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EDUCATION WALES
cenhadaeth ein cenedl | our national mission

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Education in Wales: Our national mission

Action plan 2017–21

Audience

The school workforce, and those in other settings delivering the Foundation Phase, parents and carers, government and national partners, including regional consortia, local authorities, governing bodies, workforce unions and diocesan authorities.

Overview

This plan of action sets out how the school system in Wales, including its sixth forms, will move forward over the period up until 2021 to secure the effective implementation of a new curriculum. This will be supported by policies that will be developed in partnership, based upon sound evidence and evaluated effectively at all stages. This document gathers together actions that are initiated by other Welsh Government publications or those of our partners.

Action required

None – for information only.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/learning

Related documents

Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017); *A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life* (2015); *Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* (2014); *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales* (2015); *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales* (2015)

WG32363
WG33030
Digital ISBN 978 1 78859 603 9
Print ISBN 978 1 78859 605 3

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Ministerial foreword

"The children and young people of today are entering a fast-changing world that is increasingly competitive, globally connected and technologically advanced. Schools are having to prepare our young people for jobs that have not yet been created and challenges that we are yet to encounter. This will require a renewed commitment to improving both the skills and knowledge of our young people, as we raise standards in our transformational curriculum. Education has never been more important. Education reform is our national mission.

Together, we are all responsible for ensuring that every young person in Wales has an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards.

It is our duty to provide future generations with the skills and knowledge they need to play a full and active role in their communities and wider society. Our learners should aspire to be the best. Therefore it is critical that we do everything we can to support them, setting high expectations, so that we achieve our ambitions for our citizens and for our country.

We are committed to the success and well-being of every learner, regardless of background or personal circumstance. Equity and excellence go hand in hand and we cannot have one at the expense of the other. Geography, deprivation or childhood experiences should not prevent learners from reaching their potential. Our learners will be resilient, imaginative, compassionate and ambitious – they will aim high and achieve their goals.

To do that, we will require a high-quality education workforce that is vibrant, engaged and committed to continuous learning for all. Our teaching profession, with an emphasis on strong leadership and professional learning, will help deliver on the high expectations we all share for our learners, schools and education system.

A nation's economic prosperity, social cohesion and well-being are built on the foundations of a strong and successful education system. That is why I describe our focus on raising school standards, reducing the attainment gap between different groups of learners and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence as our national mission.

The commitment to raising standards for all is a government commitment. By working across boundaries we can be confident of a prosperous Wales where education from the earliest age will be the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement. This revised plan of action is designed to support the delivery of 'Ambitious and Learning', one of the key themes as set out in *Prosperity for All: the national strategy* (2017). It is through the implementation of the actions in this plan that we will support all of our young people to make the most of their potential. We will build ambition and encourage learning for life, and equip our children and young people with the right skills for a changing world.

It is clear to me, through my discussions across the country since becoming Cabinet Secretary for Education, that there is shared optimism about the way forward. Many of our schools, their staff and young people already achieve very high standards and there are examples of world-class practice right across the country. We in Wales have much to be proud of – but there is a recognition that, together, we can be even better. We can, and will, support all of our young people to make the most of their potential.

The building of our new curriculum is well underway and will underpin all of our education reforms. New professional standards for teachers, strengthened initial teacher education (ITE) provision, formative assessment arrangements and our emerging National Academy for Educational Leadership will support the implementation of *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales* (2015) and ensure a seamless flow across our truly self-improving school system.

This action plan builds on the 2014 publication *Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* and reaffirms our ambition that learners will enjoy teaching and learning that inspires them to achieve in a collaborative and innovative education community.

In delivering our new transformational curriculum, we will need to focus on the following four key enabling objectives.

- Developing a high-quality education profession.
- Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards.
- Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being.
- Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

"Our national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence."

Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education

Within these connected objectives are a range of actions which will deliver a better school system for Wales. Parents and carers across the country must have confidence that their children attend schools that are preparing them well for their future lives, led by teachers who are passionate and talented, and that deliver qualifications that equip them for personal, national and international challenges and opportunities.

We are at a crucial point in our education reform journey. On the one hand, there is no hiding our collective disappointment with the recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results. While we acknowledge that PISA cannot measure everything, there is widespread agreement that what it does measure is important. PISA reflects the skills needed to equip our young people properly for the complex, connected and exciting world in which we live. It asks the questions that employers demand we answer.

On the other hand, and more encouragingly, the globally acknowledged assessor of education system performance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has given us some very clear messages. Put simply, they are urging us to hold our nerve and continue to work in partnership with the wider education workforce towards the longer term. I am committed to fulfilling their recommendations and am confident we are heading in the right direction.

We all want our children to be well-educated, safe and happy, to be treated fairly and benefit from high levels of well-being. For many of our young people, achieving those ambitions will require a renewed, collaborative focus across all of our public services.

Our national mission is ambitious, innovative and confident as we work to deliver a reformed and successful education system. By learning together, we can develop a better Wales."

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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A nation's prosperity, cohesion and well-being are built on a successful education system.

Our reform journey

As Wales embarks on a renewed vision of success for all learners, we can reflect on our rich heritage and proud history for promoting access to education: from Griffith Jones and his circulating schools in the eighteenth century; to the donations of the rural and working classes that helped establish our universities and colleges; through to leading the way in publicly funded secondary education.

Our transformational reforms are taking place within a challenging environment. This includes continuing UK-wide austerity, the uncertainties associated with Brexit, the technological transformation of economic and working lives, and the growing divergence in the qualification systems across the home nations. These are all challenges, and opportunities, that we can and must meet.

Though these challenges are great, they underline that education reform is essential to Wales' future as a strong, prosperous and socially cohesive society. We may be a small nation but our innovative approach, high ambitions and willingness to work and learn with the best in the world is attracting attention. We can be proud that the international community is looking with interest at what is happening in Wales, but there is much more to be done.

Since 2013, we have been open to review by the international expert community. That involvement will continue, and it is our intention to invite the OECD to carry out further reviews at key points along our national education reform journey. Quite simply, to be the best we must learn from the best.

In 2014, the previous Welsh Government published *Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales.* In the plan, we committed to building an improved, collaborative education system for Wales. Three years later it is now clear that the schools' community and their partners have made progress in several key areas. These include improved GCSE outcomes and a narrowing of the performance gap between learners from poorer backgrounds and their peers.

Our national mission does not stop at the school gates. Our reform journey, focused on raising standards and reducing the attainment gap, is further strengthened by improvements to student support and the post-compulsory education system. Our innovative approach will ensure that all students are supported with their living costs, while also investing in our universities, and that it becomes easier for people to learn and acquire skills throughout their careers.

We may be a small nation but our innovative approach, high ambitions and willingness to work and learn with the best in the world is attracting attention. The Welsh approach considers every element of the education system.

Percentage of learners in Wales, in Year 11/aged 15 achieving the Level 2 inclusive (five A*–C GCSEs/equivalent including English/Welsh and mathematics)

						Learners in Year 11	Age 15 version*
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2016**
Level 2 (inclusive)	50.1	51.1	52.7	55.4	57.9	60.3	59.8
Level 2 (inclusive) eligible for free school meals (eFSM)	22.0	23.4	25.8	27.8	31.6	35.6	35.2
% difference	28.1	27.7	26.9	27.7	26.3	24.7	24.6

* Calculated to be as close as possible to the definition in previous years.
** 2017 verified data not published until December 2017.

In November 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Education invited the OECD to examine the work underway on education reforms and shine a light on our progress to date. The OECD found that, since their previous visit in 2014, progress had been made in a number of policy areas and a noticeable shift had taken place in our approach to school improvement – away from piecemeal and short-term policy towards one guided by a long-term vision.

