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Curriculum for Wales: the journey to 2022

Purpose

With the release of the refined guidance for Curriculum for Wales in January 2020, the next phase of work has commenced. Curriculum realisation is a challenge for all schools and the whole education system as we continuously drive to instil the four purposes for all the learners in Wales.

The purpose of this document is to set out for schools consistent expectations for the process of designing their curriculum and preparing to implement it from 2022 onwards.

- How should schools approach preparation for the Curriculum for Wales?
- What steps should we take to prepare for curriculum implementation in 2022?

The document sets out shared expectations that have been developed and agreed in discussion between Welsh Government, the regional consortia and Estyn. It aims to aid schools in planning their approach and sequencing activities – and to guide the support Welsh Government and middle-tier organisations offer. We will review the document in 2021 to ensure the expectations remain relevant and up to date.

We recognise that schools will be in different places and the pace and focus of activity will vary. This is not a blueprint and is not intended to dictate the pace of curriculum development. Instead, it will help guide work and provide a common reference point for all the organisations working with schools to ensure we are consistent in our expectations and the support we provide is timely for the activity taking place in schools.

All schools should use the *Curriculum for Wales guidance* to help them in developing their curriculum (see hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/).

Further to this document, we will work with partners to develop and publish a curriculum implementation plan which sets out the steps for government and strategic partners in supporting schools in preparation for rollout.

In the context of COVID-19

The response to COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on schools and is likely to have disrupted their plans for preparation for the new curriculum. In terms of curriculum, schools will need to focus on two key aspects. They will need to:

- adapt their current curriculum and teaching to changing circumstances and prepare for a range of scenarios
- prepare for rollout of the new curriculum in 2022.

To support schools in the first of these, Welsh Government has published guidance on learning (see gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19). This guidance provides a high-level set of expectations for schools and settings in developing approaches to learning in the immediate term and seeks to close the gap between our learners while raising expectations for all.

The expectations in this document relate to the second aspect. These expectations have been refined and modified to ensure that they remain realistic in light of the pandemic and that they provide schools flexibility in their specific contexts.

How should we approach curriculum preparation?

Developing a vision for curriculum design

As schools move through the process of curriculum making, certain things remain important. As set out in the *Curriculum for Wales guidance* (see hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/), throughout their preparation, schools should continue to reflect on how the curriculum they are developing will:

- enable their learners to realise the four purposes and equip them for ongoing learning, work and life
- build high expectations and enable all learners to achieve their full potential
- offer a broad and balanced education that enables their learners to make links between the different areas of learning and experience and apply their learning to new situations and contexts
- support progression along a continuum of learning and how they are working with other schools to ensure there is alignment in the transitions across a 3 to 16 continuum
- support learners' health and well-being
- support learners' development of the knowledge, skills and experiences that are the foundation of being an informed citizen
- recognise their learners' identity, language(s), ability and background and the different support they may need given their particular circumstances
- reflect the diversity of perspectives, values and identities that shape their locality and Wales and develop understanding of the wider world
- build in co-construction with learners, their families and the wider community
- enable their learners to make sense of growing up in contemporary Wales and of issues that will be important into the future, including well-being, sustainable development and citizenship
- enable their learners to develop an understanding of their rights and the rights of others.

The focus here should be on exploring what the four purposes mean for all learners. Curriculum preparation and design should contribute to learners' development towards the four purposes, rather than trying to fit the headlines of the four purposes into all learning.

The *Curriculum for Wales guidance* sets out that schools and practitioners should develop a vision for their curriculum. This process is critical to developing a genuinely transformational curriculum: schools should not use current content or provision as a starting point or seek to retrofit it to satisfy the new curriculum requirements.

Schools should consider the section on 'Designing your curriculum' in the *Curriculum for Wales guidance* which can be found at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/.

Ways of working

The way schools approach curriculum preparation and design will be as important as what they do. In developing their approaches, co-construction will be critical. The principles that underpin this approach should include the following.

- **Development through co-construction** – Co-construction means sharing problems and jointly developing solutions. Co-construction requires people to work across traditional boundaries: between tiers of education as well as between disciplines, schools and phases, and with stakeholders beyond the education system.
- **Equity in co-construction** – Co-construction should bring an equity between different voices in a team or in the system. It should recognise that every voice within the process brings a valid contribution.
- **Space and time to think and engage** – Co-constructing solutions takes longer. High-quality thinking, solutions and relationships need to be developed over a prolonged period of engagement. This also recognises that curriculum design is a continuous process of refinement, rather than a project with an end point.
- **Clear understanding of ‘why’ things are learned and done** – Epistemic knowledge supports the system to make better decisions about what should be learned. Curriculum design requires us to reason why specific learning matters and what the essence of that learning is.
- **Critical engagement with expertise** – Curriculum design requires intellectual engagement with quality research, expert input and international expertise.
- **Leadership at all levels** – All parts of the system must provide leadership to enable others to meet our vision and aspirations. School leadership should model and enable the other ways of working. It should provide clear direction, challenge and high expectations, while also allowing ownership. This leadership also involves a culture of trust and empowerment: schools and practitioners should avoid developing additional material or data in order to evidence what they are doing.

