

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

45/2022

PUBLICATION DATE:

28/06/2022

# Qualitative Research with Practitioners on Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022: final report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

**OGL** © Crown Copyright Digital ISBN 978-1-80364-287-1

## **Qualitative Research with Practitioners on Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022: final report**

Authors: Hefin Thomas, Brett Duggan, Morgan Davies-Walker, Arad Research. Claire Sinnema, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland. Dr Nia Cole-Jones, Dr Alison Glover, The Open University in Wales.



Duggan, B; Thomas, H; Davies-Walker, M; Sinnema, C; Cole-Jones, N; Glover, A (2022). *Qualitative Research with Practitioners on Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022: Final Report*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 45/2022. Available at:

<https://gov.wales/qualitative-research-practitioners-preparations-curriculum-and-assessment-reforms-2022>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

For further information please contact:

Schools Research Branch

Social Research and Information Division

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 03000256812

Email: [SchoolsResearch@Gov.Wales](mailto:SchoolsResearch@Gov.Wales)

## Table of contents

List of tables.....	2
Glossary.....	3
Acknowledgement.....	3
Executive summary.....	4
1. Introduction .....	9
2. Methodology.....	13
3. Profile of respondents .....	16
4. Engagement and understanding .....	18
5. Design, planning and trialling .....	36
6. Evaluating and preparing for first teaching .....	50
7. Costs associated with curriculum preparation .....	57
8. Conclusions and issues for consideration .....	60
Annex A: Interview discussion guide.....	65

**List of tables**

Table 1. Profile of sample of interviewees by sector and medium ..... 16

Table 2. Profile of interview sample by region..... 17

Table 3. Profile of sample of interviewees by level of agreement with the statement '*My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022*' ..... 17

## **Glossary**

<b>Acronym/Key word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ALN	Additional learning needs
All-through school	Ages 3 – 16 / 19 school
Areas/AoLEs	Areas of learning and experience
CfW	Curriculum for Wales
CPD	Continuous professional development
CWRE	Careers and Work Related Experiences
DCF	Digital Competence Framework
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
INSET	In-service Education and Training Day
ITE	Initial teacher education
LSW	Learning Support Worker
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLASC	Pupil-level Annual School Census
PPA	Planning, preparation and assessment (time)
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
REC(s)	Regional Education Consortia
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
School(s)	Throughout the report 'school(s)' is used to refer to schools and other settings. The sample of schools included in this research included primary schools, secondary schools, all-through 3-19 schools, a special school and a pupil referral unit.
SLT	Senior leadership team
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## **Acknowledgement**

The research team is extremely grateful to all of the senior leaders and practitioners who gave up valuable time to contribute to the study, particularly given the disruption and challenges during the autumn term of 2021.

## Executive summary

1. This report presents findings of qualitative research with 48 senior leaders and practitioners in schools and PRUs carried out by Arad Research on behalf of the Welsh Government in late autumn 2021, which examined schools' preparations for the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales (CfW). It follows on from a [Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022 survey report](#) published in January 2022 and provides more detail and depth to inform policy and support for schools.

### Methodology and analysis

2. Interviewees were selected from among those who responded to the *Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022* survey (conducted in June and July 2021) and opted to be re-contacted. The focus of these interviews was to understand individual school experiences in more detail and, in particular, to learn what elements of curriculum realisation were working well and less well.
3. The findings presented in this report draw on analysis of 48 interviews: 35 with senior leaders and 13 with practitioners. A purposive sample of interviewees were recruited to ensure the inclusion of a variety of schools and settings:
  - types of setting (primary, secondary, all-through, special, PRU);<sup>1</sup>
  - language medium (Welsh-medium, English-medium, bilingual, dual stream);
  - survey respondents who felt their school was well-placed to design their own curriculum by September 2022 as well as those who did not feel this.

A description of the sample profile is included in Section 3.

### Headline findings

#### *Overall progress*

4. The vast majority of senior leaders and practitioners reported that they had made progress in their curriculum preparations between the summer of 2021, when the survey was undertaken, and late autumn 2021. Schools had begun planning and trialling new approaches in more detail, and there was evidence of greater joint-

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report *school(s)* is used to refer to schools and other settings.

working and networking activity between schools. Many senior leaders and practitioners reported that they had set out milestones during the current academic year to be ready to begin roll-out from September 2022. The findings therefore demonstrated an increased momentum in schools' activity, compared with the situation reported by schools at the end of the previous school year. A very small number of interviewees felt that their school had received very little or no support to aid preparations for curriculum reform and, consequently, had made little progress in their planning.

*Findings relating to specific aspects of curriculum preparation*

5. **Schools are taking action to develop their engagement and understanding of curriculum reform.** Most senior leaders and practitioners described a variety of actions their school had taken to develop practitioners' understanding of CfW in greater depth. These included developing their own internal guidance materials and arranging professional learning activity.
6. **Schools continue to make progress with their curriculum planning.** In many schools, senior leaders had assigned or recruited members of staff to be Area leads; these individuals were responsible for leading a collective effort, working alongside colleagues to develop curriculum plans across the Areas. Most senior leaders interviewed noted that time constraints and the disruption caused by the pandemic had, however, impacted on their curriculum preparations.
7. **Most schools reported an increase in the amount of collaboration and school-to-school networking activity**, much of it led by the Welsh Government and regional consortia (e.g. through the [National Network for Curriculum Implementation](#)) and regional networks.
8. **Some senior leaders underlined the need for a gradual and iterative approach to all aspects of the reform process**, adapting and improving the curriculum as opposed to beginning afresh and making wholesale change.
9. **Most senior leaders and practitioners reported that they were keen to ensure learners are able to contribute in meaningful ways to curriculum design.** Many had involved learners in developing their school's curriculum vision and interpreting the four purposes.

10. **Most practitioners noted that they had begun to have more informal discussions about curriculum planning and pedagogy.** However, engagement with the reforms was reported to be uneven in some schools: in these schools practitioners perceived that discussions and decisions about curriculum reforms were taking place among senior leaders without practitioners being fully involved. Practitioners in secondary schools were less likely than those in primary schools to report that they felt aware of curriculum reform activity in their school.
11. **Many senior leaders and practitioners continued to report a lack of clarity around key aspects of the reform process.** Notably, they reported a lower level of understanding and lack of practical support for schools in developing their approaches to assessment and progression. Many interviewees expressed concern about the relationship between approaches to assessment and future accountability and school inspection arrangements. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of ensuring a consistent understanding of assessment arrangements in order to support learner progression between primary and secondary schools. Many interviewees indicated that they were awaiting further guidance on assessment to help clarify these matters.
12. Most interviewees in secondary schools felt that a **lack of clarity on the future shape of qualifications at age 16** was a barrier to understanding and engaging with curriculum change.
13. **The quality and quantity of information and guidance received by schools was a prominent theme raised by both senior leaders and practitioners during interviews.** Some felt that national guidance provided sufficient information on the reforms. Some, however, felt that the guidance they had received lacked the necessary detail to help them design and plan their curriculum, noting that they would like to access examples of what an effective design or planning process entailed.
14. Many senior leaders and practitioners also reported that a lack of reassurance about actions they were taking in preparation for the new curriculum was impacting on confidence and impeding progress.
15. **Some senior leaders expressed concern that the education workforce, both in their own school and in general, lacked experience and skills to design a new curriculum.** Senior leaders' also noted concerns about a lack of confidence among



staff. This was more evident in the interviews conducted in autumn 2021 than in the survey data collected in summer 2021, and was more prevalent among senior leaders in secondary schools.

16. **There were mixed views on the professional learning that senior leaders and practitioners had accessed to support curriculum reform.** Some felt that the support delivered was valuable and helped develop their understanding of Curriculum for Wales. Other interviewees noted that professional learning had not focused sufficiently on practical examples to support their preparations for curriculum reform. Some senior leaders and practitioners noted that they had not accessed as much professional learning as they had wanted, and expressed the need for further access to professional learning opportunities.
17. **Most interviewees recognised that continuous review, reflection and evaluation were likely to be critical elements of the reform process over the coming years.** Most senior leaders and some practitioners reported being unclear about how to evaluate the extent to which curriculum delivery supports learner outcomes.
18. **Most senior leaders interviewed referred to the additional costs incurred by schools in preparing for curriculum reform.** The costs reported most frequently by schools related to: the time spent out of the classroom by teachers to plan and design the curriculum; additional staffing costs relating to new posts being created or additional responsibilities taken on by staff; and professional learning linked to curriculum preparation. Senior leaders reported that these costs were met either directly through additional Welsh Government support for curriculum preparation or by drawing from school budgets.

#### *Issues for consideration*

19. The qualitative research carried out with schools in autumn 2021 suggests that the key areas for further support at the time for Welsh Government and middle tier partners were:
  - The need to address the **time constraints** that have limited the ability of some schools to progress preparations for the new curriculum. What more can be done to allow schools time and space for planning and design activity linked to the new curriculum?

- **Uneven engagement:** How can senior leaders in schools be supported to ensure that more staff are engaged in curriculum planning and design activity, particularly in secondary schools?
- **Enhance the skills and confidence:** What further action can be taken to boost the skills and confidence of the workforce to contribute meaningfully to curriculum design?
- **Increase and enhance the quality of available support:** Could further support be provided to aid schools' curriculum preparations and provide reassurance about the suitability and direction of curriculum realisation? This could include supporting materials, exemplifying effective approaches to design or planning.
- **Access to professional learning with a focus on practical support:** How can access to professional learning be enhanced? Could the existing professional learning offer be adapted to include a greater focus on practical support to aid curriculum planning and design?

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This section provides an overview of the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales and the purpose of the scoping study in helping to support future research and evaluation priorities.

### Curriculum for Wales

- 1.2 The Curriculum for Wales is the cornerstone of the Welsh Government's efforts to reform education in Wales and build an education system that raises educational standards and enjoys public confidence. The four purposes of the curriculum are the starting point and aspiration for every child and young person in Wales. The [OECD's Improving Schools in Wales report \(2014\)](#) and [Professor Graham Donaldson's independent review \(2015\)](#) set out a rationale for the reforms as well as recommendations for how to design a new curriculum fit for modern day Wales. Under the reforms each school is developing its own curriculum, supported by national guidance, which will enable learners to embody the four purposes of the curriculum by becoming:
- **ambitious, capable learners** who are ready to learn throughout their lives
  - **enterprising, creative contributors** who are ready to play a full part in life and work
  - **ethical, informed citizens** who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world
  - **healthy, confident individuals** who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
- 1.3 Under the Curriculum for Wales subjects will be organised around six Areas of Learning and Experience (Areas): expressive arts; health and well-being; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; mathematics and numeracy; and science and technology.
- 1.4 The Curriculum for Wales guidance promotes an integrated approach to learning and teaching. It encourages collaboration and cross-disciplinary planning and teaching to enable learners to make links between the different Areas and apply their learning to new situations and contexts.

- 1.5 Under the new curriculum arrangements schools support the progression of each individual learner along a continuum of learning from ages 3 to 16. The Curriculum for Wales guidance describes principles of progression for the curriculum and for individual Areas, and progression steps which are supported by the statements of what matters and descriptions of learning. Linked to this, assessment should be formative, learner-focused and used to inform how practitioners respond to the needs of individuals and groups. A defining characteristic of the new approach is that curriculum, assessment and pedagogy are seen as parts of an integrated whole.
- 1.6 The curriculum reforms are supported by a national approach to professional learning; new evaluation and improvement arrangements; a transformation of additional learning needs support and provision; and the development of new qualifications.
- 1.7 The Welsh Government has set out a series of guidance documents to schools on how to approach curriculum design and implementation, recognising the iterative process of curriculum development. The most recent publication [Curriculum for Wales: the journey to curriculum roll-out \(2021\)](#) built on earlier documents and set out the phases involved in curriculum design, which were:
- **engagement** to develop a whole-school understanding of the curriculum and a vision for the teaching and learning that supports it;
  - **design, planning and trialling** – drawing on guidance and support;
  - **evaluating and preparing for first teaching**;
  - **first teaching**, begin to implement the curriculum, reflecting on its effectiveness over time and refining its design as learners progress.
- 1.8 In addition, the Welsh Government set out the principles that should underpin schools' curriculum preparation and design: development through **co-construction**; effective **pedagogy**; engagement with **professional learning** and networks; embedding the qualities of **schools as learning organisations**; considering the **wider school context**, including how the curriculum can support the ALN Code, the Welsh Government's Welsh language strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh speakers*, and the promotion of learner health and well-being.