They found the Welsh reform journey was increasingly characterised by close working between government and the education sector, with a commitment to improvement 'visible at all levels of the education system'.

The report recommended that key priorities for government should be to:

- bring further coherence across the various reform initiatives, ensuring that this coherence is evaluated at key points in the journey
- continue the process of co-constructing policies with key stakeholders, making explicit how teachers, support staff, school leaders, local authorities, regional consortia and other stakeholders each contribute to realising the vision for the Welsh learner
- continue the strengthening of Wales' school improvement infrastructure through strengthening the capacity of regional consortia and the quality of their relationships with teacher education institutions
- further enhance the use of evidence and research and its link to policy through continuing to invest in building research and assessment capacity at all levels of the system
- communicate clearly about the Welsh education reform journey, including ensuring that we celebrate the successes that we have on the way.

In response, this document, *Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21* is our revised plan of action. It will support 'Ambitious and learning', one of the key themes as set out in *Prosperity for All: the national strategy,* and will help to develop a school system that will instill in our learners an ambition to make the most of their potential, lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement, and equip them with the right skills for a changing world.

To deliver our reforms across the entire system, we will need a bold commitment to effective collaboration along with integration of services where appropriate. This will include Welsh Government, the teaching profession and the wider education workforce, our key partners in local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional services, Estyn, the Education Workforce Council (EWC), Qualifications Wales, higher education institutions and others. Successful implementation will require effective and honest engagement between all facets of the education system. We are committed to providing the conditions to enable this to happen. In delivery we will also seek to work with the wider public service and third sector where required.

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Our education system in 2021

By 2021, our transformation will be well underway. Schools will have significant experience of working together to take the new curriculum forward, and our reforms to ITE and additional learning needs (ALN) will be well established. Likewise, the growing contribution of the National Academy for Educational Leadership will be generating future leadership capacity and the culture and principles of the self-improving school system will be further embedded.

The Welsh education system three-tier model

Tier 1

Welsh Government

- Planning and policy making – through evidence-based collaboration.
- Managing models of accountability within the democratic process.
- Engaging with all tiers and supporting capacity-building for system improvement.

Tier 2

Four regional consortia, local authorities, diocesan authorities, Estyn, Qualifications Wales, Education Workforce Council (EWC), examination boards and higher education

- Using their knowledge of schools and research to facilitate and support the sharing of best practice and collaboration to improve learner outcomes, within a self-improving school system.

Tier 3

Schools

- Working together to provide the range of experiences for children, young people and professionals to enhance their learning and well-being.

It is our intention that our **learners** will:

- benefit from experiences at school that will support them in becoming young adults that are:
  - ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
  - enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
  - ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
  - healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society
- have relevant high-level digital, literacy and numeracy skills
- be increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp of other languages.

If our learners are to be developed in these ways, the **teaching profession** will be:

- high-quality, collaborative and driven by a deep understanding of pedagogy and subject knowledge
- research-engaged, well informed and learning from excellence at local, national and international levels
- attractive, with high morale and professional satisfaction
- well supported by a range of learning support professionals who can provide the additional capacity that is needed to meet the needs of every child
- outward-looking and committed to raising standards within and between schools
- creators of vibrant, warm and caring environments that inspire learning
- well led by leaders who will ensure that every teacher can improve through effective collaboration, innovation, professional learning and opportunities to provide professional leadership to others.

If we are to achieve this for our workforce, our **schools** will be:

- exemplifying the characteristics of effective learning organisations (see 'Schools as learning organisations' on page 12)
- vibrant, inclusive, open, connected, creative community-based learning organisations, active in wider networks
- well led by education professionals who have the intellectual and practical understanding of education leadership within our system, developed through a common national approach and supported by effective governance.

