

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	14th July 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Gill German / Geraint Davies
Report authors	James Brown (DCC), Jacquie Chan (GwE) and Mair Herbert (GwE)
Title	How the regional consortium (GwE), in partnership with the Local Authority (LA), are supporting schools in the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales following the publication of the Donaldson Report ‘Successful Futures’

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The implementation of Curriculum for Wales in Denbighshire Schools.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. At the request of Performance Scrutiny Committee, this report provides an overview of the implementation of Curriculum for Wales and how GwE and the LA are supporting its development in Denbighshire schools.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. Scrutiny Members are invited to discuss the details of this report and comment accordingly.

4. Report details

4.1. The new Curriculum for Wales will be implemented in September 2022 by all primary schools. One Denbighshire secondary school will implement in 2022 for year 7, with all others opting for a joint launch with years 7 and 8 in September 2023. GwE’s extensive support takes place at a national, cluster and individual school level.

- 4.2. The curriculum for Wales does not provide the objectives and content which the previous curriculum provided, but gives a clear structure of many components to ensure learners become: ambitious and capable; enterprising and creative; healthy and confident and ethical and informed. These four purposes form the vision for all learners.
- 4.3. GwE leaders have taken an approach (created locally and regionally in line with the national roll-out journey) towards professional learning for schools which addresses what is required of schools in manageable stages. Further guidance and resources for the new curriculum are still being developed and from September 2022, schools are expected to still be refining their curriculums, not exhibiting the 'finished product'. They are currently required to produce a summary this term of their curriculum design plans so far, and to begin to plan cluster approaches to 3-16 progression through a new transition plan for 2022/23.

Professional learning and support – how

- 4.4. GwE have provided an extensive range of professional learning and support, developed nationally by GwE leaders working alongside other consortia, and additionally personalised to the needs of our schools in Denbighshire. This professional learning began pre-pandemic and has accelerated throughout the past two years, building upon learning responsively. GwE's professional learning team have operated with agility during this period, adapting how resources and training are delivered according to feedback from the schools themselves as well as learning from the pandemic. For example, GwE professional learning leaders have consulted with local authorities and headteachers on how and when is best to re-engage with professional learning. Further feedback is regularly gained from Denbighshire headteachers, in order to evaluate impact and respond to schools' needs.

Professional learning for senior leaders

- 4.5. In the spring and summer of 2021, professional learning was aimed initially at headteachers and senior leaders, on leading change, developing a shared vision and planning for curriculum change. This included sessions delivered on-line, with follow-up by Supporting Improvement Advisors with individual schools.

All sessions were recorded, and frequently viewed on the GwE website. This work enabled senior leaders to be able to focus upon their strategic direction and how to support staff by prioritising what is important, and developing a culture to nurture curriculum reform.

- 4.6. During the current academic year, further professional learning sessions have built upon this impact, enabling senior leaders to develop clear plans for curriculum design, assessment and progression, principles of planning and enabling learning. This training has included resources and models for schools to adapt, such as curriculum design and planning rationales and presentations from schools on how they have developed assessment, vision and curriculum planning.

Professional learning for middle leaders and teachers

- 4.7. Denbighshire Middle leaders and teachers have engaged with and benefitted from the GwE professional learning offer and participated very well, attending a series of workshops on understanding the curriculum for Wales framework, unpacking the Areas of Learning and Experience and progression in learning. Again, as well as attending the sessions on-line, schools are downloading recordings and resources. Each school and cluster also has bespoke curriculum for Wales support from their SIA, which varies, for example, from partnering schools in collaboration, monitoring curriculum developments, providing resources and training input and supporting planning for implementation.
Regional and local networks
- 4.8. GwE have been exclusive as a consortia in our collaboration with Professor Donaldson, who has worked alongside GwE staff and schools for the past two years, shaping the development of professional learning throughout this period. One of the key impacts of this work has been the regional and local networks of schools focussing on curriculum design, assessment and the six Areas of Learning and Experience, designed to share expertise, approaches, and foster collaboration, creativity and enthusiasm. Sessions so far have focussed upon expectations, making sense of the new curriculum, progression, curriculum design and planning. Local Authority officers from Denbighshire also attend and contribute to the networks, which has shared their significant expertise across

our region, for example the Health and Wellbeing group includes a Denbighshire Healthy Schools Adviser. (Appendix 1 & 2)