## About the scoping study

- 1.9 The Welsh Government has commissioned Arad Research, in partnership with The Open University in Wales, to conduct a scoping study relating to the evaluation of the curriculum and assessment reforms in Wales.
- 1.10 The aim of the scoping study is to articulate the theory, assumptions, evidence and readiness underpinning the curriculum and assessment reforms and to use this information to develop recommendations for a robust monitoring and evaluation programme. The study objectives are to:
- assess schools' preparations for the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales, identifying key actions for supporting preparations.
  - develop a programme theory for the curriculum and assessment reforms, setting out key evidence and assumptions and providing a clear picture of the system and stakeholders that will implement them.
  - identify the evaluation questions and explore the extent to which they can be met credibly and reliably using existing, and new, data sources.
  - recommend a detailed monitoring and evaluation strategy for addressing the evaluation questions.
- 1.11 A report was published in January 2022 presenting findings from a [\*Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022\*](#) survey of schools and PRUs that relates to the first of the objectives listed above. The survey was carried out in June and July 2021, and examined schools' preparations for the roll-out of Curriculum for Wales.
- 1.12 This report presents findings of qualitative interviews with 48 senior leaders and practitioners, carried out in Autumn 2021, in relation to their schools' and PRUs' preparations for curriculum reform. The interviewees were recruited from the respondents to the *Preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022* survey who agreed to be re-contacted. A report on the other elements of the evaluation scoping study will be published by the Welsh Government later in 2022.
- 1.13 Section 2 of this report presents the methodology for the qualitative research with senior leaders and practitioners. Section 3 provides information on the profile of interviewees. Subsequent sections reflect the main topics used to structure discussions:

- Section 4 focuses on interviewee's comments on engagement and understanding;
- Section 5 presents findings relating to design, planning and trialling;
- Section 6 summarises comments on schools' evaluation activities and preparations for first teaching;
- Section 7 presents comments from senior leaders on the additional costs associated with curriculum reform;

Case studies are included in some of the above sections which provide examples of how schools are preparing for the Curriculum for Wales. These case studies are indicative of the schools that took part in the research and do not represent endorsements of particular approaches to curriculum realisation. Conclusions and issues for consideration are set out in Section 8.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 This section provides detail on the research methodology. This includes detail of the research tool design process, fieldwork conducted, analysis process, challenges encountered and limitations of the methodology.

### **Research tool design**

2.2 The focus of the interviews was to explore senior leaders' and practitioners' responses to the survey, understand the depth and detail of individual school experiences and the challenges facing them in preparing for curriculum reform. An interview guide was designed focused on schools':

- Engagement and understanding;
- Planning, design and trialling;
- Evaluation and preparing for first teaching.

To check whether respondents' views had changed between completing the survey (June and July 2021) and the interviews (autumn 2021), interviewees were reminded during the interview of their responses to overarching survey questions, and asked whether they would still answer in the same way. The vast majority noted that their views had not changed between participating in the survey and follow-up interview. The interview discussion guide is included in Annex A.

### **Sampling and recruitment**

2.3 Survey respondents who agreed (in June and July 2021) to participate in the follow-up qualitative research were invited to participate in an interview in October and November 2021. It was agreed that senior leaders and practitioners from Pioneer Schools and Innovation Schools would be excluded from the follow-up sample.<sup>2</sup> The rationale for this was that these schools have been closely involved in the curriculum reform process, have contributed to discussions on an ongoing basis and are therefore likely to be further ahead in their preparations than other schools:

---

<sup>2</sup> This meant that 38 senior leaders and 7 practitioners from Pioneer Schools or Innovation Schools were excluded from the invitations to take part in follow-up interviews. This equates to 25 per cent of the senior leaders and 16 per cent of practitioners who agreed to participate in follow-up research.

that is, their experience and perspective may not reflect the wider experiences in schools, which was the focus of this study.

- 2.4 A total of 150 survey respondents (113 senior leaders and 37 practitioners) from these schools opted in to be re-contacted for an interview in autumn 2021. The sample of interviewees was recruited to include a range of schools by type (e.g. primary, secondary, PRU), geographic region and language medium. In order to achieve a good cross-section of perspectives, the recruitment process also took into account interviewees' survey responses, specifically their level of agreement with the overarching statement '*My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022*'.<sup>3</sup> The recruitment process particularly targeted the minority of respondents who had disagreed with this statement to ensure issues and challenges could be fully explored within the interviews - all those who opted in to being re-contacted for further research were invited to participate in an interview.
- 2.5 In total, **48 interviews** were completed with senior leaders and practitioners during October and November 2021. Interviews typically lasted around 45 minutes to an hour. Most were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, while a few were conducted by telephone.
- 2.6 Throughout the findings, the following terms are used to describe groups of research participants:
- **Senior leaders** is used to refer to respondents who stated they were a headteacher, senior leader or in another senior leadership role (e.g. deputy headteacher, assistant head teacher);
  - **Practitioners** is used to refer to respondents who stated they were a middle leader, teacher, Learning Support Worker (LSW) or another role other than senior leader (e.g. Higher Level Teaching Assistant, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) student, school clerk).

---

<sup>3</sup> Among the 113 senior leaders who responded to this question (and had opted in to further research), 87 agreed and 18 disagreed to varying extents (8 neither agreed nor disagreed). Among the 37 practitioners who responded to this question, 22 agreed and 10 disagreed to varying extents (5 neither agreed nor disagreed).



- **Interviewees** is used to refer to all research participants (i.e. both senior leaders and practitioners together).

### **Qualitative analysis**

- 2.7 A framework approach was taken to analyse the qualitative interview data. This allows structured analysis of the data as well as enabling the consideration of issues that emerged from the data itself and may not have been previously considered. Evidence was initially reviewed during a briefing session which involved the researchers who conducted the interviews. This enabled the researchers to reach agreement on the key themes emerging from the evidence, and informed the subsequent analysis.

### **Methodological challenges and limitations**

- 2.8 In analysing the findings presented in this report, it is important to bear in mind some of the challenges encountered during the fieldwork.
- 2.9 One issue faced was that fieldwork took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and its progress was disrupted by the challenges and frequent changes which affected the education sector. Many schools indicated they were unable to participate in the fieldwork, often because of time pressures, uncertainty and day-to-day challenges related to COVID-19. The sample of 48 schools was not designed to be representative, but rather to include a sufficient spread of schools (by language medium and sector) to obtain a good cross section of views and experiences. The purpose of qualitative research is not to achieve full representation (which the earlier survey was better able to achieve) but to allow a broad range of issues to be identified, and deeper discussion to take place.
- 2.10 It is important to acknowledge the risk of selection bias among the sample of schools which engaged in the follow-up interviews. Schools that had progressed further than others in their preparation activities may have been more likely to agree to take part in the follow-up interviews. A purposive approach to sampling, excluding Pioneer and Innovation Schools (see Section 2.3), and sampling based on previous survey responses (see Section 2.4 above) was taken to mitigate this risk.

### 3. Profile of respondents

3.1 This section sets out the profile of interviewees who participated in the qualitative research. As noted in Section 2, a purposive approach was taken to sampling to ensure that the research explored the views of those who agreed that their school was well placed to design their own curriculum as well as those who did not feel this. The sample was therefore not intended to be representative of the population of schools or survey respondents in terms of their views on their preparations for curriculum reform.

#### Profile of interviewees

3.2 A total of 48 survey respondents were interviewed. These comprised 35 senior leaders and 13 practitioners. The sample included 34 interviewees from English-medium schools and 12 from Welsh-medium schools.<sup>4,5</sup> The profile of the interview sample by type and medium (Table 1), and region (Table 2) of school is set out below.

**Table 1. Profile of sample of interviewees by sector and medium**

Sector	Percentage of the sample of 48 interviewees in each category				Number of interviewees			
	Welsh-medium	English-medium	No language classification	Total	Welsh-medium	English-medium	No language classification	Total
Primary and nursery*	13%	42%	0%	54%	6	20	0	26
All-through schools (Middle)	4%	0%	0%	4%	2	0	0	2
Secondary**	8%	29%	0%	38%	4	14	0	18
Special schools	0%	0%	2%	2%	N/A	N/A	1	1
PRUs	0%	0%	2%	2%	N/A	N/A	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>48</b>

\*Welsh-medium primary includes dual stream and transitional schools.

\*\*Welsh-medium secondary includes bilingual schools.

<sup>4</sup> Including dual stream primary and bilingual secondaries and all-through (3-16/3-19) schools. One interviewee was from a special school and one was from a PRU, both of which are settings that are not classified by language.

<sup>5</sup> [Guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) was issued in December 2021. The categories used in this report reflect the approach to the categorisation prior to December 2021. Under this approach, primary schools fell into one of five categories. Secondary schools fell into one of four categories. Further information on these categories and the proposed new categories can be seen in the above non-statutory guidance document.

**Table 2. Profile of interview sample by region**

Geographic region	Number in sample	Percentage in sample
Central south	13	27%
Mid and west	16	33%
North	10	21%
South east	9	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.3 Interviewees were also profiled in terms of their level of agreement with the statement *‘My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022’* when completing the survey. During recruitment, the minority of schools who disagreed with this statement were actively targeted to ensure that their views could be explored in the fieldwork. Table 3 shows that respondents who disagreed with this statement, and those who neither agreed nor disagreed with it, are slightly over-represented in the sample; those who agreed with the statement are slightly under-represented. It had been hoped to recruit more schools who disagreed with the statement, but this was not possible during the fieldwork period.

**Table 3. Profile of sample of interviewees by level of agreement with the statement *‘My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022’*.**

Level of agreement with the statement <i>‘My school is well-placed to design our own curriculum ready for the planned roll-out from September 2022’</i> .	Number opting in to be re-contacted for interview	% opting in to be re-contacted for interview	Number interviewed	% of those interviewed
Neutral	14	9%	6	13%
Disagree*	28	19%	11	23%
Agree*	109	72%	31	65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Includes those who strongly agreed/disagreed and somewhat agreed/disagreed

## 4. Engagement and understanding

4.1 This section outlines the findings of the research in relation to interviewees' engagement with the curriculum reform process and their understanding of different elements of the reforms.

4.2 Interviewees were asked about a number of issues relating to engaging staff in the curriculum reform process and developing their understanding of CfW. These included questions on:

- what **actions their schools had been able to take** to develop a whole-school understanding of the Curriculum for Wales;
  - what had **worked well** and any **barriers** faced;
- whether and **how their school had developed a vision** for their curriculum;
- whether and how **learners, parents**, and the **wider community** had been **involved in discussions** about their school curriculum;
- **how the new curriculum would feel different** from a learner's perspective.

4.3 During discussions, interviewees also provided their views on the **information and guidance** they had received on CfW and commented on practitioners' **level of understanding** of curriculum change in more general terms. Findings relating to each of these issues is discussed below.

### **Actions taken to develop schools' and schools' understanding of CfW**

4.4 Most interviewees described a variety of actions their school had taken to develop practitioners' understanding of CfW. The types of activities most commonly mentioned by interviewees were:

- Senior and middle leaders (and practitioners, on occasion), being tasked with **reading and interpreting parts of the guidance**, and then collating and presenting information to other staff during meetings;
  - In many instances, this involved **schools developing their own internal guidance materials** and documents to interpret and share **more digestible information** on the curriculum;

- In many cases, this had been done by **groups of staff covering each of the Areas**, and presenting findings back during whole-school sessions.
- Schools holding **regular staff meetings to discuss specific aspects of the curriculum reform process**, focusing on particular parts of the guidance. The frequency of these meetings varied by school from weekly sessions to more ad hoc discussions;
  - In many cases, these types of meetings involved groups of staff working collaboratively to **review or audit their existing provision**, to consider to what extent it provided adequate ‘coverage’ of aspects of CfW, and to identify priorities to work on next;
  - In some cases, practitioners were asked to review aspects of CfW and **reflect on the extent to which these (e.g. the 12 pedagogical principles) were embedded** within their professional practice;
  - In some cases, interviewees described collaborative activity to **develop practical materials**, such as planning templates and ‘coverage documents’ to help them design their new curriculum;
  - One school had adopted an **‘asymmetric week’** where practitioners had half a school day dedicated to professional learning each week, much of which was devoted to curriculum change;
- Schools **dedicating INSET days and ‘twilight sessions’ to developing their staff’s knowledge and understanding** of aspects of the curriculum reforms;
- Senior leaders and practitioners taking part in **professional learning activities delivered by external partners** such as the regional consortia;
  - In a few cases, schools had **commissioned external partners (e.g. academics, Area experts) to deliver professional learning to their staff** on various aspects of curriculum reform;
- Senior leaders **visiting other schools or holding collaborative meetings** to learn from each other’s experiences.

In most cases, interviewees reported that their schools were involved in more than one of the above activities.

