the language learning pathways from schools to post-16 and post-18 education for students studying Welsh in English-medium schools
- enhance and build on support for parents and carers of children in Welsh-medium education
- develop a new framework for supporting the use of Welsh by children and young people

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Our future generations

Our future generations deserve the best and, in Wales, we have the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to support us in this endeavour.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 set out the five principles of working. The implementation of 'Our national mission' has developed in parallel with the Act and continues to use those principles ensuring:

- a long-term approach by developing a ground-breaking curriculum while maintaining a shorter-term focus that demonstrates improvements and examination results
- prevention – our continued focus on the critical early years Foundation Phase, wrap around care for the school day, youth work and interventions to support families with our free school meals programme for the summer holidays; at the core has been our implementation of the ALN legislation so that every learner can fulfil their potential
- integration via a cross-sector and a whole-system approach pivotal to the vibrant partnerships we have through the education sector
- collaboration that continues to extend the co-construction that is at the heart of developing and promoting the transformation required within a broader society that will continue to challenge our thinking
- involvement with a wide range of partners, parents/carers and businesses, and by active participation of a teaching profession who are the game changers to our mission

The implementation of 'Our national mission' is a key contributor to the change envisaged by the Act demonstrating evolution of Wales in a global context.

Conclusion

'Our national mission' has seen us raise standards for all, reduce the attainment gap, and have more pride and confidence in our education system.

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Over the last four years, we have seen record student attainment; learners from disadvantaged backgrounds catching up with their peers; our best PISA scores; record levels of investment in our teachers; a massive expansion in digital skills; thousands of learners and teachers benefiting from new school buildings and super-fast broadband; new support for current and future leaders; targeted programmes for our more able and talented; reduction in class sizes; and much more.

We have achieved all this together, and we met, and are meeting, the challenges of COVID-19 together. Continuing technological and economic changes will also test us, but we can be confident that our reforms are giving our young people and our education system the best chance to prosper.

It remains our collective responsibility to engage and inspire the next generation of learners for a more prosperous and equal Wales. Our national mission is to ensure we deliver on this for all learners, in all schools, in all parts of Wales.

Kirsty Williams MS

Minister for Education

“We can be confident our reforms are giving young people and our education system the best chance to prosper.” Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education.

Further information

Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21 (2017) sets out how the school system in Wales, including its sixth forms, will move forward over the period up until 2021 to secure the effective implementation of a new curriculum – Curriculum for Wales.

Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017) sets out the long-term aim to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.

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Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales (2015) outlined Professor John Furlong's proposals for reforming ITE.

National model for regional working outlines principles to transform school improvement in Wales.

The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** sets out clear wellbeing goals for public services.

The **Progressive Agreement** sets out the common and education priorities agreed by the First Minister and the Minister for Education.

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