In embedding these principles, schools **should not**:

- move too quickly towards implementation
- use superficial thematic approaches or try to evidence four purposes coverage
- retrofit current content of their curriculum to meet the demands of *Curriculum for Wales guidance*
- carry out an audit in an attempt to match up every description of learning and then plan content to fit perceived gaps
- feel pressured to produce extra material just to prove what they are doing
- invest in ‘off the shelf’ ready-made curriculum offers
- view curriculum making as a ‘once and done’ event
- assess directly to descriptions of learning.

What should we do? Shared expectations at school level through to 2022

Phase	Length of time	Key work
Engagement	1–2 terms	Schools will need to develop an understanding of the conceptual model of the curriculum: this will involve engaging and sense-making with materials and literature, and developing or updating their vision with local stakeholders. Schools will reflect on current practice and learning from responding to COVID-19.
Design, planning and trialling	3 terms	Schools should start developing high-level curriculum and assessment design, informed by the guidance, and progress priorities to support curriculum realisation set out in their school development plan. Schools may begin trialling aspects of design, new approaches and pedagogy, using the learning to evaluate and refine their approach.
Evaluating and preparing for first teaching	2–3 terms	Schools should evaluate initial designs and trial further approaches. Schools will begin to finalise medium-term planning for primary and Year 7, and longer-term for Years 8–11.
First teaching and ongoing refinement	September 2022 onwards	Schools will adopt their curriculum and begin to implement it. Secondary schools should refine their curriculum design as learners progress. Schools should reflect on the effectiveness of their curriculum and use that insight to improve.

Detailed expectations

Engagement: 1–2 terms

Schools will need to develop an understanding of the conceptual model of the curriculum. This will involve engaging with materials and literature, and developing or updating their vision with the whole school community.

Schools should:

- develop whole-school understanding of a purpose-led curriculum
- consider how the four purposes drive all school priorities
- develop a vision for curriculum and the learning and teaching that supports it
- make connections with the implementation of wider education reform (e.g. the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and Welsh in Education) to ensure activity is mutually reinforcing
- develop an agreed view of priorities for, and strategic approach to, developing teaching in the school
- lead a culture for change, with ongoing conversations at all levels and time to understand and engage with changes
- build understanding of the curriculum model and approach to assessment set out in the *Curriculum for Wales guidance* among all staff
- understand the importance and value of knowledge, skills and experiences and the role each plays in enabling learning, as set out in the *Curriculum for Wales guidance*
- evaluate current practice and learning from responding to COVID-19.

Activity in schools should be characterised by:

- leaders recognising the importance of putting time and effort into developing understanding of the new curriculum and assessment framework across the school and taking steps to ensure this happens
- active engagement with the curriculum and assessment guidance to develop understanding of all staff of the key principles of curriculum design of the Curriculum for Wales (including the statements of what matters), of the descriptions of learning, and of progression and the role of disciplines in learning¹

¹ These concepts are new and distinct from the existing curriculum. It is critical that before schools and practitioners embark on curriculum design that they understand the role and purpose of these principles and how they differ from current practice. For example, the descriptions of learning are designed to sustain learning over a period of years and should be used to select learning that provides both breadth and depth. A wide range of learning should contribute to learners' engagement with each description of learning. They are not designed as stand-alone tasks, activities or assessment criteria to be directly assessed against.

- develop all staff's understanding of the principles and practice of person-centred planning in relation to learners with additional learning needs (ALN)
- engaging with academic literature and evidence-based research
- starting conversations with learners, parents/carers and stakeholders about what is changing and how they can be involved, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing co-construction with them
- considering how pedagogy can support the realisation of a curriculum and starting to identify which approaches will best serve learners at that school
- engaging in professional learning, to develop the capability of all professionals, and using the feedback from the Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO) survey to help develop an environment supportive of ongoing professional learning
- capturing understanding of the range of learner needs, capacities, identities and values of learners to help establish what the four purposes mean for them and the school context
- working collaboratively in networks – this should include cross-phase work in geographic clusters (3 to 16) and with other existing networks within the same phase to share thinking and support a single continuum of learning, and it should support onwards progression post-16
- developing understanding of the importance and value of knowledge and the role it plays in learning, along with the approach to knowledge acquisition articulated in the curriculum
- using the school development plan to set priorities for the next three years, based on an analysis of what is needed to realise a new curriculum for the school.