'We've held numerous twilight sessions collectively poring over the documentation and pulling them apart section by section. We've had additional sessions on trying to determine what assessment is going to look like.' Senior leader, primary school

4.5 In many schools, senior leaders had adopted a **sequential approach** to developing their staff's knowledge and understanding of curriculum changes. In some schools, this process had begun over five years ago, while others were at an earlier stage of engagement. Examples of how schools had sequenced their activities included initially focusing on:

- Staff in a particular **stage of education** (e.g. Key Stage 2 staff in primary) or staff in a particular **Area or department** (e.g. humanities, health and wellbeing);
  - These interviewees described how they had used the insights gained from this early activity to adapt their approach to engaging other practitioners in their school.
- Focusing on a **specific aspect of the CfW**, such as embedding the 'what matters' statements or 12 pedagogical principles in their provision during the first year, and other aspects (e.g. mandatory curriculum elements) in the second year;
  - These interviewees felt this sequential approach made the process more manageable. For example, a few interviewees felt that focusing on the 12 pedagogical principles provided their staff with a strong grounding for introducing other aspects of the CfW guidance.

4.6 A few senior leaders noted that adopting a **sequential approach** to developing their staff's understanding had initially led to an imbalance in their staff's levels of understanding of the reforms. However, they felt that this was outweighed by the benefits of engaging staff in a more manageable way (e.g. in smaller groups), and that these variations in their staff knowledge and understanding could be addressed at a later stage in the process.

4.7 Each of the activities described above was considered by interviewees who had participated in them to be helpful in developing their understanding of Curriculum for Wales. However, most interviewees also noted that the benefit derived from these activities was **dependent on having sufficient time** to plan and participate in them, which often posed a challenge in busy school environments. Many interviewees emphasised the importance of early engagement and awareness-raising activity with staff to develop their understanding of the principles and ethos of CfW.

‘The curriculum guidance is not an easy read. You need to go back to it several times. So that’s why we did so much on engagement and understanding and staff developed their own curriculum journals which they reflected on individually and together. It’s not for one person to create, it’s for the whole school to buy in to.’  
Senior leader, primary school

4.8 Many interviewees felt that staff and learners spending time interpreting and articulating their own understanding of the four purposes was valuable in providing a strong basis for designing and trialling new content. Many felt their school had now reached a point in their curriculum journey where more practical sessions focusing on planning, design and trialling were of greater value to them, but they continued to emphasise the importance of this early engagement activity.

4.9 Most interviewees noted that opportunities to share and learn about other schools’ experiences were valuable. Examples of these types of approaches mentioned by schools included:

- Attending local authority, regional or national **network meetings**<sup>6</sup> to hear about others’ experiences;
  - Some reported accessing online resources and recordings of meetings arranged by the regional consortia;
- Attending **informal meetings** with their challenge advisor (e.g. ‘coffee curriculum’ sessions) to hear about and discuss others’ experiences;

---

<sup>6</sup> A series of [National Network ‘conversations’](#) relating to the new CfW started in mid-October 2021. Depending on the precise timing of interview, practitioners may have had the opportunity to attend one of the early National Network conversations. The National Network is an open platform, with opportunity for all schools in Wales to get involved in exploring key issues around implementing the curriculum. These conversations are being held at a national and regional level, in partnership with the Welsh Government and regional consortia and, as appropriate, local authorities. These conversations will build on professional learning at a regional level, bringing practitioners together across Wales to develop approaches to national implementation issues.

- Attending **meetings or visits with other schools** (e.g. cluster meetings) to share ideas and experiences;
  - Appointing practitioners to lead on cluster activity, tracking progression during the primary-secondary transition;
  - In some cases, interviewees described attending regular cluster meetings or working groups with other cluster school staff focused on a specific Area;
  - A few schools had developed a shared curriculum vision for their school cluster.

'We had meetings with headteachers from the cluster on how to present the [curriculum] changes in a positive way to staff. How to break it down into digestible chunks to avoid being daunted by the changes. We spent time explaining to staff that we're changing to react to the needs of pupils and wider society.' Practitioner, primary school

*Barriers to developing schools' and schools' understanding of curriculum change*

- 4.10 Most interviewees highlighted a **lack of time** as a barrier to developing a whole-school understanding, and noted that COVID-19 had exacerbated the time pressures as well as making it more difficult to obtain supply teacher cover for staff to engage in activities relating to CfW. Secondary practitioners in particular, emphasised that they considered time pressures to be a barrier, and they highlighted that the time taken to assess centre-determined grades during the pandemic had reduced the opportunities to undertake curriculum-related activity. Some interviewees reported seeing the 'same schools' represented at meetings relating to curriculum change, and that they were concerned that some other schools were disengaged from the process.
- 4.11 Most interviewees noted that their progress in developing a whole-school understanding had been **interrupted by the pandemic**, with much activity paused from March 2020 onwards. In contrast, a few interviewees felt they had more opportunities to develop their understanding of the reforms during the early period of the pandemic. These interviewees explained that they had been able to participate in more professional learning because they had more time to undertake research whilst working remotely during the 'lockdown' periods. A few had found it



easier to collaborate in new ways whilst working remotely (e.g. collaborating across Areas rather than subjects or departments). The findings indicate that schools were affected to varying extents by the pandemic, depending on a number of factors such as the profile of learners and families at the school, the nature of local 'hub' provision, schools' pre-existing capacity to deliver digital learning and collaborative activity, and rates of staff absence.

4.12 **Communication between senior leaders and practitioners** within schools appeared to be a barrier for some interviewees. Some practitioners, particularly those in secondary schools, considered that they were not aware of all the activities that were taking place in their school. Some secondary practitioners were able to describe the structures that had been set up in their school to focus on curriculum development (e.g. Area working groups, cluster meetings), but felt that much of the activity was happening 'behind the scenes' and that they were not always informed of progress and outcomes.

4.13 Some senior leaders highlighted **challenges in engaging a minority of their staff** who were more reluctant to engage in the reforms. Most senior leaders emphasised the importance of developing a whole-school understanding of curriculum changes.

'We have some staff, like in all schools, who have been in the school for a long time and have seen changes come and go, and they think 'if I just keep my head down then it'll be fine'. Breaking away from that is important. We've got to a point where the 'reluctant few' have been drawn forward by the enthusiastic many.'  
Senior leader, secondary school

4.14 Some senior leaders expressed concern that the education workforce, both in their own school and in general, **lacked experience and skills to design a new curriculum**, noting that a lack of confidence among staff created significant uncertainties. Concern about a lack of confidence was more evident in the autumn 2021 interviews than in the summer 2021 survey data, where the vast majority of senior leaders agreed that their staff had the skills required to design the new curriculum.<sup>7</sup> Many interviewees questioned whether they were 'on the right track' with their approach to curriculum change and indicated that they were seeking reassurance that this was the case.

---

<sup>7</sup> The survey report noted that "The vast majority of senior leaders (95 per cent) agreed with the statement 'My school has the staff with the skills required to design the new curriculum'." See Welsh Government (2022), [Practitioner survey on preparations for Curriculum and Assessment Reforms 2022: final report](#).

'My concern was our lack of skillset as curriculum designers. The previous National Curriculum was very prescriptive and guided by accountability which then drove what was in the assessment task.' Senior leader, primary school

- 4.15 There were mixed views among those interviewed on the professional learning they had accessed relating to curriculum reform. Some schools felt that the professional learning they had accessed, mainly via regional consortia, was valuable in developing their understanding of curriculum change. However, others were less positive and indicated that they were not confident they would be able to access the professional learning they needed to help design the new curriculum. Among these interviewees, a few noted that the professional learning they had accessed did not provide sufficient focus on practical support and examples to support their understanding of curriculum changes. Interview findings reflected the mixed views gathered during the survey, notably that practitioners were less likely than senior leaders to have positive views on professional learning and their ability to access it.

*Actions taken to develop schools' and schools' understanding of assessment arrangements*

- 4.16 Most interviewees noted that, compared with other elements of curriculum reform, they had engaged in **fewer activities to develop their understanding of assessment** arrangements to support learner progression. However, interviewees generally reported that they were at an earlier stage of engagement with assessment and that, as a result, their levels of understanding of assessment arrangements to support learner progression were lower than other aspects of the curriculum changes. Many interviewees indicated that they were unsure how to proceed or were awaiting further guidance on assessment, and were therefore not yet prioritising this as much as other aspects of reform in their school.

'Assessment is a big issue. I've read the assessment consultation and I'm no clearer really.' Senior leader, secondary school

'We feel we need to do something [on assessment], we just don't know what the best thing to do is at the moment.' Senior leader, primary school

'Assessment is a big unknown at the moment... ..There's an element of over-thinking in assessment, and it's all being driven at individual school level. I think all teachers would like to talk to their peers more about it and those opportunities haven't been there. It's a bit of a black hole at the moment.' Practitioner, primary school

4.17 Many interviewees described how they had reviewed the progression steps in their school and ‘mapped’ or ‘audited’ their provision against these. This was considered to be helpful in **developing a shared understanding of the progression steps** across the school as well as reflecting on whether their school’s provision covered these adequately. A few interviewees felt that the progression steps were too vague and did not provide them with sufficient detail for developing their own assessment arrangements to support learner progression. A few interviewees also indicated that they found it challenging to avoid cross-referencing any new assessment approaches with the levels they previously used for key stage assessments.

‘With the progression steps, I feel like I’ve still got the tree but have lost the leaves.’ Secondary school practitioner

4.18 Many interviewees were concerned about how to develop assessment arrangements that would be considered adequate by external partners, such as Estyn and regional consortia. This was often raised by interviewees in tandem with **concerns about future accountability arrangements** and what requirements these might place on their school.

‘I think ‘I know that my learners are progressing’, but how do I prove that, and what do I need to do to prove that?’ Practitioner, primary school

4.19 Most interviewees felt that ensuring a consistent understanding of assessment arrangements to support learner **progression between primary and secondary** schools was a challenge. Some interviewees explained that they had started to participate in cluster meetings, involving feeder primary and secondary school representatives, that were focused on developing a coherent process of assessment to support the transition from primary to secondary school. However, interviewees tended to describe these as ‘early stage’ discussions which were raising issues for consideration rather than developing solutions.

4.20 Most interviewees, particularly in secondary schools, felt that a lack of **clarity on the future shape of qualifications** at the age of 16 was a barrier to developing a whole-school understanding of curriculum change. In some schools, interviewees reported that staff were engaging with Qualifications Wales on curriculum reform, and hoped that this would help them develop a clearer understanding. However, in general, interviewees felt that uncertainty about qualifications created challenges for practitioners in understanding what learners should be aiming towards.

'Staff find it difficult not knowing what the 'end game' is for children at the end of Year 11, find it difficult to map out how things will look in terms of assessment. There's concern about how this is going to look.'<sup>8</sup> Senior leader, Secondary school

'There are two general camps of staff in the school – 'big picture thinkers' who like the focus on ethos, the vision, journey etc., and the 'systems thinkers' who like to focus on schemes of work, planning. We are heavily reliant now on the planners ['systems thinkers'] and they struggle with not being able to visualise everything on paper because they can't visualise the assessment. We struggle to see the pathways for learners.' Senior leader, primary school

4.21 Two case studies follow which provide examples of how schools are developing practitioners' understanding of the Curriculum for Wales.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Original quote in Welsh: 'Staff yn ei gweld yn anodd, ddim yn gwybod beth yw'r 'end game' i blant ar ddiwedd Blwyddyn 11, ei gweld yn anodd mapio allan sut mae pethau'n mynd i edrych o ran asesu. Mae pryder, sut mae hyn yn mynd i edrych.'

<sup>9</sup> These case studies are indicative of the schools that engaged in the research, and do not represent endorsements of particular approaches.









**Case Study 1: Primary school**  
**Theme: Setting aside time to embed engagement & understanding**

**Overview of school progress in their preparations**

The school reported being well-placed to design their own curriculum and make changes to professional practice in readiness for Curriculum for Wales. A lot of ground work has been done, with a **primary focus on professional learning** which has been very effective. There is an increased prominence for the **Pupil Voice** and more activities are being shared with parents including during termly celebration events.

**The approach adopted by the school**

**Devoting time** to embed the Curriculum for Wales and new ways of working, and promote engagement with the wider school community has been critical. Activities that have supported the positive progress include:

	Familiarising staff with Curriculum for Wales		Consultation with wider stakeholders determined priorities
	Professional Learning for all staff for one afternoon each week		Area leads appointed
	All Professional Learning is linked to the professional standards		Progression steps tracker introduced
	Pupil Voice approach changed		Engagement with parents

**INSET days** provided opportunities to establish everyone's roles, responsibilities and expectations. Staff have been allocated a **half day every week** for Professional Learning; all lessons finish at lunch time, with after-school provision available for learners if required. The main focus for Professional Learning has been the **pedagogical principles**. Although **Area leads** have been appointed there is a focus on ensuring all staff understand all the Areas. The **pupil voice** is now given more prominence and used differently; teachers lead for six weeks on a topic, pupil voice is gathered throughout this time, and for the rest of the term pupil-led topics are delivered that are linked to the theme.