To support our schools, our **middle tier** (local authorities and regional consortia) will:

- be clear about their key roles as leaders of effective planning and providers of intelligence into the system to enable all schools to play their part in improving learner outcomes and well-being
- be knowledgeable about educational inequities within and between partnerships/alliances and able to address them by moving knowledge and expertise; they are key to facilitating cross-sectoral and multi-agency collaboration to support those in greatest need
- work collaboratively across the whole of Wales to mobilise expertise and minimise duplication of effort and cost – to do this, they will continue to operate at a regional scale to build capacity and enable services to target resources and activity effectively towards schools working together
- be well led by education professionals who have the intellectual, practical and shared understanding of education leadership within our system – leaders will be driven by the curriculum's four purposes, provide good-quality vision and build strong evolving partnerships.

For our schools and middle tier to be able to grow in the ways outlined above, our other **key partners in the middle tier** (such as Estyn, Wales Audit Office (WAO), Qualifications Wales, EWC) will:

- exemplify the qualities of effective learning organisations, learning from the best in the world to support our national reform journey
- seek to ensure that all sectors engage in effective partnerships to build a high-quality workforce to meet the needs of all learners
- develop accountability models to promote system change, avoiding incentivising institutional self-interest
- be well led by confident, ambitious professionals who share in our vision for a self-improving system and recognise their crucial role in delivering positive change.

To achieve the above, we will continue with a clear commitment to the effective delivery of our new curriculum, underpinned by the four enabling objectives required to ensure its success. This will be reinforced by continued co-construction, open and honest dialogue with educators and evidence-based policy development.

To achieve this, **Welsh Government** must:

- be bold and courageous in securing the best for our young people and the teaching profession
- maintain a commitment to inclusive, public service education and to schools designed to serve their communities
- build a network of support around the education workforce and its learners by strengthening links with other public services, acknowledging the vital importance of mental and physical well-being for both learners and educators
- work with key partners to develop flexible and responsive accountability models which hold schools to account and support children's learning, without inhibiting innovation and effective sharing of good practice
- communicate our education reform journey effectively and celebrate successes across the system to build national pride and public confidence in what we are doing.

If all key partners deliver on these expectations, by 2021 Wales will be well on its way to possessing an intelligent, collaborative three-tier school system that is connected to a clear vision for all of our learners.

Schools as learning organisations

Wales has an ambition that all schools develop as learning organisations, in keeping with OECD principles. Schools that are learning organisations have the capacity to adapt more quickly and explore new approaches, with a means to improving learning and outcomes for all their learners.

The Welsh school as a learning organisation focuses on realising seven 'dimensions'.

- Developing and sharing a vision centred on the learning of all students.
- Creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff.
- Promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff.
- Establishing a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration.
- Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning.
- Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system.
- Modelling and growing learning leadership.

For further details, see www.oecd.org/edu/school/school-learning-organisation.pdf

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Key actions

In classrooms and schools across Wales, we are building on strong foundations to deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence. Together, we are all responsible for ensuring every young person has an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards. This plan details some of our key actions as shown here.

Establish a national approach to professional learning, building capacity so that all teachers benefit from career-long development based on research and effective collaboration.

Develop a new 'made in Wales' teachers' pay and conditions framework, enshrining a national approach to professional learning and standards, and the freedom for teachers to use their professionalism and knowledge.

Expand the Pupil Development Grant (PDG), formerly known as the Pupil Deprivation Grant, building on its success in narrowing the attainment gap and breaking down the barriers faced by learners.

Commit to formative assessment, supporting personalised progress (including for our most able learners), together with our new reformed and rigorous GCSEs and A levels.

Deliver a transformational new curriculum, to embed the four purposes and ensure that all are focused on higher standards of literacy and numeracy and ensuring our young people are more digitally and bilingually competent.

Reduce unnecessary workload and bureaucracy, by providing clarity of what is and isn't required in the classroom, and improving the use of business managers to support school leaders.

Improve the proportion of top-performing learners in PISA, by addressing the relatively low proportion reaching the highest levels; this will be crucial in reaching our long-term aim of scoring 500 in each domain in PISA 2021.

