

National Network Report: Curriculum and Pedagogy In Person Conversation

Overview:

In January/February 2024, we held the first in person National Network conversation in both North and South Wales.

The aim of the conversation was:

- To receive the latest update on *the Curriculum for Wales: [Continuing the Journey](#) guidance* and see what this means for your school or setting;
- Contribute to the national conversation about Curriculum Design and Progression;
- Share thoughts on opportunities and challenges in the six areas of learning and experience, to help shape policy and practice to benefit all learners in Wales; and
- Network with fellow practitioners from across Wales, and feed into policy.

Overarching feedback:

- Opportunities such as these National Network conversations are valued as a safe space to discuss and debate national priorities and approaches to supporting learners.
- Collaboration with stakeholders and primary/secondary/special clusters is improving. The need for further joined up working is needed as this work progresses.
- Practitioners found it useful to discuss approaches to curriculum and assessment design across schools and settings. Building a shared understanding of progression remains a priority for all schools and settings, where further support and reassurance would be welcomed.
- Many practitioners discussed the role of effective curriculum and assessment design in supporting the principles of Curriculum for Wales across the whole 3-16 continuum, including further support needed to ensure the effective use of qualifications specifications when published.
- Resources: whilst the simplifying of grant arrangements was welcomed by practitioners and school leaders, the overall budget constraints within all schools and settings remained a concern when supporting such a wide scope of reforms.

You can see the outcomes of the two days in the videos below:

In person National Network Conversation South Wales https://youtu.be/KrxY_wVFcG4

In person National Network Conversation North Wales

<https://youtu.be/KunrXAlnx1I>

Next steps for Areas of Learning and Experience: Expressive Arts Area

We heard:

- It is vital to ensure that the Expressive Arts Area is not “pushed aside” in the context of other emerging issues and priorities. For example, some practitioners felt that there remained a strong focus on supporting literacy and numeracy at the expense of Expressive Arts rather than seeing opportunities to develop through the Expressive Arts.
- There is a strong need to support teachers in affording them the time to develop full understanding of planning and teaching – particularly relevant to Expressive Arts Area, given that it encompasses specific disciplines (e.g. Art; Music; Drama)

We will:

- Continue to place a strong emphasis on promoting the Expressive Arts Area and its inherent value in supporting learning across the curriculum – including through the key programmes which we support such as the Creative Learning through the Arts (with Arts Council of Wales) and the National Music Service (WLGA).
- Continue to develop resources to support practitioners in their teaching of Expressive Arts and its component disciplines (e.g. the “Mewn Tiwn” music resource website, due to be made available via Hwb very shortly)
- Explore how to support clarity over progression and the specialist disciplines within Expressive Arts.

Health and Wellbeing Area

We heard:

- That there is variability across Wales in the approach to this Area, however, there was consensus that Health and Well-being is fundamental to effective learning and relationship building.
- That further support is needed in schools with curriculum design, assessment and progression within this Area.

We will:

- Continue to work closely with Public Health Wales on the development of a Health and Well-being Curriculum Toolkit to support practitioner confidence in their understanding of the Area and in designing their curriculum. The first draft of this Toolkit will be published at the end of the Summer term 2024 and will focus on Substances and Addiction (specifically the theme of vaping). Future topics to be added are Sleep; Food and Nutrition and Emotional Regulation.
- As part of the formative evaluation of curriculum implementation, a deep dive into the Health and Well-being Area is due to go ahead this year. This will involve in-depth interviews with a range of practitioners and schools to explore effective practice and further areas for support.

Humanities Area

We heard:

- That there's a need for further Professional Learning across the Humanities Area. It is vital that cluster networking is improved to help with this and share knowledge and expertise.
- There is a lack of confidence in understanding progression and particularly around the impact of qualifications as curriculum rollout continues.
- Questions remain around how to integrate business studies, citizenship, social studies and politics (previously covered in PSHE), particularly in, but not limited to, primary schools.

We will:

- Continue to promote dissemination of resources and professional learning to support practitioners to develop their teaching in Humanities and its component disciplines (e.g. interactive timelines to support the teaching of Welsh and Black and Minority Ethnic histories).

Languages, Literacy and Communication Area

We heard:

- While practitioners are relatively confident in understanding learner progression, they are aware much of this is through their own observations, and concerns remain from existing cultures around evidence to support professional judgement.
- Primary schools are engaging with curriculum, including innovative development of international languages but there is still a reluctance to make any significant changes at secondary until there is a better understanding of what the qualifications will look like.
- There is a need for more professional learning and resources to support Welsh in English medium primary schools and international languages in primary schools.

We will:

- Continue to work with Adnodd to identify and address gaps in resources, both for the teaching of Welsh and for other subjects through the medium of Welsh.
- Explore how to support clarity over progression as part of the updated guidance review and additional supporting materials.
- Explore how we can help to build the confidence of practitioners to design and deliver a curriculum for Welsh in English medium primary schools and international languages in primary schools.

Maths and Numeracy Area

We heard:

- Proficiencies, where applied, are having a positive impact on pedagogy, however knowledge and application of the proficiencies more widely could be improved.
- Maths is often planned and taught in isolation. Though some schools are using a buddy system between maths and other areas of learning and experience.
- Practitioners find the terminology difficult to understand and find it difficult to articulate the "purpose" of some maths content. Conceptual understanding for non-specialists is an issue.

- Change in approaches to maths teaching between primary and secondary can be disruptive.
- There is a perception that maths can be difficult to differentiate for. The mindset remains that teachers need to fit in content for exams.

We will:

- Continue to work towards realising the actions within the [mathematics and numeracy plan 2023](#) which are:
 - actively promote the importance and relevance of mathematics and numeracy skills
 - support the development of a positive 'can do' mindset and approach across schools, settings, parents, carers and the wider community to promote mathematics and numeracy,
 - develop a national professional learning offer for mathematics and numeracy coherent with Curriculum for Wales and underpinned by the National Professional Learning Entitlement (NPLE)
 - in realising Curriculum for Wales, support educators throughout Wales to develop their practice, knowledge and confidence so that they in turn can encourage and guide learners in how to apply their mathematics and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Science and Technology Area

We heard:

- Schools are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content they feel they need to cover and do not have the confidence to know where content could be reduced to support conceptual understanding.
- That it can be difficult to take a step back from this coverage approach due to the amount of content specified within the statements of What Matters for Science and Technology.
- That schools are working with local STEM employers to assess their curriculum science offers to ensure the knowledge, skills and experience developed by learners is relevant and purposeful.

We will:

- Work with teams across Welsh Government to scope out how industry can support practitioners, ensuring this support aligns with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales and is practical to use.

To take part in our next conversations, register here for:

[National Network Conversation: Purpose, Pedagogy and Progression:](#)

South Wales: Thursday 27th June 2024, Liberty Stadium, Swansea

North Wales: Tuesday 2nd July 2024, Venue Cymru

And

National Network: Responding to AI in Education

North Wales: Tuesday 2nd July 2024, Venue Cymru

South Wales: Thursday 11th July 2024, Novotel Hotel, Cardiff.