**What has worked well?** There have been both **formal INSET and more informal** sessions with another primary school to learn about others' professional learning. Staff work in triads and peer teach, with it recognised that it is important to share both the successes and the not so successful, and share all learning. Staff have moved across phases to learn more about each other's roles.

However, **accountability** is not as clear as it could be, with staff needing reassurance that their approaches are compatible with the evaluation, improvement, and accountability system. There is a risk that some staff may experience isolation as they are not sure what to do.

## Case Study 2: All-through (3-16) school

**Theme: A sequential approach to whole-school engagement and developing understanding**

### Overview of school progress in their preparations

The school has focused on developing a strong understanding of the 12 pedagogical principles among staff and on developing their own interpretation of the four purposes. The school feel their design and trialling is going well, but that staff lack 'high-level' curriculum design skills.

### The approach adopted by the school

The first step of the school's curriculum implementation plan was to develop a strong understanding of pedagogy across the school by focusing on the 12 pedagogical principles. The rationale for this approach was that these principles would remain constant throughout and would apply to current and future provision, regardless of new curriculum content. Senior leaders felt there was now an understanding of 'what good pedagogy looks like' among staff. Staff have also worked collaboratively to develop a version of the four purposes focused on their school. Learners were also involved in this process which has helped to develop their understanding of the curriculum.



Focus on developing staff understanding of pedagogy



Developed own version of the four purposes with learners



Local cluster committee developed shared cluster vision



Area leads appointed

The school has appointed 6 leaders to oversee the six Areas whilst still working in their subject area. Area leaders cascade information throughout the school and help distil guidance for staff. The school has delivered lots of professional learning on aspects of the CfW and has collaborated with other schools through a local cluster committee (involving feeder primary schools) to develop a cluster vision. Regular weekly meetings take place with feeder primaries to develop the curriculum.

**What has worked well?** Focusing on pedagogy has worked well because it has provided practitioners with a strong basis for design and trialling activity. Senior leaders are confident that practitioners understand what makes a 'good lesson' and that this gives staff confidence to try new approaches. Working in small groups and cascading information to others via Area leads was also considered to have worked well. Some of the design and trialling had been less successful, with a lack of 'end product' from some discussions. However, senior leaders felt that the discussions had still been useful in providing useful learning points, for example that senior leaders needed to provide more prescriptive templates for planning some activity.

However, senior leaders feel that ensuring the curriculum is coherent across Areas and covers all the necessary elements of CfW whilst ensuring appropriate breadth and depth of content remains a challenge. A senior leader felt that and that staff lack the experience of doing this and the time to 'step back and review' the curriculum. Senior leaders also felt that the progression steps were vague and there was a lack of clarity about arrangements for assessing learner progression.

## Views on information and guidance

4.22 Interviewees had mixed views on the **information and guidance** they had accessed on the curriculum reforms. Some interviewees expressed positive views on the guidance they had accessed. Many felt that the volume of information published made it difficult to navigate, and senior leaders reported that they had used Welsh Government guidance to develop their own materials, which they felt would be more accessible for their teachers. Senior leaders and practitioners in primary and secondary schools reported developing and using these types of materials during their internal professional learning sessions.

4.23 Some interviewees felt that the national guidance provided sufficient detail on the processes they should follow in terms of engagement and developing an understanding of the reforms. Some felt that the guidance, as well as professional learning activity delivered via external partners, **needed more practical detail on the curriculum design process** itself.

‘If you follow the guidance, there is lots of information on engagement. You follow the process and engage your stakeholders, understand the local context, the national picture, engage your local cluster. You do all that and then... now go and design your curriculum!’ Senior leader, primary school

‘There’s been no practical, hands-on activity. It’s been more focused on ‘awareness’ rather than change in practice’. Practitioner, PRU

4.24 Many senior leaders and practitioners interviewed felt they **had not received sufficient information from pioneer schools** to aid their understanding of the curriculum change. Some of these interviewees felt they were two to three years behind those schools who had been immersed in the reform process for a longer period and felt that they would value more information about what these schools had learnt from their journey so far.

‘Schools were chosen to be pioneers because they were sector leading but now the gap feels widened as the schools that weren’t doing as well are further behind in their planning and preparation.’ Secondary school practitioner.

‘I understand the trap of getting examples and they don’t want us to copy the Pioneer Schools’ activity, but one of the things that is vital is knowing what hasn’t worked in these schools. They haven’t been as forthcoming as we wanted.’ Secondary school practitioner.

## Levels of understanding of curriculum changes

- 4.25 Overall, most interviewees reported that they understood what they and their school were required to do to prepare for curriculum changes. However, many interviewees reported that they had not fully appreciated the scale of the task when embarking on the process. As a result, some interviewees reported that, **as their understanding of curriculum changes increased, they had felt more daunted** by the scale of the challenge.

'When I completed the survey, I was on a mission. I was really up for the reforms! I had started the process of design. I've become more aware of the scale of the reforms alongside other developments. But now that there is so much else going on with ALN transformation – including legal requirements, it feels overwhelming.'  
Practitioner, primary school

'I feel as if we've gone through other phases happily and confidently. It [now] seems further from our grasp than ever in some ways. Not sure what else we can do other than give it a go. Evaluation needs to be really strong rather than knowing it's right straight away because it's never going to be 'right' is it?'  
Practitioner, primary school

- 4.26 Practitioners, particularly in secondary schools, tended to express less confidence than senior leaders in their understanding of curriculum changes and were more likely to be concerned or uncertain about aspects of the reforms.
- 4.27 Most senior leaders and practitioners reported that there were varying levels of knowledge of the curriculum changes among practitioners in their school, depending on the amount of discussion taking place, and nature of leadership, within departments. Interviewees reported that ensuring regular opportunities to discuss and collaborate on specific aspects of curriculum reform at school and area/department/faculty level were important to developing the understanding of all practitioners. Interviewees frequently mentioned that time pressures were a barrier to providing these opportunities for regular discussion, collaboration and feedback, and that these had been exacerbated during the pandemic, particularly in secondary schools.
- 4.28 Some interviewees reported that one of the challenges they faced was understanding the level of 'breadth and depth' required in their school curriculum content. A few interviewees were unsure about how to balance the freedom to choose their own content with mandatory aspects of the curriculum.



4.29 Most interviewees expressed support for the principles of CfW and commitment to a system where progression is embedded in teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis. However, interviewees commonly expressed a view that they were awaiting further information and support before formulating plans on assessment to support learner progression.

‘The elephant in the room is assessment – you develop fantastic experiential content but how do you measure where the kids have got to? The concern for us is that some schools can afford to take chances and make some mistakes but still have kids who are well rounded and do well in GCSE. In a school such as ours with higher levels of deprivation there is more at risk and we have to get it right from the start.’ Senior leader, secondary school

‘There was lots about the assessment regime I didn’t agree with previously but we can’t have nothing. We’re just waiting at the moment.’ Senior leader, primary school

4.30 A few interviewees felt it was difficult for less experienced staff to develop an understanding of approaches to assessment to support learner progression. These interviewees explained that this was because these practitioners had less experience of observing learners’ progression over time, and therefore found it more difficult to develop their own approaches to assessing learner progression.

‘It’s very difficult for newer staff to develop a vision and think about that journey, without that experience of teaching learners and seeing them progress through school. As teachers, we’re used to being told what to do. How do you ‘see’ the journey?’ Senior leader, primary school

4.31 Some interviewees noted that levels of understanding among parents and governors were low. A few interviewees emphasised that it was a challenge to engage parents in curriculum change processes such as getting feedback on a school vision, responses to surveys and recruiting to parent councils.

‘We presented our work plans to governors and their faces were like ‘wow – what is going on?’. It’s all new to them.’ Senior leader, primary school

### **Developing their school’s vision for CfW**

4.32 Almost all of the interviewees noted that their school had developed a vision for their own curriculum. Interviewees described how they had developed their vision including, where relevant, the involvement of learners, parents and the wider community. The most common approaches mentioned by schools were:

- Involving staff and learners in **developing or re-visiting their school's motto, values or existing vision**, and seeking to incorporate elements of the CfW (typically the four purposes) within it;
  - Some schools encouraged their staff to collaborate on a shared document setting out their school's new vision;
  - Some had developed a shortlist of potential 'straplines' and motto statements and surveyed staff and parents to help select new ones;
  - Some had restructured their school councils to examine and interpret one or more of the four purposes;
  - In some schools, interviewees felt the four purposes were already closely aligned with their school's ethos.
- Primary schools **developing and designing characters to visually embody the four purposes** and, in some cases, using these as 'shorthand' ways of referring to the four purposes in the school;
  - Some schools had developed displays or information boards presenting this information to promote a shared interpretation of the four purposes among learners and staff;

'The pupils have created four core purposes 'avatars' which are made relevant whenever four core purposes are referred to in lessons... ..The pupils have used the avatars to help with the design of a pupil friendly school prospectus.'  
Senior leader, special school

- Distributing information on their vision in various formats and **gathering the views of learners, parents and governors** through questionnaires and more qualitative approaches;
  - For example, one primary school had gathered comments and suggestions from their staff and governors which had helped them reword the school vision.

4.33 Interviewees emphasised the role of gathering learner voice data in developing their school's vision for CfW. Some schools had engaged their learners in activities to develop their understanding of the four purposes; this included class discussions, developing 'mind maps' and creating characters. A few had established new school council groups relating to Areas of the curriculum (e.g. Health and Well-being).

## How the new curriculum will feel different

4.34 Interviewees were asked how they thought their school's new curriculum would feel different from the perspective of the learner. The most commonly raised responses were that the new curriculum would feel:

- More **experiential**: interviewees believed that their curriculum would provide learners with more practical learning experiences involving more external partners (e.g. employers, parents) and outdoor learning that was linked to their local context;
- More **coherent**: links between Areas and subjects would be more explicit and obvious to learners;
  - In many schools, particularly primary schools, interviewees felt that more integrated planning in the school would lead to greater coherence;
- More **enjoyable, exciting and engaging** for learners: interviewees felt that a more experiential learning experience would lead to greater enjoyment for learners;
  - Some interviewees also felt that this would arise through learners being taught by staff with more enthusiasm and energy.

'I'm very excited. I'm past retirement age and keeping going because this is the first time in my 30 years that anyone has actually asked what is the purpose of education? It's always been teach the national curriculum, prepare children for work, and some of that might be true whereas now we know what we want people to be like at the end of the education process and so that is the way we are going in our planning – what do they look like? What would we deliver to get them there?' Senior leader, primary school

- More **learner-focused**: interviewees were enthused by the focus on the four purposes and by the idea of placing these at the centre of their curriculum;
  - A few primary interviewees described their curriculum for 7-11 year olds as being more 'child-led' and believed it would feel more like their Foundation Phase curriculum;

'It's a huge change in the way of learning, putting the pupil at the centre of everything to help create the complete child. And putting the enjoyment back into learning.'<sup>10</sup> Practitioner, primary school

'Breaking things down and collaborating is the key thing. In the Foundation Phase we're used to focusing on wellbeing now, so we've worked with Key Stage 2 to develop this for that age group' Practitioner, primary school

- More **parental involvement**: interviewees described various ideas for engaging parents in curriculum change (e.g. surveys) and for developing their understanding of the new school curriculum (e.g. celebration days/evenings).

4.35 The following case study provides an example of how one school has engaged parents and the community in its preparations<sup>11</sup>.

---









<sup>10</sup> Original quote in Welsh: 'Mae'n newid anferthol yn y ffordd o ddysgu, rhoi'r disgybl yn ganolog i bopeth er mwyn helpu creu plentyn cyflawn. A rhoi'r mwynhad nol mewn i addysg.'

<sup>11</sup> This case study is indicative of the types of approach mentioned during interviews and does not represent an endorsement of this particular approach.

### Case Study 3: Primary school Community and parental engagement

#### Overview of school progress in their preparations

The school has been preparing for the new curriculum for the past three years, engaging in a broad range of activities to support this:

 Staff opportunities for development through training and secondment	 Linking with other schools within the consortia
 Embedding team teaching across Key Stage 2	 Attending consortia training
 Parental and stakeholder engagement at the core of curriculum	 Extensive modelling of pedagogy for staff
 Developing blended learning	 Pupil voice a key feature

The school began implementing the new approach in Key Stage 2, ensuring that the **four purposes were at the core of all pedagogy**. A new **team teaching approach** was implemented too. The school and staff were anxious at the beginning, as the approach was new to them. However, having seen that the pedagogy works, they are now **enthusiastic** to use it in their classrooms. The school has an open-door policy and staff observe each other implementing the new approaches.