Promote school-to-school working, including federation, clusters and professional learning communities.

Build on our commitment to equity in education through ALN legislation that will strengthen provision and support for all learners in all language settings.

Develop and deliver a new Assessment and Evaluation Framework, supporting the realisation of the four purposes of education.

Reform our teacher training offer, strengthening university and school partnerships so that they jointly design and run programmes.

Establish our new National Academy for Educational Leadership, which will identify, support and inspire leaders across the entire system.

Ensure we partner equity with excellence, identifying new and effective ways to measure and improve learner well-being.

Continue to upgrade the quality of school buildings, with a further funding of £1.1 billion capital investment over the next four years through our 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme.

Introduce new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (and dedicated standards for support staff), promoting teaching excellence and supporting career-long professional learning, collaboration, innovation and effective leadership.

Reduce infant class sizes, targeted at those who will most benefit, supporting teachers to raise standards for all.

A transformational curriculum

Developing transformational curriculum and assessment arrangements will be crucial to realising our vision for children and young people in Wales. They will have higher standards of literacy and numeracy, become more digitally and bilingually competent, and evolve into enterprising, creative and critical thinkers. Our new curriculum will have equity and excellence at its core and help develop our young people as confident, capable and caring citizens.

We are moving ahead to ensure that the widely supported new curriculum will be available for all learners in Wales. In order to achieve that, we need to design a full curriculum and the associated assessment arrangements, which is now being done with schools and expert stakeholders. A key principle of the new curriculum is that it must be appropriate to every learner in every classroom. It is not a matter of simply adapting the existing curriculum.

The new curriculum replaces existing key stages with 'progression steps', and will be organised into six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) – expressive arts; health and well-being; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; mathematics and numeracy; and science and technology. The implications for schools will be felt at many levels – it is not just a matter of changing the content of lessons.

As the cornerstone of our collective effort to raise standards, the new curriculum will be reliant upon the alignment of four enabling objectives which must all be delivered effectively to have the transformational impact to which we aspire. Each objective links to the others and only when they are all functioning will we realise our vision for our education system and its learners. By focusing on these objectives, reinforced by a focus on raising standards and expectations, we can be confident that we can deliver for all.

Strong progress has already been made and, together, we have:

- published *A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life* (2015) and put in place a network of more than 175 pioneer schools to lead the development and support of the new curriculum
- updated the National Literacy and Numeracy Programme (NLNP) and published the Foundation Phase Action Plan
- introduced rigorous made-in-Wales qualifications, such as reformed key GCSE specifications, the Welsh Baccalaureate, AS and A levels
- established Qualifications Wales to act as an independent regulator of general and vocational qualifications in Wales.

