



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

December 5th 2024

Report of the Head of Education Development – Christopher Millis

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Report Title. School Improvement Team – Curriculum for Wales

Purpose of the Report:

To monitor on the progress of the Curriculum for Wales

Executive Summary:

Curriculum for Wales requires significant long term cultural change in Welsh schools. This requires schools to consider not just what they teach but how they teach and crucially why they teach it. Schools in Neath Port Talbot are making steady progress. Teaching in many of our schools is evolving to support learners to realise the four purposes. However, this is proving more challenging as the curriculum is rolled out in our secondary schools. This is because the pressures of qualifications at 16 continue to drive behaviours. However, the very recently published 14-16 guidance clearly articulates the need for all learners to have a broad and balanced education and as teaching for pupils aged 11-14 evolves, teachers will begin to grasp the challenge of the high demands and expectations in the Curriculum for Wales.

Background:

Timeline for Curriculum for Wales

Successful futures report published 2015

Draft guidance published January 2020

For primary schools, the Curriculum for Wales was introduced in September 2022. Secondary schools that chose to introduce the curriculum to Year 7 early also started in September 2022 (on secondary school in NPT); with the curriculum being mandatory for Years 7, 8 and 9 from September 2024.

As the Curriculum for Wales is extended year by year until 2026, secondary schools should work very closely with their cluster primary schools to understand their experiences, including understanding their experience of learners' progression, to inform planning for transition. All schools are expected to engage with work within and across their clusters and networks, including through the National Network.

Curriculum for Wales is a significant part of the transformation of education in Wales. The definition of curriculum states: 'A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it.'

Developing schools' and NPT officers' ability to articulate what is different about Curriculum for Wales is a key priority. Without this understanding there is the potential that nothing changes.

This includes:

- Understanding that Curriculum for Wales is purpose led. Focusing on what pupils should learn and why.
- Knowing that the four purposes articulate the pupil development and pupil potential we seek to develop. Recognising that the four purposes are made up of: knowledge and understanding, cross-curricular skills, skills integral to the four purposes and values and attitudes is crucial.
- Understanding Curriculum for Wales is a process orientation curriculum. Developing a curriculum that focuses on the process of learning and development. Seeing a learners' time in school as a continuous journey that supports them to become an autonomous learner.
- Developing a shared understanding of progression within the school, with their cluster of schools and engage with Networks, for example National Network conversations. Section 2.2 of the progression code states:

Progression in learning is a process of developing and improving in skills and knowledge over time. This focuses on understanding what it means to make progress in a given area or discipline and how learners should deepen and broaden their knowledge and understanding, skills and capacities, and attributes and dispositions. This is key to them embodying the four purposes and to progressing into different pathways beyond school.

In NPT there is a range of bespoke support available to all schools:

- Whole school INSET/ADDs
- School cluster INSET/ADDs
- Support for individual/groups teachers
- Support for monitoring – Are pupils making progress?

In addition to this there is professional learning offer for all schools:

Cluster workshops (listed in academic years)

- 2021-2022 – Understanding Curriculum for Wales
- 2022-2023 – Camau workshops – Progression and assessment
- 2023-2024 – AoLE workshops Expressive Arts, Humanities, Health and Well-being and Science and Technology
- Secondary subject network groups (each one meets once a term)
- Governor training

National Professional learning:

- Camau I'r diddorol – NPT school improvement officer and schools (through application)
- National Network meetings.

Mike Daley the Lead Education Support Officer from Neath Port Talbot is now working for two days a week as a professional adviser to Welsh government. He is advising the curriculum and assessment division as they produce a national support programme for curriculum design. This work began in September 2024 and is a ministerial priority.

Strengths

School improvement officers have developed a vision for curriculum in NPT that is communicated widely and regularly with schools and stakeholders.

We continue to support schools to develop their curriculum in line with the local and Local Authority's vision and interpretation of the principles of the Curriculum for Wales.

School improvement officers have a deep understanding of the Curriculum for Wales that informs the strategy that supports schools to develop a curriculum design process.

Overtime the sophistication and complexity of dialogue with schools has deepened. We have a relentless focus on the need to develop a challenging purpose led curriculum that supports all learners in NPT schools to realise the four purposes.

Nearly all schools support the aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales. There are high levels of engagement in nearly all primary schools.

This deeper understanding is impacting on the quality of teaching in many schools.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve is higher as teachers plan more explicitly for pupils knowledge, understanding, cross-curricular skills metacognition, values and attitudes.

Improvements in middle leaders' ability to evaluate learning between ages 11-14 should support teachers to consider the need to evolve their teaching within the Curriculum for Wales. Benefit of our team working closely with WG officers, often used to lead discussions. Two members of the school improvement team are currently working for the Welsh Government, on a part-time basis.

Areas for development

Ensuring that all schools Systematic and progressive development of skills in particularly in writing and numeracy across the curriculum are high priorities for many NPT schools.

A minority of school leaders cannot yet articulate what is different about the Curriculum for Wales. As a result of this those schools will receive support aimed at tackling this issue, particularly around deepening their understanding of purpose and progress.

In a very few schools the pace of development of the Curriculum for Wales is too slow. This is often due to leadership issues and the school not embracing or understanding the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. As a result, we will continue to support those schools in deepening their understanding of the process of curriculum design based on the principles of the Curriculum for Wales.

Financial Impacts:

All NPT schools receive funding for Curriculum development and professional learning. The Education Support Officers work with schools and report to Welsh government to ensure good value for money.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications as this includes all schools

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

There are no legal impacts as this report is for monitoring purposes.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item as this report is for monitoring purposes.

Recommendations:

No recommendations as this is a report for monitoring purposes only.

Reason for Proposed Decision:

No decision required

Implementation of Decision:

N/A

Appendices:

None

Officer Contact:

Mike Daley – Lead Education Support Officer m.daley@npt.gov.uk

Chris Millis – Head of Education Development c.d.millis@npt.gov.uk