#### The approach adopted by the school

Ensuring that stakeholders and parents are aware of the four purposes is considered to be a key activity. Governors were described as being very supportive of the new approach to ensure that the pedagogy was effective in the first instance, and that the school's vision would be developed from there.

**What has worked well?** Parents have been involved through a series of challenges for the family and home. A **newsletter** challenges families to assess how ethical and informed they are as a family through a scoring mechanism to discuss what makes an ethical child and to **set targets** within the home. Children can complete this task during reading time with a member of staff if they have been unable to complete this at home. **Parents' expertise** also contributes to teaching and extra-curricular activities e.g. fitness sessions or Eisteddfod judging. Pupils are considering how they can raise the **community's awareness** of their 'Cynefin' by drawing the community's attention to what makes them unique e.g. displays outside the school.

**What could have been done better?** More communication with parents from the outset to alleviate any concerns about the new approaches in lessons.

**What is the next step?** Designing the assessment, the school will seek parental engagement for this. However, care is needed to ensure that assessments are designed carefully to fit the requirements of the children and the new curriculum.

## 5. Design, planning and trialling

5.1 This section outlines the findings of the research in relation to interviewees experiences of designing, planning, and trialling the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in their schools.

5.2 Interviewees were asked about a number of issues relating to designing, planning, and trialling the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. These included questions on:

- what actions they had taken as part of the process of designing and planning the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in their school;
- what they considered to be working well in the design, planning and trialling of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in their school;
- what they considered to be the barriers in terms of the design, planning and trialling of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in their school.

### Action taken to design and plan for the new curriculum

5.3 Interviewees described a variety of actions their school had taken to design and plan for the implementation of CfW. The types of activities most commonly mentioned by interviewees are presented below.

5.4 Many practitioners reported undertaking independent **research** into new pedagogical approaches and trialling this in the classroom:

- In some instances, this was followed by teachers offering feedback on what they had researched and how it was implemented in the classroom to other members of staff;
- One practitioner noted that, in their school, these feedback discussions were conducted in a 'non-judgemental' manner, with the emphasis being on reflection and enquiry.

5.5 Most schools were engaging in **collaborative activity** within and between schools to co-ordinate planning processes and engage in collective learning. In some cases,

the importance of a collaborative design and planning process was conveyed by the senior leadership team.

- One example of a collaborative planning process were **joint INSET days** between schools within a cluster to ensure continuity for learners between primary and secondary phase;
- A few interviewees described how **planning within the school had become more coordinated** and has seen coordination in teaching across the school rather than by year group. For example, one practitioner mentioned ‘topic-based afternoons’ whereby the whole school was learning about a specific topic;
- It was noted that whilst some schools utilised formal inter-school collaboration – for example, through existing regional networks – a small number of schools had opted to **collaborate through more informal connections**.
  - One interviewee described this as having the benefit of being able to jointly plan with schools that shared the same ethos and vision:

‘We’ve gone about it intentionally to collaborate with schools that have the same way of thinking as us. The idea in the local authority was for us to work with a specific group of schools, but we weren’t keen because we felt that we had to have the same kind of ambition and culture. Our network has been established through informal connections – though the consortium is happy that we’ve created it’ Senior leader, Secondary school<sup>12</sup>

5.6 Many senior leaders noted that **school staffing structures had been reorganised** to reflect the CfW vision and guidance and to allow for more effective design and planning;

- Most frequently, this involved the appointment of Area leads within schools and was frequently accompanied by a move away from traditional ‘head of department’ roles. However, a few schools had opted to appoint Area leads

---

<sup>12</sup> Original quote in Welsh: ‘Da ni wedi mynd ati’n fwriadol i gydweithio ag ysgolion sydd â’r un ffordd o feddwl â ni. Y syniad yn yr awdurdod lleol oedd i ni weithio gyda grŵp penodol o ysgolion, ond doedden ni ddim yn awyddus gan ein bod yn teimlo bod yn rhaid i ni gael yr un math o uchelgais a diwylliant. Mi wnaethom ni sefydlu’n rhwydwaith drwy gysylltiadau anffurfiol – er mae’r consortiwm yn hapus ein bod wedi ei greu’.

in *addition* to maintaining current staff roles with the aim of Area leads acting as facilitators of intra- and inter-department planning;

- One interviewee noted specifically the importance of Area leads acting in an **advisory and supportive capacity** as opposed to telling practitioners what to do.
- One school had **moved staff across different year groups** within the primary school. This was described as important for staff learning and fostering an appreciation of each other's roles. It was described as emphasising the role of staff as 'primary practitioners' who require an understanding of what learners do at different stages of their journey.

5.7 Most interviewees mentioned that they had **identified authentic links between different Areas** in their process of design and planning for CfW. Some emphasised the benefit of establishing these connections within their schools' local context, noting that this had helped bring cross-Area teaching to life for practitioners and learners.

5.8 Most interviewees noted that **pupil voice had become a more central part of the design and planning process**. This involved two main views: that learners and teachers work *together*; and that a greater emphasis on pupil voice afforded the learner more ownership and agency whilst the practitioner's role shifted to be more facilitative. A few of the interviewees noted that whilst pupil voice has become more important, learners are not *leading* the design and planning process but are *informing* it.

5.9 A few interviewees noted that their schools had made concerted efforts to incorporate more **experiential and outdoor learning**. In a few cases, the design process involved expenditure on resources and materials to facilitate experiential learning.

- For example, one school had planned for increased experiential and outdoor learning through the construction of new resources including: outdoor ponds, polytunnels, a beehive, raised beds, and an outdoor classroom;
- Other interviewees also recognised the importance of experiential learning but in different ways, for example by inviting visitors to the school every



Friday to give talks about their jobs/careers (parents and individuals from the community).

- 5.10 A few interviewees described a process whereby current provision was audited and evaluated in light of the overall ethos and requirements of the new curriculum. For example, a few described doing this to ensure that the 12 pedagogical principles were incorporated into their practice. Many interviewees described the process of ensuring that any ‘gaps’ left uncovered in curriculum delivery were addressed (e.g. ensuring sufficient Area breadth and depth; tracking the coverage of descriptions of learning over the year). Amongst those who made these comments, some mentioned how this incremental and adaptive approach was considered an easier in-road to making future curriculum changes as opposed to initiating wholesale changes. A minority of interviewees said that they had **engaged with parents** in the design and planning of the new curriculum. Many schools reported that they had struggled to achieve sufficient or prolonged contact with parents. However, there were innovative examples of efforts to engage parents, such as through school ‘apps’ or through the creation and sharing of videos.
- 5.11 A few interviewees noted that they had adopted a new approach or mindset when planning and designing the new curriculum. These comments described a mode of action as opposed to specific activities:
- For example, one interviewee described this as ensuring that all planning for the new curriculum contained lessons and experiences for learners that were **real and relevant**, or that the learning is more **purposeful**;
  - Another example was a change to how the recipients of planning and design are conceptualised: as opposed to simply imparting knowledge onto learners, innovate to get learners more involved and shift the role of the practitioner to be that of a facilitator.
- ‘We have the freedom to look at what’s happening globally and say that this is what the children need to know – it’s one of *our* four purposes’. Senior leader, primary school

## Positive reflections on planning and design of the new curriculum

- 5.12 This section outlines the aspects of design and planning for the curriculum that were perceived to be progressing well. The points raised by interviewees are set out below.
- 5.13 A sizeable minority of interviewees noted that successful outcomes were accompanied by a sense of **staff ownership** over the CfW changes. This was reported in instances where planning was identified as being collaborative and collective. It was also noted that being transparent about how the school is progressing and what is or is not working was especially helpful. Some interviewees noted specifically that morale and ambition was at its highest when practitioners could feel a sense of ownership over planning and design and had the freedom to tailor, as opposed to being told what to do. In schools where planning was reserved to the senior leadership team (most notably in secondary schools) interviewees reported that this hampered the ability of all practitioners to contribute to planning and design and thus could dampen ambition.
- 5.14 Of those interviewees who reflected positively on the design and planning process in their school, a very common factor was taking a **patient and iterative approach to reform**. That is, it was noted that not rushing to implement or develop CfW changes had been of benefit to the school. For schools that had begun considering CfW changes earlier, it was reported that there was more time for reflection and trialling and therefore also fostering **reassurance** in their schools' approach. That is, a measured approach allowed – in some cases – greater experimentation with pedagogical approaches.
- 5.15 Several senior leaders appreciated the flexibility afforded to them by the CfW guidance. The perceived benefits of flexibility can be split into three elements:
- Practitioners valued **the flexibility in what they are able to teach** and found that this aided the design and planning process, especially in drawing authentic links between areas of learning as opposed to 'shoehorning' lessons because they are prescribed in the curriculum;
  - A few senior leaders commented that they valued the greater flexibility they now had in **timetabling**. For example, rather than having to deliver a specific

number of hours of a certain subject each week, interviewees reported that there was less rigidity in their new timetables as they were able to incorporate aspects of learning in different ways;

- Thirdly, several interviewees noted appreciation for a **flexible and open approach to planning** within their school. This incorporates affording space for practitioners to trial, make mistakes, and learn from these mistakes.

‘Being open and honest and having time to try, and for it not to be particularly good or right but to be able to learn from that’. Senior leader, primary school

5.16 Some interviewees noted that a positive by-product to the pupil voice element of the design and planning process is that **learners are much more engaged** with the process of thinking about knowledge, skills, and experience. Some practitioners reported that learners are taking more initiative in their learning and direction of learning.

5.17 A few interviewees felt that **incorporating the local context** into their planning and curriculum content had the potential to enthuse learners and help them see greater relevance and significance in their learning. It was reported that this aspect allowed for a more organic process of curriculum design. Some innovative approaches mentioned included examining the history of the school itself or utilising local history interest groups on social media. These were identified as rich resources for schools to tap into.

### **Barriers faced when designing and planning the new curriculum**

5.18 This section outlines the barriers faced by senior leaders and practitioners when designing and planning their new curriculum. The points raised by interviewees are set out here.

5.19 A lack of **time** was by far the most common barrier mentioned by senior leaders and practitioners alike. Most of these concerns related to a lack of time for practitioners to plan and design the curriculum alongside their teaching commitments, leading to concerns about being ready for roll-out in September.

5.20 Interviewees reported that practitioners **did not have sufficient time away from the classroom to design and plan** due to poor availability of supply teachers. This problem was further exacerbated in Welsh-medium schools by a lack of available

Welsh-speaking supply teachers. Interviewees from **smaller schools** noted that time constraints were particularly affecting them due to having less staff capacity and staff absences having a proportionately larger effect on them.

‘We’re working through it, bit by bit. The big challenge is not resources, but time. The pandemic has had a big impact on this. We’ve decided that every other staff meeting, so fortnightly, we need to discuss the curriculum. This takes until 6.30pm and this is not time we’re being paid for.’ Practitioner, primary school

5.21 Many interviewees noted that what was preventing them from progressing further or more confidently with design and planning was a **lack of reassurance**. Specifically, a few interviewees suggested that it would be useful to have contact with someone with a ‘bird’s eye view’ of curriculum design progress in other schools who could then inform schools how they were faring in their journey or if they are on the ‘right track’. In other words, many noted that a lack of **external reassurance** was – if not a barrier – impeding progress.

5.22 Some interviewees noted that they had not accessed as much **professional learning** as they had wanted, specifically in relation to curriculum design. For some practitioners especially this was because they were not provided with sufficient time away from the classroom to engage with professional learning. Others felt that a lack of access to practical support and learning from other schools (e.g., Pioneer Schools) had affected their confidence to design and trial their new curriculum.

‘Good teachers always do professional learning casually but there needs to be a more coherent approach to professional learning and teachers who are further from their teacher training can struggle as they maybe don’t know where to find the answers’. Senior leader, primary school

5.23 Some interviewees expressed frustration at **poor communication** within their school whereby **discussions about design and planning were taking place at a senior leadership level without being disseminated to teaching staff**. These interviewees, mainly practitioners, felt that this resulted in a lack of information about how practitioners can contribute to curriculum design. Some interviewees acknowledged that this was probably because senior leaders had more flexibility to attend professional learning or network opportunities outside of the classroom, but remained frustrated at what they perceived to be poor dissemination of knowledge. This issue was raised more frequently in secondary schools than in primary schools.

5.24 Interviewees highlighted that there were a number of barriers which related to the shift from **discrete subjects** to **Areas**:

- Some interviewees noted that heads of department were occasionally reluctant to move to a model of cross-curricular and cross-subject teaching and planning due to being 'protective' over their discipline;
- A small number of interviewees mentioned differing levels of capacity between departments to be able to allocate time and resources to plan and develop the new curriculum.