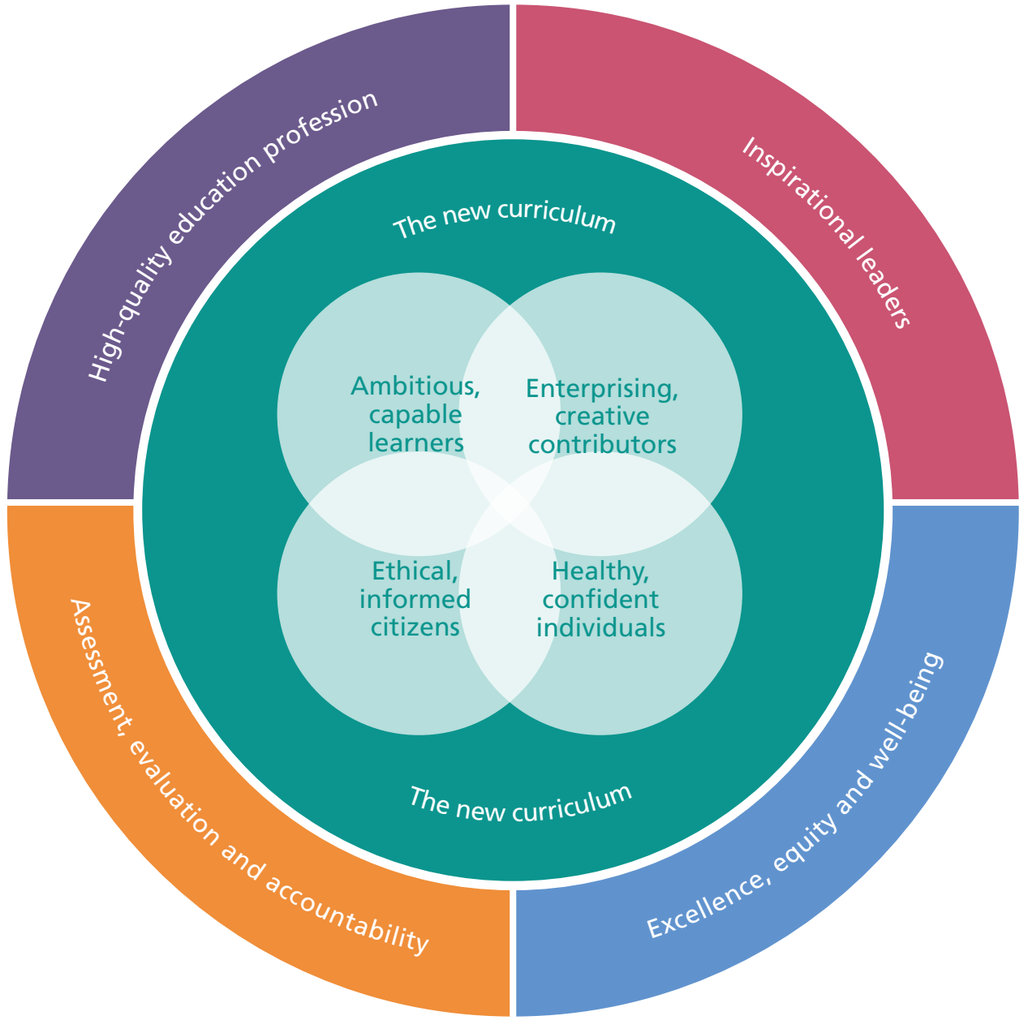
During the period until 2021, and within the context of the four purposes (see diagram on page 23) of the new curriculum, we will:

- use reputable pedagogic research and effective collaboration across the entire system to support the development of a world-class curriculum that will help raise standards for all in Wales
- design and implement new assessment arrangements, with more emphasis on formative assessment; this will include developing personalised assessments that are computer-based and adaptive to provide improved diagnostic capabilities for all our learners, including the most able, and also ensure that new accountability arrangements are fit for purpose and effectively support curriculum and assessment reform
- bring forward legislation for the revised curriculum and assessment arrangements reaffirming the principle of a new national curriculum framework for Wales, which will be defined through a broad set of duties, and will provide the freedom for our practitioners to use their professionalism and creativity to meet the needs of all learners
- develop a transformational approach to the learning, teaching and assessment of the Welsh language with the aim of ensuring all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school
- extend and promote learners' wider experiences so that the curriculum is rich and varied as well as being inclusive, broad and balanced, where learners will benefit from the best possible learning opportunities both inside and outside of school.

To do this, we will do the following.

• Develop the framework for the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) including the key requirements for moving towards a language continuum for Welsh. • Ensure that resources that we commission are developed in English and Welsh at the same time to support our new curriculum. • Develop approaches to professional learning to ensure that all schools are better able to plan for curriculum change.	Autumn 2017
• Begin the phasing-in of adaptive personalised assessments (to replace paper-based reading and numeracy tests).	During autumn 2018
• Make available for final feedback new curriculum and assessment arrangements for schools.	By Easter 2019
• Final curriculum.	By January 2020
• Ensure all maintained settings and schools are using the new curriculum.	By 1 September 2022

Our national mission is ambitious, innovative and confident.