4.9. This term, GwE officers have evaluated readiness for implementation with individual schools. Supportive discussion has evaluated: how well schools have evaluated their vision in relation to their school's unique factors; understood the curriculum design considerations which includes the mandatory elements and the school's linguistic policies; reviewing potential curriculum models; the role of pedagogy, progression and assessment and how they plan to trial and evaluate their own model. Currently all Denbighshire primary schools are on track to implement all steps. Most high and special schools are on track for implementation for 2023, with only one secondary school opting to introduce the new curriculum for 2022. The schools who are not fully on track with all steps are being supported with their development in the steps with which they are struggling, following the evaluation discussions. Appendix 3.

Future professional learning and support

4.10. Due to the pandemic, much professional learning so far has been on-line, and GwE have developed a host of resources to support this, which have had over 125, 000 views and downloads to date. Additional support made available to schools includes a series of 'Think Pieces' which have been written by the GwE team as part of the reform sessions with Professor Graham Donaldson (Appendix 4). Local network meetings are just beginning to be held face to face, and future planned professional learning for the curriculum for Wales will hopefully be a blend of on-line and face to face.

4.11. GwE professional learning and support for implementing the curriculum for Wales will continue through 2022-23 focussing upon transition, progression and assessment, bespoke and intensive support for schools and clusters appropriate to their preparedness for implementation, supporting our secondary schools for September 2023, supporting self-evaluation in line with the new School Improvement Guidance and developing understanding of impact by capturing progress and success. A further focus will be peer engagement through cluster and alliances, encouraging a structure for leaders and teachers to collaborate to evaluate their own and each other's schools.

Relationships & Sexuality Education, and Religion, Values and Ethics

4.12. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a statutory requirement in the Curriculum for Wales and starting in September 2022 will be mandatory for all learners from ages 3 to 16. The new guidance was released to schools and local authorities in January 2022. Through the Health & Wellbeing Team, the local authority has commissioned an expert practitioner to work with all RSE leads in schools to support them in the development of a whole school approach to *designing* their RSE curriculum, *consultation*, *audit* and *delivery*. The practitioner is available for advice between these sessions and has also developed resources which are available to all Denbighshire schools. The primary workshops finished on the 23rd May and secondary workshops will be complete by the end of term. GwE have commissioned the same expert to produce a template RSE policy which schools will be able to adapt to their own circumstances.

4.13. Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) is a statutory requirement of the Curriculum for Wales and is mandatory for all learners from ages 3 to 16. Unlike other curriculum areas, RVE is a locally determined subject. At the request of the Denbighshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), an Agreed Syllabus Conference was held on the 14th March 2022. The Conference agreed that the RVE guidance produced by Welsh Government should be adopted as the Agreed Syllabus and made this recommendation to the LA. The LA has adopted this recommendation and it was presented to schools on 20th May. A secure online area has been created containing support resources for all schools and a specialist RVE consultant is funded by the LA to advise and support schools and the SACRE.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1. There is a statutory duty to implement the mandatory aspects of Curriculum for Wales under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 and to have regard to statutory guidance. This contributes towards the Young People's corporate priority.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. The implementation and support of new curricula is part of the work of the LA and GwE. This should not impact on other services.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required as there is no proposal or request for decisions to be made.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. This report is for information only.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 There are no direct financial consequences of this report. The Council maintains a robust budget setting process which aims to capture for discussion any savings or pressures that services identify.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. The implementation of the curriculum for Wales is reviewed by Estyn as part of their inspection work. The local authority and GwE are already working in partnership to monitor and support schools with their implementation, thereby reducing the associated risks.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

11.2. Sections 7.3, 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 of the Council's Constitution.