5.25 Most interviewees identified **COVID-19** as a significant barrier in their process of planning and designing the new curriculum

- For example, the pandemic has limited schools' ability to cooperate with other local schools (e.g., planning or observing other practice and sharing resources);
- COVID-19 is demanding more time from practitioners and senior leaders alike, such as ensuring health and safety needs are met and the wellbeing of students, and previously for secondary school teachers a large amount of time being consumed by centre-determined grade allocation;
- Staff absences were also mentioned by interviewees as preventing efficient planning when schools are under such staffing pressure.

'Creating momentum is difficult with everything else that's going on, especially in a small school. You set up a meeting to discuss things, agree a way forward and then by the next meeting someone is off with Covid or self-isolating, so you lose that opportunity and time goes by'. Senior leader, primary school

### **Information and guidance**

5.26 The quality and quantity of information and guidance received by schools was a prominent theme raised by interviewees. Most comments about this were comments on a lack of information and guidance being a barrier that hindered their ability to design, plan, and trial the new curriculum.

5.27 The most frequent comment regarding information and guidance was that **many interviewees felt they would like to access examples of what a successful design or planning process looked like**. Whilst many were embarking on their

own journeys of design and planning, the perceived absence of exemplar material led many to lack confidence in their own process.

- 5.28 Some interviewees felt that there was not enough precision in the official guidance that could effectively help them with designing and planning their curriculum. For example, one interviewee described their confusion about what constituted an 'experience' within experiential learning and about how frequently links need to be made between Areas. Though this type of comment was not common, it illustrates that while practitioners generally have a good understanding of the ethos of curriculum changes, they also often lack knowledge on how to design and implement the changes.
- 5.29 A very small number of interviewees felt that their school had received very little or no support for the curriculum changes. One school noted that they had done 'nothing overt' in terms of planning because they had received very little information and conduct most professional learning in a 'DIY manner'.
- 5.30 A few interviewees referred to specific shortages of information for cross-cutting elements of CfW, such as Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was noted by some that these aspects of CfW are especially unfamiliar to primary schools. These interviewees felt they needed more resources and to have a greater understanding of the importance of incorporating these cross-curricular aspects. A small number of interviewees said that they were waiting for the relevant guidance to be released before initiating the design and planning of the cross-cutting themes such as RSE and CWRE.

### **Assessment to support learner progression**

- 5.31 Echoing comments from interviewees about a lack of clear understanding of how assessments will work in CfW reforms, many also commented on the difficulty of incorporating assessment arrangements as part of their design and planning. This section outlines the main points raised concerning assessment.
- 5.32 Whilst progression steps were met with enthusiasm by some interviewees, others expressed confusion with regards to how to use them – especially in absence of wider context of assessment reform

‘With the progression steps, the worrying thing is we’re a little bit like ‘I’m going to jump off a cliff and see what happens’. And this is the difficult thing to explain to pupils and parents if they ask how they get from one step to another’ – Practitioner, secondary school

- 5.33 A few interviewees were cognisant of the need to not approach progression steps as a ‘tick box’ list. For example, one interviewee described how whilst their school had not yet successfully implemented progression steps, they would be implementing and conveying to learners the pedagogical principle of the importance of progression and the recognition that it is not always linear. This was felt to be an effective message to convey before clarifying exactly how assessment will work.
- 5.34 A few interviewees noted the difficulty of adopting a flexible approach to teaching and designing a new curriculum when the prescriptiveness of current qualifications such as GCSEs is still in place. Without more knowledge of how assessment will change on a longer timescale, it was described as difficult to fully embrace the curriculum changes and to reflect this in the design process.
- 5.35 The case studies below provide an example of approaches three schools have taken to planning, designing and trialling adaptations to their curricula.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> These case studies are indicative of the schools that engaged in the research, and do not represent endorsements of particular approaches.









**Case Study 4: Secondary School**  
**Theme: Collaboration and a focus on pedagogy**

**Overview of school progress in their preparations**

The school reported significant developments in **designing and trialling** adaptations to their own curriculum in preparation for Curriculum for Wales. The school has designed a **structure** where each Area can take **ownership** of their curriculum design and has placed a **strong emphasis on developing effective pedagogy**.

**The approach adopted by the school**

The school took a cautious approach to curriculum design and considered that having effective pedagogy in place was vital. The school considered the three cross-curricular skills first and then developed their approach to curriculum design. Activities that promoted this approach include:

 Staff have taken advantage of consortia training	 Familiarising staff with Curriculum for Wales
 Time for staff to come together to plan in Areas	 Staff ownership essential
 Senior Leadership Team offer targeted support for Areas	 Engagement with stakeholders
 Pupil Voice approach changed to evaluate changes	 Informal networking opportunities with other schools promoted

A **structure** has been established to ensure that a senior member of the leadership team manages each Area in order to offer **tailored input**, with appreciation that each Area is **different in its context**. The SLT meet fortnightly with Heads of Department and Curriculum for Wales is a **formalised agenda item**. One member of SLT receives all formal minutes from the Area meetings and has an **overview** of developments across the school.

**What is working well?** Areas have the **opportunity to collaborate** in order to form a sense of their own Area and vision. Work is being undertaken on developing the **staff relationships** within Areas before focussing on curriculum design. There is a **different focus** for development each term, e.g. one term will consider how to ensure the four purposes, the next term will focus on 'what matters' statements, the next will develop progression steps and assessment strategies to *'ensure joined-up thinking'*.









However, the biggest step is the change in **assessment arrangements** and staff are currently very unsure of the implications. The level of concern varies between Areas; some are more skills-based and are less concerned but other staff are **anxious** about how the assessments will be shaped for Key Stage 4. There is a concern that they could be interpreted differently by each school and local authority.



**Case Study 5: Special School**  
**Theme: Working across Areas to design topic-based approaches**

Overview of school progress in their preparations

The school has been preparing for the new curriculum for the past five years, engaging in a broad range of activities to support this:

 Attending Regional Education Consortia training courses	 Linking with Pioneer schools
 Embedding literacy and numeracy strategies	 Implementing the Digital Competence Framework (DCF)
 Delivering in-school training (e.g. pedagogical principles)	 Delivering thematic immersion days for learners
 Developing blended learning	 Engaging in triad lesson observations

To begin with the school focused on how the **four purposes** aligned with the school ethos, placing these at the centre of all lesson planning. Learners were involved from the very beginning in developing a wider school understanding of the four purposes – they created characters to represent each of the purposes.

Delivering **ongoing staff training** over the past five years has ensured all staff are knowledgeable as to what is required; the staff team were keen to begin delivering the new curriculum. Consequently, the school have used CfW for the past few years and the school is *‘fully ready for it’*.

**The approach adopted by the school**

**Immersion days** focused on each of the **four purposes** and involved external providers delivering activities in school. For example, sessions to develop well-being to support the ‘healthy, confident individual’. These activities helped to **build staff and learner understanding** of the core purposes.

During **twilight training** sessions, and two **extra weekly PPA sessions** staff work in Area teams to plan, develop intra- and inter-area cross curricular projects, and share good practice. Area leaders **quality assure** planning. The school staff lead all planning and have *‘ownership’*. Learners propose sub-themes for topics. Each lesson now has a foundation of literacy, numeracy and digital learning with the subject discipline objective secondary to these, with UNCRC, Welsh and real-life contexts also included.

**What has worked well?** *‘Doing it gently, has ensured sufficient time to develop over the past few years’* and prioritising staff training on the pedagogical principles. However, the **unreliability of IT** is a barrier, with the service often ‘going down’. More practical support is also needed to develop a clearer understanding of the assessment /progression requirements – *‘this is the final piece of the jigsaw’*.

**Case Study 6: Secondary school**  
**Theme: Design and trialling**

**Overview of school progress in their preparations**

The school has appointed Area leads and reviewed their provision against elements of the CfW. They have begun design and trialling activity but have not yet fully evaluated this.

**The approach adopted by the school**

The school has appointed five **Area leads** who lead design and trialling activity. Area leads have been coordinating a process of 'auditing' the school's current provision, working with practitioners in each department to **examine 'coverage' of CfW elements and identify gaps**. This process highlighted that the school's staff did not understand the progression steps, which then led to more detailed activity to examine this.

There have been discussions between practitioners in different departments to try and identify links between their topics (e.g. between fabrics and materials in Design and Technology and studying the role of the fabrics trade in slavery in History). They plan to try and formalise these links between departments during this academic year.



Identifying common threads between subjects and Areas



Area leads appointed



Reviewing school's coverage of CfW elements in current provision



Setting performance targets for staff to trial new approaches

All teachers have now completed one full rotation of designing and trialling projects with Year 9 learners, with each Area having a particular focus on one aspect of the CfW. For example, the Science and Design and Technology departments have used the progression steps as 'scaffolding' for designing and trialling new projects in four topics. The school has not yet fully evaluated the projects, but the curriculum leader is meeting with practitioners across departments to gather qualitative views on what has worked well and plans to share learning across the school. Initial feedback suggests that practitioners have found it challenging to judge whether the content is 'pitched at the right level' and how to explain to learners how they can move between progression steps.

**What has worked well?** Appointing Area leads has been positive, and the 'auditing' process helped identify what aspects of the CfW practitioners needed further support to understand. The school likes to allow practitioners to have control of the process.

A senior leader felt that the pandemic had held some activity back (e.g. trialling practical learning experiences). However, they also stated that they had been able to press ahead with some activity during this period (e.g. developing pupils' digital literacy skills). The school feel that assessment arrangements to support learner progression are unclear and that more professional learning on the progression steps would be beneficial.

**Case Study 7: All-through (3-18) school**  
**Theme: Designing and trialling a more experiential curriculum**

**Overview of school progress in their preparations**

The school has commissioned its own professional learning to engage and develop staff understanding. It has focused on improving its **outdoor learning environment** and outdoor experiences for learners. The school has not yet developed its vision and is in the early stages of design but intends to focus more heavily on this during 2021-22.

**The approach adopted by the school**

The school felt they had fallen behind during the pandemic and therefore commissioned **external experts to deliver six professional learning days**, each focused on a specific Area. The experts (academics, practitioners and freelance experts) broke down the guidance documents during these sessions and a senior leader explained this had generated enthusiasm and motivation among staff: *'It's important to get this right. The fear is if we get it wrong and people have a poor perception the first time they work with it and it could get a bad rep like the Welsh Bac.'*

Since these sessions, the school has started to identify **links between departments** and develop these (e.g. fitness testing data in PE being used for data analysis and monitoring in Maths lessons). The school wants to increase experiential learning and related thematic work, something which is quite unfamiliar to secondary schools. As part of this process, the school has developed a new **multi-purpose outdoor learning resource**; this includes outdoor ponds, polytunnels, a beehive, raised beds and an outdoor classroom. A senior leader at the school felt this helped bring learning to life and facilitated cross-curricular learning, for example focusing on climate change, wellbeing, food production systems and the circular economy. The school is hoping to further develop the facilities to enable a focus on clean energy production and forest school activities.



The school has appointed four staff to research roles linked to the development of its curriculum. These are leads for pedagogy, outdoor learning, inclusion and the Digital Competence Framework. These leads will have responsibility for liaising with staff to research ideas, share these with practitioners, record findings from trialling and evaluate success develop a resource for sharing learning with all staff. These staff have had professional learning focused on research practices and data analysis.

**What has worked well?** Appointing research leads focused on sharing ideas and good practice across different Areas has worked well, as has bringing in external expertise to deliver training. However, they are still concerned about whether their staff have the skills to design a whole curriculum and feel there is uncertainty around assessment arrangements.

## 6. Evaluating and preparing for first teaching

- 6.1 This section outlines the findings of the research in relation to interviewees' experiences of evaluating new approaches to curriculum delivery and preparing for first teaching.
- 6.2 Interviewees were asked about a number of issues relating to evaluating aspects of their new curriculum and assessment arrangements. These included questions on:
- whether and how they had evaluated new approaches to curriculum delivery and used this to influence ongoing design;
  - what they considered to be working well in terms of evaluating initial designs and trialling further approaches;
  - what they considered to be barriers to evaluating initial designs and trialling further approaches.

### Activity undertaken to review and evaluate new approaches

- 6.3 Many interviewees explained that they had not yet reached the point where they had reviewed or evaluated new approaches, noting that design and planning activity was ongoing and that they were planning on reviewing approaches during the spring term. In some cases, senior leaders noted that informal discussions had taken places with some middle leaders and staff who were leading on aspects of curriculum development or had begun to introduce new teaching practices in line with the pedagogical principles. These schools noted that they would be carrying out more evaluation and discussions to learn from initial developments during 2022.
- 6.4 Some senior leaders who noted that they had carried out initial reviews of preparations indicated that they had carried out the following activity:
- **More frequent informal discussion and reflection on practice:** a few schools noted that they had seen a shift towards more open discussions about approaches to planning and teaching practice. These schools noted that they had replaced weekly whole-staff meetings to free up time for colleagues to have smaller team discussions about professional learning as departments or in Areas. A few schools also referred to an increase in informal discussion and reflections on how teaching practices are changing.