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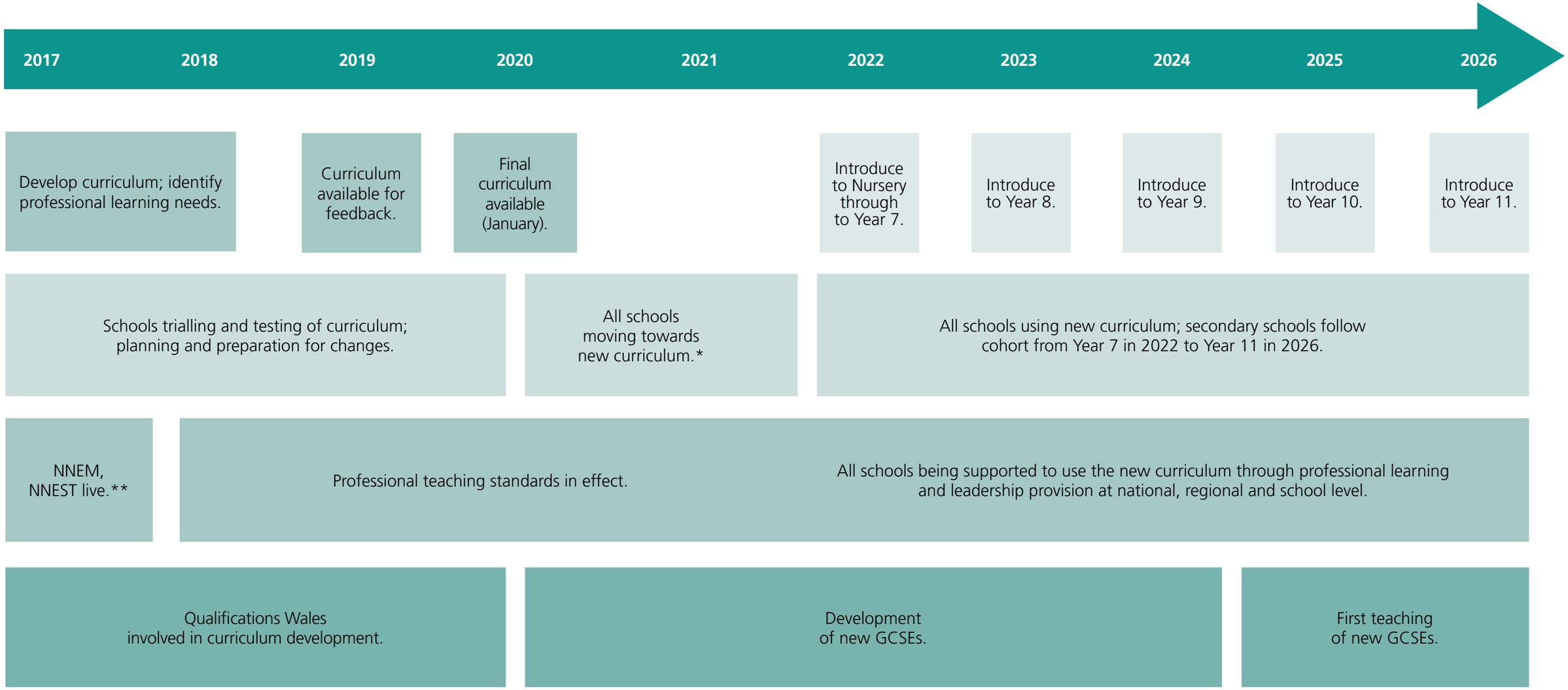
Rollout of curriculum and qualifications timeline



* Includes assessment.
** NNEM – National Network for Excellence in Mathematics. NNEST – National Network for Excellence in Science and Technology.

We all want our children to be well-educated, safe and happy.