Design, planning and trialling phase: 3 terms

Schools should start developing high-level curriculum and assessment design, informed by the guidance, and progress priorities to support curriculum realisation set out in their school development plan. Schools may begin trialling aspects of design, new approaches and pedagogy, using the learning to evaluate and refine their approach.

Building on activity in the previous phase, schools should:

- begin the design process involving all stakeholders – including learners, all practitioners and governors – and involving parents/carers and the local community
- set out design principles to ensure high standards and enable at least good progress for all learners
- ensure engagement with professional learning and that it supports the development of teaching
- engage in professional dialogue with networks to identify and solve school curriculum challenges
- have an integrated approach to implementation of wider education reform
- develop approaches for the mandatory elements of the curriculum
- ensure there are arrangements in place to secure engagement of key groups including governors, and develop their understanding of the curriculum.

Activity in schools should be characterised by:

- consolidating and building upon the activity and learning during the engagement phase, including:
 - further developing the school community's understanding of the curriculum model and assessment arrangements, including the approach to progression
 - further developing practitioners' understanding of the importance of pedagogy in supporting the realisation of the curriculum and continuing to identify the approaches they propose to adopt
 - active engagement with the ALN Code to develop understanding of all staff and ensure its implications are reflected in realising the school's vision and supporting the process of curriculum design
 - engaging all learners, parents/carers and the wider community in realising the vision and supporting the process of curriculum design

- working in networks, collaborating and sharing approaches to curriculum design and development and enabling seamless progression in learning, including to post-16
- ensuring that priorities are captured appropriately and resources identified to support curriculum development within the school development plan.
- considering a range of approaches (e.g. disciplinary, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary) to curriculum design and determine which approach(es) to test and evaluate in the context of the school and different areas of learning and experience ensuring all learner needs are considered in an inclusive context
- developing a shared understanding of progression within a school, and identifying what this means for its context. Sharing and discussing this initial understanding within their cluster and reflecting on these discussions to further develop their thinking
- drawing on the voice of all learners in the curriculum design process
- co-constructing a high-level curriculum model, including assessment arrangements to support progression for all learners, with all stakeholders
- working in clusters to develop thinking around the effective transition of learners along the 3 to 16 continuum, bringing continuity to curricula across phases to support learner progression. Jointly developing and trialling processes to support the transition of learners
- building-in consideration of how the new curriculum will support Welsh in Education and Cymraeg 2050
- deepening staff's understanding of the enquiry process to help facilitate curriculum design
- undertaking short- and medium-term planning and trialling some classroom approaches
- continuing to work collaboratively in networks and through this build further relationships with higher education partners to design based on a rich evidence basis.

Evaluating and preparing for first teaching: 2–3 terms

Schools should evaluate initial designs and trial further approaches. Schools to begin to finalise medium-term planning for primary and Year 7, and longer-term for Years 8–11.

Building on activity in the previous phases, schools should:

- evaluate trials and reflect on learning to influence ongoing curriculum design
- engage with a wider evidence base, including with higher education institutions (HEIs), to inform the approach to the areas of learning and experience and disciplines within them to inform curriculum and assessment design
- continue to invest in professional learning and develop teaching and practitioners to make the most of the opportunities of the Curriculum for Wales
- develop, trial and finalise transition planning as part of the curriculum design to ensure an effective process for the transition of learners along the 3 to 16 continuum.

Activity in schools should be characterised by:

- consolidating and building upon the learning during the engagement and design planning and trialling phases, including:
 - deepening all stakeholders' understanding of the curriculum model and assessment arrangements, including the approach to progression
 - ensuring that all practitioners understand the importance of pedagogy in supporting the realisation of the curriculum
 - continuing to engage parents/carers and the wider community in realising the vision and the process of curriculum design
 - continuing to work collaboratively in networks, sharing approaches to curriculum design and development
 - extending short- and medium-term planning and trialling, ensuring that these approaches are inclusive of all learners
 - learning from trials and testing of potential approaches to curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment and using this to refine the approach, ensuring that these approaches are inclusive of all learners
 - continuing to work collaboratively in networks and through this build further relationships with higher education partners to design based on a rich evidence basis

- drawing on learner voice to reflect on teaching, planning and classroom delivery to inform evaluation and refinement of approach
- developing approaches to enable effective and appropriate assessment as an indistinguishable part of learning and teaching
- refining their understanding of progression, both within their school and across their cluster and wider networks. Making arrangements to support ongoing sharing of understanding of progression
- engaging with parents/carers and the community about the emerging school curriculum
- further development and approaches to the mandatory aspects of the curriculum
- developing effective processes for engaging and communicating with parents/carers throughout the school year in order to support learner progression
- developing school-level action research models to help facilitate ongoing curriculum design and making.

