



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee
14 October 2021

Report of the Head of Education Development

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Report Title. Curriculum Reform Update

Purpose of the Report:

To provide members with information on the rollout of the Curriculum for Wales and how Neath Port Talbot schools are being supported

Executive Summary:

This report will provide information on how the Education Development Service addresses support for the rollout of the curriculum for Wales

Background:

The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language has published the 'Renew and Reform' plan, setting out the Welsh Government's approach to supporting the education system in responding to the two clear challenges schools currently face: responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on learners and preparing for reform.

Current position

The Curriculum for Wales provides a once in a generation chance to revolutionise the quality of opportunity for our children and young people. Preparation for curriculum reform has put NPT in a strong position to respond to the impacts of the pandemic,

recognising that now more than ever, the central importance of the four purposes of the curriculum for the children and young people in Neath Port Talbot.

The government's emphasis is on wellbeing and flexibility and the Curriculum for Wales will continue to be implemented in primary schools, maintained nursery schools, and non-maintained nursery settings from September 2022. There is a recognition that secondary schools have faced specific challenges such as managing qualifications, which, in some instances, have affected their readiness for curriculum delivery.

Therefore the Minister has taken the decision to provide some additional flexibility for schools where they judge that they need it. In 2022, schools which are ready to roll out the curriculum to Year 7 may do so, but this will not be mandatory until 2023, with rollout to Years 7 and 8 together. The reform of qualifications will play a fundamental role in the success of the curriculum. The ambition and purpose behind the curriculum must be matched by the qualifications system. The flexibility for secondary schools in 2022 will provide space for the sector to work closely with Qualifications Wales over the coming year to co-construct a high-quality set of qualifications which are aligned with the philosophies of the new curriculum, and to capitalise on emerging opportunities around assessment methods. Beyond 2023, roll out of the Curriculum for Wales will follow on a year by year basis, and the first qualifications designed specifically for Curriculum for Wales will be awarded in the 2026 to 2027 academic year as planned.

Welsh government has produced guidance to support schools with a common set of expectations, priorities and supporting information for curriculum design and effective learning and teaching. To do this, it brings together 2 previous key documents, 'Curriculum for Wales: The Journey to 2022' and 'Guidance on learning in schools and settings: coronavirus'. The guidance helps schools to focus on:

What should learners learn and why?

All curriculum development should have a clear purpose in mind. A clear understanding of the purpose of learning and why specific knowledge, skills and experiences are important helps focus the planning of progress and learning and teaching. The knowledge, skills and experiences learners acquire and the outcome of learning should contribute to learners embodying the four purposes. The statements of what matters set out the key understanding learners must develop and the mandatory cross-curricular skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills). This has been a central part of the NPT learning and teaching strategy which has been shared with all schools, Welsh government and Estyn.

What should progress in that learning look like?

Curriculum design, allied to effective learning and teaching, should enable learners to make meaningful progress. The process of curriculum design should determine what knowledge, skills and experiences will support learners to progress both in the short term and over time, and how these should be sequenced. In Curriculum for Wales, the principles of progression and the statements of what matters, which form the mandatory basis for progression, must directly inform planning for progression. These also offer a useful tool for building progression for learners in response to the disruption of COVID-19. To do this, staff within and across schools and settings will need a shared understanding of this progression - what progress should look like across learners' journeys, how they should be supported to progress and how they are progressing. This will provide a strong foundation for assessing that progress as a fundamental part of learning and teaching. In developing shared understanding, schools and practitioners should ensure high expectations for progression across the 3 to 16 continuum of education and beyond. The NPT school improvement team continue to meet Welsh government representatives to discuss progression and this is helping to inform the plan.

How should we assess that progress?

The purpose of assessment is to support each individual learner to make progress. Assessment is critical to understanding learners' strengths and areas for development and is an integral part of curriculum design. It should inform what specific support and challenge learners need to reach their full potential, and their next steps in learning. This requires a clear understanding of the purpose of learning and expected progression. In developing assessment approaches, practitioners should consider what they expect progress to look like and how they will know learners are progressing.