This was helped by ensuring that all planning documents are live and accessible to all via the schools' IT systems;

'Staff can review each other's planning work. There is more open, development and collaborative practice happening.' Senior leader, primary school

- **Evaluation activity centred on learner feedback:** a few schools noted that they had asked learners a series of questions about what they enjoyed, what they didn't enjoy, what they learned, and whether children would enjoy these lessons next year.

'Often a theme emerges from these responses and then the school acts on this. There is an emphasis on the rights of the child... we're asking children about what interests them.' Senior leader, primary school

- **Focused lesson observations:** a few schools noted that they use commercial digital platforms for staff to self-evaluate their lessons. These platforms have been adapted to link to the CfW framework and professional standards, and areas for development can be identified and used to inform planning. The outcomes from self-evaluation are triangulated with reviews of learners' books and are quality assured by a lead member of staff;
- **Building on existing processes:** some schools noted that they had sustained existing evaluation and review arrangements but that these were now focused on curriculum reform and progress in their preparations.

'Every half term each head of department has a meeting with the head and deputy to review and evaluate the learning of the previous term. The processes we already have in place support internal evaluation [of the new curriculum].'  
Senior leader, secondary school

6.5 There were more isolated examples of activities to review and evaluate preparations in individual schools. These included:

- **Peer-to-peer coaching through triads:** one school reported working in triads with teachers supporting each through informal observation and coaching;
- **Research-informed practice and review processes:** another school had established research groups (within departments or Areas). These groups develop ideas for teachers to try in lessons, based on putting What Matters

statements into practice, and then lead feedback sessions and 'coaching conversations' during departmental meetings;

- **Researching and preparing for cross-curricular teaching:** preparations in one school include the development of a 'teaching and learning booklet' which will present ideas for approaches which staff can draw on.

6.6 A few senior leaders noted that they had started planning their review and evaluation processes but without yet having commenced activity. In these schools, plans were in place to use various methods and software to log findings and share across the school to ensure a collective approach. Another school had accessed support from an external consultant to develop skills in research and data analysis to support future evaluation activity linked to the new curriculum.

6.7 A smaller proportion of the practitioners interviewed reported having been involved in evaluations of initial curriculum delivery. Practitioners who noted that they had reviewed or evaluated early curriculum delivery said that this had taken the form of informal discussions with colleagues to reflect on new approaches introduced, and collecting and sharing learner feedback. Some noted that evaluation and review processes had been delayed as schools had not yet reached this stage of their preparations.

6.8 A few practitioners noted that it would be useful to hear more about others' experiences (particularly those working with similar year groups or in the same Areas) through video clips on Hwb or through other platforms.

#### *Learning points*

6.9 Senior leaders noted that the main learning points from initial evaluation and review activity were as follows:

- That there is a need to understand that subjects and departments within the same school can be at very different stages of their preparations and planning. Senior leaders noted that they were reviewing the progress of each Area during the autumn term of 2021 with a view to subsequently targeting support towards those Areas and colleagues who were a little further behind in their engagement and practical preparations.

- That Areas and teams 'quickly learned that they need to walk before they can run'. Senior leaders underlined the need for a gradual and iterative approach to all aspects of the reform process, from the vision through to planning curriculum content. Regular review, evaluation and continuous re-design were referred to as critical elements of the reform process by some interviewees.
- Senior leaders noted the importance of instilling a change in mindset so that teachers see reviewing their practice as a positive and constructive process. One senior leader in a secondary school noted that discussions about improving practice were no longer driven by accountability as part of performance review but by collaborative approaches to supporting improvement.

'The approach to observations has changed – teachers now use lesson observations as a professional development opportunity as opposed to something that's about accountability.' Senior leader, secondary school

- Senior leaders referred to the importance of combining 'established methods of collecting evidence of quality' with pupils' views on the effectiveness and quality of provision. These interviewees referred to the need for 'honesty' and 'inclusivity' when evaluating provision.
- A few schools noted that they had learnt, through their 'preparations and reflections on work to date', that they need to 'get better at taking risks'. Senior leaders noted that they have an important role to play in encouraging teachers to trial things without fear of failure.

'We've adopted a *'marvellous mistakes'* approach where we reflect on things and discuss what hasn't worked and why. It's essential that staff get together and share ideas as part of a self-evaluation process.' Senior leader, primary school

- Senior leaders noted that they had learnt that they need to be more prescriptive and provide a more detailed steer on certain aspects of curriculum and assessment design – whilst recognising that further work is needed to ensure that they are able to provide this steer to practitioners.

'Staff understand how to prepare lessons, but they lack confidence with the overall curriculum and envisioning how skills progress over the whole curriculum. We're planning on coming together as a consortium to share good

practice on these things and take part in constructive criticism'. Senior leader, secondary school

- Senior leaders commented that collective approaches, where senior members of departments are working closely with other staff within their Area of Learning on aspects of curriculum reform (from visioning to planning curriculum content) are particularly beneficial.
- One primary school senior leader noted that internal evaluation of approaches trialled in their school had shown that project-based work during afternoon sessions had worked well. Learners demonstrated enthusiasm for experiential learning during these sessions. This was being fed into overall timetable planning when looking ahead.
- Schools outlined ways in which they had begun to review their new curriculum design, in some cases mapping provision against aspects of the CfW framework and guidance (e.g. what matters statements, descriptions of learning) in order to feed into lesson planning.

6.10 The case study below provides an example of how one school is evaluating new approaches to curriculum delivery and preparing for first teaching.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> These case studies are indicative of the schools that engaged in the research, and do not represent endorsements of particular approaches.



**Case Study 8: Primary school**  
**Theme: Evaluating first teaching and using gap analysis to refine approaches**

Overview of school progress in their preparations

The headteacher described the school as being ‘quite far advanced on our journey’ towards the new curriculum. The school developed its vision for the curriculum in 2018; it set up teams to lead on each Area; and has **worked with governors, parents and children** to inform curriculum design, leading to the identification of 12 projects that are delivered as a two-year rolling programme.

The school has undertaken **gap analysis** and identified notable aspects of the ‘what matters statements’ that were not being covered in their learning plans. This helped them reflect on the next cycle of activity to ensure that they embed things that were not given sufficient attention previously:

*‘We have learnt that our analysis could be more effective. To date it has been based largely on teachers’ plans, and not on what was taught or what was learnt during that period. We realised that we needed to do more listening to learners to evaluate what they gained from the sessions.’*



A commitment to continuous review and improvement



Area leads appointed



Reviewing school’s coverage of key aspects of CfW framework



Links to numeracy and literacy frameworks

A practical challenge facing the school in seeking to review learner progress under new curriculum delivery is that there is less written material in pupils’ books. The headteacher noted that the approach to teaching has shifted and there is more of an emphasis on deepening knowledge through resources and discussion before moving on to written work. In mathematics, for example, it’s not about pages of sums it’s about understanding underpinning concepts. Sometimes this can be difficult when it comes to evaluating teaching because there are fewer learner-produced materials available.

*‘This is why we feel we need direct input from learners to inform our evaluation – we realised that we need more effective approaches to capturing learners’ experiences of their learning so that we are digging more deeply and understanding their progress.’*

**The approach adopted by the school**

In maths, the school has developed a ‘toolkit’ to support review and gap analysis: teachers talk through specific questions with the children and, if learners are able to answer certain mathematical questions, they know that pupils have developed the skills and gained the learning needed. The school is producing an equivalent toolkit on literacy so that they know what the expectations will be for each year group and can gauge progress. The idea with the literacy toolkit is that when teachers are talking and listening to learners they can ask them about punctuation or specific types of sentences, to help understand if this learning has been embedded within the curriculum.

*‘Our gap analysis previously was largely based on our gut feeling whereas having something more structured and systematic – linked to the what matters statements – gives us the reassurance that good coverage is built into our overall design.’*

*Barriers to evaluating and preparing for first teaching*

- 6.11 Time and the disruption caused by the pandemic were reported by schools to have impacted on overall progress with regard to curriculum preparations and, consequently, on review and evaluation activity. Senior leaders explained that the pandemic had limited the number of face-to-face meetings between teachers across phases and departments, limiting the time and opportunities to review initial activity, where schools had reached this stage of their preparations.
- 6.12 Schools cited a number of issues that had presented as barriers to evaluating initial curriculum delivery.
- A number of schools shared concerns about how to approach the process of evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and learner outcomes;  
  
‘How will we really know if it’s actually working?’ Senior leader, secondary school
  - For some a lack of clarity around assessment was a barrier to engaging in evaluation.
- 6.13 One school shared its experience of initial curriculum design, which was based on a misunderstanding of how to plan curriculum content; this school noted that they had developed and trialled a curriculum plan which tried to cover ‘all aspects of all AoLEs [Areas] in a termly block’. When reviewing the approach the school realised that they had ‘tried to shoehorn all the skills, knowledge and experience into a term, when they needed to be planning over a two-year cycle’. The school has now moved to a two-year planning cycle focusing on different skills, knowledge and experience under different topics.

## **7. Costs associated with curriculum preparation**

7.1 The Welsh Government has provided additional funding to schools in Wales to support preparation for the new curriculum. Approximately £35m was invested in supporting curriculum reform in 2021-22, which included funding for schools to support their preparation and realisation of Curriculum for Wales.

7.2 Senior leaders interviewed during the research were asked to provide examples of the costs associated with preparing for curriculum reform. This includes costs covered by the additional spend from the Welsh Government through sources outlined above, and also activities or spend that schools reported covering from their own school budgets. This section summarises the recurring points raised during interviews.

- Schools reported that the biggest cost is that of the time spent by senior leaders and staff away from school. This includes Area leads working on preparations and having time outside of the classroom or working with the consortium and with partner schools.
- Additional planning, preparation and assessment time each week to support curriculum developments for staff and the time to attend twilight training sessions.
- Costs associated with professional learning to aid preparations for the new curriculum.
- A number of schools explained that new roles or posts had been created, including:
  - The appointment of Area leaders, which have included additional TLR payments for members of staff in secondary schools. Schools noted that in addition to the direct costs, these roles involved reducing Area leaders' teaching time by three hours per week (to lead on the development of the curriculum in their respective Area), resulting in a need to cover this time through supply or re-timetabling.
  - A new role in a secondary school in the Health and Wellbeing Area: the role involves engaging with feeder primary schools to collaborate

with, and upskill, non-specialists to deliver good quality physical literacy lessons. The aim is to support learners in the primary phase so that they are in better physical health when they arrive at secondary school.

- The appointment (from within the existing school staff) of teachers to lead on research and enquiry projects relating to: changing approaches to pedagogy; outdoor and experiential learning; inclusive teaching and learning under the CfW; and digital learning and the alignment of the DCF to the new curriculum arrangements. Several schools explained that these posts (with examples in primary and secondary schools) were temporary contracts with additional TLR points.
- The costs of time out of school, transport and training linked to the new curriculum. One secondary school estimated that these items had cost around £7,000 in one year.
- INSET days and designated professional learning activities focusing on the new curriculum arrangements were reported to have incurred additional costs. In one school, for example, a training week focused on the new curriculum in the summer of 2021 had cost £10,000 in guest speakers, external consultancy support, and other activity. The headteacher reported that these costs were covered from within the school budget.
- Schools referred to additional IT-related costs. A few schools referred to having purchased Chromebooks, licenses (e.g. IRIS) and other equipment, much of which was related to or driven by new curriculum developments.
- A few schools referred to the costs of developing outdoor learning areas and games areas.

*How are additional costs being met?*

- 7.3 Schools reported that the additional staffing costs (additional members of staff and additional TLR) were being met through school budgets and also through funding made available by the Welsh Government as part of the *Recruit, recover, raise standards: the accelerating learning programme* in response to the pandemic.

- 7.4 Senior leaders frequently reported that lockdown periods and school closures had contributed to easing some of the burdens on school budgets, thereby allowing some flexibility and freedom to be able to bring in additional staff, supported by new grant funding streams linked to COVID-19. A few schools expressed concerns about how sustainable the newly created posts would be beyond one to two years, if school budgets come under greater pressure.
- 7.5 A small number of schools provided examples of how they had invested in the development of LSWs to be able to cover classes and therefore free up teachers to be able to spend time on curriculum development activity.

## 8. Conclusions and issues for consideration

8.1 The conclusions and issues for further consideration set out below have been developed based on the findings set out in Sections 4-7.