First teaching and ongoing curriculum refinement: September 2022 onwards

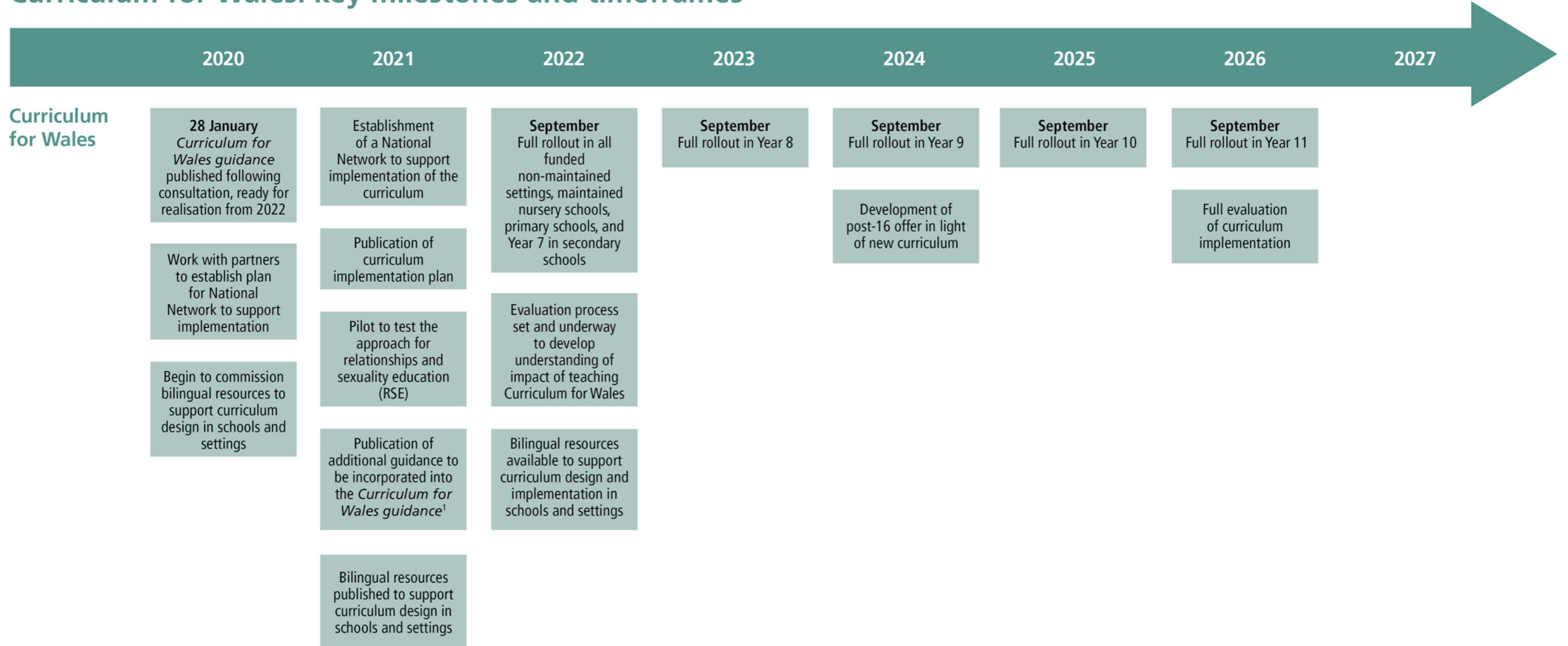
Building on activity in the previous phases, schools should:

- adopt the curriculum and begin to implement
- in the case of secondary schools, refine curriculum design as learners progress from Year 7 to Year 11 from September 2022 onwards
- develop, and use, mechanisms to reflect on the effectiveness of the new curriculum, pedagogy and assessment arrangements and use that insight to improve.

Activity in schools should be characterised by:

- schools continuing to build on work done over the last two and a half years
- ensuring the four purposes, and their key characteristics, guide curriculum realisation, the approach to assessment, and pedagogy
- deepening understanding of what the purposes mean for learners, including engagement with academic expertise, and using this insight to inform practice
- using the opportunities offered within the new curriculum to change practice in order to raise standards, close the attainment gap and support learner progression towards the four purposes
- collaborating with other schools and settings to deepen understanding, capacity and capability to support realisation of the curriculum, effective pedagogies and assessment for learner progression
- continuing co-construction in realising the curriculum in school, with appropriate involvement of all staff, learners, parents/carers and the wider community.

Curriculum for Wales: key milestones and timeframes



¹ Careers and work-related experiences (CWRE) (summer); relationships and sexuality education (RSE) (summer); Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) (summer); education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)/pupil referral units (PRUs) (September); British Sign Language (BSL) (September); Enabling Pathways (November); a curriculum for funded non-maintained settings (November); revised assessment framework for learners pre-progression step 1 (November).

Curriculum for Wales: key milestones and timeframes