This assessment should not be used to determine the performance of practitioners or schools or for any other means of accountability.

Shared expectations for Curriculum roll-out

There are three phases to the roll-out:

Engagement – Schools are expected to develop an understanding of the conceptual model of the curriculum - this involves schools engaging and sense-making with materials and literature, and developing or updating their vision, engaging within and beyond school. Reflect on current practice and learning from responding to COVID-19. This is happening in all NPT schools

Designing, planning and trialling – Schools are expected to develop high-level curriculum and assessment design, informed by the guidance, and take forward priorities to support curriculum realisation set out in their school development plan. Trial aspects of design, new approaches and pedagogy, using the learning to evaluate and refine their approach. Nearly all NPT schools are currently in this phase of development.

Evaluation and preparation for first teaching – Schools will be expected to evaluate initial designs and trial further approaches. Establish medium-term planning for future roll-out. Schools in NPT will move towards this process throughout this academic year

and beyond. The Welsh government HWB website outlines clearly the key work each school is expected to undertake in each phase and how they are to evolve teaching. Effective learning and teaching is central to the success of the curriculum. Practitioners should develop understanding of how different pedagogical approaches can support the realisation of different aspects of the curriculum. Practitioners should identify the blend of different approaches that will best serve learners, and be empowered to make choices about how they teach (with a clear rationale for those choices). As a result the school improvement team in NPT has developed and shared a learning and teaching strategy with all schools. The rationale is based on the position that in order to realise a purpose led curriculum for all learners aged 3-16 then we need to develop pupils' higher order thinking skills. The effective teaching of which we believe will support children and young people in NPT to realise the four purposes of the curriculum. All NPT schools will be encouraged to contribute to the National Pedagogy Project ('Talk Pedagogy') which has been developed to facilitate conversation, collaboration and enquiry in order to support the exploration and reflection on the pedagogical principles and approaches.

Also, NPT schools are being encouraged to engage with professional learning and networks. Practitioners need to be supported by effective professional learning to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities. This should include engagement with support offered by school improvement services in the Local Authority as well as a range of academic literature and evidence-based research. It should also include engagement, support and input from higher education institutions. As a result, the school improvement team in NPT has forged new partnerships with Swansea University, the University of Wales Trinity St. David's and the Open University. Schools and settings should work collaboratively in formal and informal networks to share emerging thinking and practice. The National Network (an open platform, with opportunities available for all interested practitioners in Wales to get involved in national co-construction to address our shared challenges and opportunities) offers important opportunities to engage on issues with practitioners across the country and

feed directly into the ongoing national direction. All NPT schools have been encouraged to join these national networks.

Additional information

Aspects of the curriculum and learning and teaching relating to Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) must accord with the locally agreed syllabus in schools without a religious character. There are additional requirements for RVE for foundation, voluntary-controlled and voluntary-aided schools that have a religious character. These requirements are set out in the RVE guidance, on which a public consultation has been carried out.

Informal feedback from Estyn during thematic review on support for NPT schools

- NPT has a strong, shared vision for the Curriculum for Wales
- It makes sense and is clearly articulated
- There is a strong moral purpose at its core and there is a clear focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners
- There is a clear link between the language of the purposes and the language of metacognition
- The NPT team have shown bravery in asking schools to re-think and review their curriculum with a focus on the why
- There is a clear approach to deepening thinking in NPT schools
- There are useful links with partners in particular a symbiotic relationship with HEI and the Inclusion services
- Powerful examples of how hugely helpful partnerships exist with external and internal partners when discussing curriculum design

- There is clear recognition of the need to support and improve teaching
- There is a strong emphasis on learning

Financial Impacts:

No implications

Integrated Impact Assessment:

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

Valleys Communities Impacts:

All schools are involved in this process

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

No implications

Consultation:

‘There is no requirement for external consultation on this item’

Recommendations:

Matter for information – no recommendations required.

Implementation of Decision:

Matter for information – no recommendations required.

Appendices:

No Appendices are attached to this report

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