### Overall progress

8.2 The sample of interviews confirmed that schools were at differing points in their journey towards curriculum reform. However, there was a general pattern to indicate that schools felt that they had made progress between the summer of 2021 (when survey data was collected) and late autumn. In part this is explained by more in-depth engagement with key aspects of the reform process:

- A number of senior leaders and practitioners reported having begun trialling new approaches to teaching and learning;
- Schools had mapped out their plans for curriculum redesign in further detail, setting out milestones during the current academic year to be ready to begin roll-out from September 2022; and, importantly,
- Schools reported an increase in the amount of school-to-school networking activity, led by the Welsh Government and regional consortia.

The interviews therefore revealed increased momentum in schools' activity.

8.3 However, a number of the concerns expressed in the survey data were echoed in these interviews:

- There remains a lack of clarity about approaches to assessment and progression;
- Some practitioners reported feeling less knowledgeable about the reforms than senior leaders;
- A number of senior leaders and practitioners reported a lack of confidence that the actions they were taking to adapt teaching practices or trial new approaches were consistent with the vision of Curriculum for Wales;
  - they often questioned whether *'they were on the right track'* or whether the approaches being taken were *'the right way to go about things'*, indicating that they were looking for reassurance or further support.

## Engagement and understanding

8.4 Developing a whole-school understanding of the reforms was considered by most interviewees to be an important pre-requisite for successfully designing and trialling their curriculum. Schools reported undertaking a variety of activities to help develop practitioners' understanding of CfW including:

- Holding regular internal and external meetings and participating in professional learning and collaboration activity focused on developing an understanding of specific aspects of the CfW;
- Developing their own guidance and planning materials based on CfW guidance, often led by designated Area leads in the school;
- Reviewing to what extent their school's provision covers aspects of the CfW guidance.

8.5 Schools considered all of the types of activities above to be valuable, but reported that time pressures limited the extent to which some were able to engage in them. This was particularly the case among secondary school interviewees who emphasised the impact of the pandemic and additional burdens associated with administering centre-determined grades on the time they could dedicate to developing their understanding of the CfW.

- **Issue for consideration:** Time constraints are reported to have limited the ability of some schools to progress preparations for the new curriculum. Welsh Government and partners could consider what more can be done to allow schools time and space for planning and design activity linked to the new curriculum.

8.6 The effectiveness of communication between senior leaders and practitioners appeared to influence practitioners' confidence in their understanding of curriculum change. Some practitioners in secondary schools indicated they were not aware of all the activities that were taking place in their school, and perceived that much was happening 'behind the scenes'. This echoes findings from the [survey report](#) which illustrated that practitioners were not always aware that their school had developed a curriculum vision. It suggests a need to encourage and support senior leaders to disseminate information on their CfW-related activity to all staff.

**Issue for consideration:** How can senior leaders in schools be supported to ensure that more staff are engaged in curriculum planning and design activity, particularly in secondary schools?

- 8.7 While most senior leaders were confident in their staff's ability to design effective lessons, some expressed concern that their staff, and the education workforce in general, lacked the understanding, experience and skills to design a new curriculum. Compared with the [survey report](#), which showed that senior leaders had high levels of confidence in their practitioners' curriculum design skills, the interviews indicate a more nuanced picture in relation to practitioners' confidence. Many interviewees indicated that they were unsure whether their understanding was consistent with national guidance, and expressed a desire for reassurance or validation of their activity to date. Many felt that they had not received enough information about the experiences of pioneer schools to provide them with reassurance that their understanding of the reforms was correct and their plans appropriate.

**Issue for consideration:** Welsh Government and middle tier partners should explore the further actions that can be taken to boost the skills and confidence of the workforce to contribute meaningfully to curriculum design.

**Issue for consideration:** Welsh Government and middle tier partners should consider whether further support can be provided to aid schools' curriculum preparations and provide reassurance about the suitability and direction of their curriculum realisation. This could include supporting materials, exemplifying effective approaches to design or planning.

### **Design, planning and trialling**

- 8.8 The findings show that schools had progressed their curriculum design and trialling activity. Interviewees described a range of research, collaboration and review processes which had informed their planning and design. Schools described placing learner voice at the heart of their design and planning approach and seeking to design content that provided more experiential opportunities for learners. Many schools were seeking to identify links between themes and content across different



Areas, in order to create common threads that would help learners see connections within a more integrated curriculum.

- 8.9 Schools reported having assigned staff to be Area leads, establishing organisational structures that could support curriculum reform. These roles were described as being largely about facilitating collaboration and leading planning and design activities with the active support of colleagues.
- 8.10 Interviewees noted that the reform represents a process of curriculum re-design, making adaptations and improvements to the curriculum in line with the CfW guidance – as opposed to beginning from the very beginning and making wholesale changes.
- 8.11 When reflecting on the benefits and positive features of curriculum planning and design activity, interviewees referred to the importance of:
- encouraging a sense of shared ownership of the reforms;
  - appreciating the opportunities through more flexible approaches to planning and timetabling;
  - greater learner engagement in thinking about the knowledge, skills and experience they gain through the curriculum; and
  - the opportunities associated with developing a more locally rooted and relevant curriculum.
- 8.12 Interviewees also reported there were a number of challenges and barriers relating to curriculum design. Senior leaders and practitioners noted the need for further access to professional learning to support curriculum design, something which the Welsh Government and regional partners, it was felt, should prioritise. Other challenges were reported at the individual school-level: some interviewees expressed frustration at poor communication within their school whereby discussions about design and planning were taking place at a senior leadership level without being disseminated to teaching staff. Finally, interviewees felt they would like to access examples or illustrations of what a successful design or planning process can look like – including in schools with similar characteristics or in similar contexts.

**Issue for consideration:** How can access to professional learning be enhanced? Could the existing professional learning offer be adapted to include a greater focus on practical support to aid curriculum planning and design?

### **Evaluating and preparing for first teaching**

- 8.13 At the time that interviews were conducted, many schools had not yet progressed their curriculum development to the point where they had evaluated or reviewed new approaches. However among these schools there was support for the principle of developing and revisiting the curriculum through a process of continuous review and collective reflection. Schools were in many cases still developing curriculum plans with the intention of trialling and evaluating approaches during the spring and summer terms of 2022.
- 8.14 Senior leaders reported that, as part of the reforms, they are seeking to encourage a culture of collaboration and shared purpose where teachers discuss, reflect on, and evaluate, their teaching practice within their teams and Areas. Practitioners also noted that they had observed a shift towards more informal discussions about planning and pedagogy, with these discussions often framed by the CfW guidance. A range of other activities were mentioned which schools have started to use or are planning to introduce: these include peer-to-peer coaching; working in triads to observe and provide feedback on classroom delivery; and approaches to evaluation that are more directly focused on learners' experiences of particular lessons or topics.
- 8.15 Senior leaders underlined the need for a gradual and iterative approach to all aspects of the reform process. A number of interviewees recognised that review, evaluation and curriculum re-design were likely to be critical elements of the reform process over the coming years. Interviewees reported that this requires a shift in mindset across the wider system so that review and evaluation are not driven by accountability or performance management measures but are instead part of a culture of continuous improvement and shared learning. Interviewees provided examples of how they are encouraging teachers to innovate, to try new approaches without fear of failure, accepting that not all innovations will work. Learning from mistakes, and sharing the learning that emerges, were reported to be key aspects of the reform process.

- 8.16 A number of schools noted that time constraints and the disruption caused by the pandemic had impacted on their curriculum preparations and meant that they had not yet reached the stage where they had started evaluating. Another barrier to reviewing and evaluating provision was a perception that it was unclear which learner outcomes schools should be evaluating against.

### **Costs associated with curriculum reform**

- 8.17 Senior leaders reported that schools had incurred costs linked to their preparations for curriculum reform, noting that in many cases these costs had been supported through additional funding streams provided by the Welsh Government. These costs related mainly to the time spent by staff outside of the classroom or away from school to work on preparations; new posts and/or additional TLR for members of staff taking on additional responsibilities (often Area leads); the cost of accessing professional learning; costs associated with engaging experts to provide support to schools.
- 8.18 Headteachers interviewed did not report having faced difficulties in finding the funds to cover the additional costs. However, some suggested that sustaining the additional expenditure over a number of years may prove difficult.

## Annex A: Interview discussion guide

1. The survey asked whether you felt in July of this year that your school was well-placed to design your own curriculum for the planned roll-out. You answered [RESPONSE].
  - We also asked if your school was well-placed to make changes to your professional practice in readiness for the new curriculum. You answered [RESPONSE]
  - Thirdly, we asked if your school is in need of additional support or resources to be ready for the roll-out of the new curriculum. You answered [RESPONSE]
  - Would you still answer these questions in the same way?
2. During the interview we will ask about specific aspects of curriculum reform but, broadly speaking, how are things progressing in your preparations for the new curriculum?

### Engagement and understanding

[Introduction/set the scene for first group of questions]: Welsh Government published guidance (Journey to 2022) in October 2020 to support schools in their preparations for 2022. This included examples of the actions schools could be taking to support understanding of the new curriculum.

3. [For headteachers/senior leaders] What actions, if any, have you been able to take to develop a whole-school understanding of the Curriculum for Wales?
  - What steps is the school taking to put the four purposes at the centre of school priorities / strategies?
  - What about actions to develop a whole-school understanding of assessment arrangements?
  - How effective have they been?
4. [For practitioners] What activities have you been involved in to develop your understanding of the Curriculum for Wales?
  - **What about activities to develop an understanding of new assessment arrangements?**
  - How effective have they been?
5. How has your school's vision for the new curriculum been developed?
  - [If assessment not mentioned] How has assessment featured in your discussions to date?
6. How do you think your school's new curriculum will feel different from the perspective of the learner?

7. What actions are working well in terms of developing a clearer understanding of the Curriculum for Wales among practitioners?
  - What have you found most helpful in developing your understanding of Curriculum for Wales? [Prompts: professional learning activity; guidance (if so, which specific aspects); regional networks; school-to-school working;
  - Do you collaborate with other schools on curriculum reform activities? If so, how and is there anything that could make this more effective or easier for you?
  - What could other schools learn from what has worked well in your school in developing an understanding of the CfW?
  
8. What are the barriers in terms of developing a clearer understanding of the Curriculum for Wales among practitioners?
  - What additional support or actions are needed around engagement and understanding?
  - What specific support would be helpful to further develop both leaders and practitioners' understanding of what's changing in relation to assessment?
  - Is support required to ensure a shared understanding of progression and continuity for learners across phases?
  
9. [For headteachers/senior leaders] Have you engaged with parents and the wider community as part of discussions about curriculum reform?
  - If so, in what ways and how effective has this engagement been?
  
10. Have you included learners as part of the process?
  - If so, how have they been involved in discussions about the new curriculum?
  - What do learners in your school want from the new curriculum?

### **Design, planning and trialling**

Refer to interviewee's responses to relevant questions (e.g. survey question 19, 'Our school has trialled classroom approaches linked to the new curriculum')

11. What actions have you taken / are you currently taking as part of the process of designing and planning the new curriculum and assessment arrangements?
  - Are any new approaches to teaching and learning being developed or trialled? If so, what?
  - Any professional learning needs identified to support the curriculum design and planning process?
  - As part of this process, have you identified any needs that are specific to supporting the development of new assessment arrangements?

- What collaboration activity is being undertaken to support the process?
  - Both in-school and collaboration with other schools.
  - Do you collaborate with schools in other phases (with primaries/secondaries)? If so, have you found this beneficial?
- What guidance are you using to support this? [Prompts: National Curriculum for Wales Guidance documents? Regional guidance and support?
  - How effective is the guidance?

12. What is working well in the design, planning and trialling of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in your school?

- What could other schools learn from what has worked well in your school?

13. What are the barriers in terms of the design, planning and trialling of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in your school?

- What additional support is needed around design, planning and trialling of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements?

### **Evaluating and preparing for first teaching (10 minutes)**

14. [For SLT] Have you reached the point in your curriculum development process where you have evaluated new approaches to curriculum delivery and used this to influence ongoing design?

- If so, what did you learn and what, if anything, did you adapt?

15. [For practitioners] Have you been involved in evaluating new approaches and used this to adapt or change your approach? [RESPONSE to 19.3]

- If so, what did you learn and what, if anything, did you adapt?

16. What is working well in evaluating initial designs and trialling further approaches?

- What could other schools learn from what has worked well in your school in evaluating new approaches and learning from them?

17. What are the barriers to evaluating initial designs and trialling further approaches?

- What additional support or actions are needed around evaluating initial designs and trialling further approaches?

### **Costs of reform process (5 mins)**

18. [For SLT] Without specifying figures, what additional costs are schools incurring as part of the curriculum and assessment reforms? [Prompts: Can you provide examples of actions / arrangements / preparations that require additional resources? E.g. releasing staff for professional learning, backfilling, resources, infrastructure]

19. [For SLT] How are any additional costs currently being met?

- External funding? From within the school budget? Are these additional costs impacting on the school in any way?