The four enabling objectives

It is clear that the successful realisation of our new transformational curriculum and assessment arrangements will require well-coordinated, enabling reforms. These reforms are being developed in collaboration with education professionals, and are benefitting from engagement with excellent practice from around the world. The realisation of a new curriculum will require a clear focus on the following four key enabling objectives.

1. Developing a high-quality education profession.
2. Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards.
3. Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being.
4. Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

Enabling objective 1: Developing a high-quality education profession

An education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, and our new curriculum cannot be delivered without a well-supported, aspirational teaching profession. The world's highest-performing education systems have vibrant, engaged educators and support staff who are committed to continuous learning. We will support teachers in Wales to be lifelong professional learners that reflect on and enhance their own practice to motivate and inspire the children and young people in their care.

We will work with key partners to ensure that all teachers will:

- benefit from opportunities to improve the quality of their pedagogy, while aspiring to be a better teacher
- be effectively supported by other colleagues within the education workforce
- have opportunities for professional learning in a research-driven culture, in the knowledge that excellent teachers are effective learners
- enter the profession having experienced significantly improved initial teacher education (ITE).

So far, we have:

- established the Education Workforce Council (EWC) and recognised the value of an increasingly professional workforce by registering all the school and further education workforce
- worked with our higher education partners and schools to plan for transformation of ITE
- established four regional consortia to focus on school improvement through collaborative working
- improved learning environments in schools through local and diocesan authorities and Welsh Government investment to the value of £1.4 billion through the 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme
- created Hwb, our all-Wales learning platform, which is now being accessed by more than 500,000 users.

During the period until 2021, we will:

- strengthen ITE using new accreditation criteria which will expect higher education institutions and their school partnerships to collaborate in the design and running of high-quality teacher training programmes
- attract and retain more high-quality applicants and high-calibre mature graduates into teaching through a redesigned Graduate Teacher Programme
- develop, consult upon and launch new professional standards for teachers and others in the education workforce that will focus on the essential elements of successful teaching; we will also develop standards for support staff that can enable them to improve their skills, commit to professional learning and facilitate clearer pathways to the role of higher level teaching assistant (HLTA)

- develop a national approach to career-long professional learning (see 'Priorities for professional learning' in the next column) that builds capacity from ITE and is embedded in evidence-based research and effective collaboration
- establish a national approach to reducing infant class sizes in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching of those most adversely affected by deprivation and to support the continued development of the principles and best practice of the Foundation Phase
- establish more effective workforce planning systems to ensure sufficient numbers of highly skilled teachers, including those able to work through the medium of Welsh and the wide range of ALN roles, and develop alternative models to ensure the quality and sufficiency of supply teachers for schools
- continue the 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme in order to deliver learning environments that meet the needs of all learners and ensure the availability of education through the medium of Welsh for all who choose it, and support making better use of schools to provide extended services to their communities, including community learning centres.

To assess progress in this area, we will:

- use workforce surveys to evaluate the confidence of the profession in delivering the new curriculum
- work with Estyn as they evaluate the quality of ITE and professional learning at the different tiers and respond as required
- monitor the match of supply and demand for staff in specialist areas including Welsh-medium provision
- monitor that there is sufficient access for learners to Welsh-medium provision.

Priorities for professional learning

Over the coming years, it will be imperative that we equip our education workforce to deliver the four purposes of our new curriculum in all contexts, and improve the quality of assessment for learning.

In the short term, in order to build capacity, we recognise that rapid progress needs to be made with supporting our education professionals to:

- utilise the relevant technologies and skills to transform the digital competence of our learners
- improve classroom practice in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects ahead of the new Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) and revised A level courses
- share best practice in Foundation Phase teaching across all settings/schools
- meet the needs of all learners with ALN, in keeping with the requirements of new legislation
- teach Welsh as a living language and ensure that greater numbers can work effectively in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings
- improve the quality of teaching in order to extend our most able learners in all settings/schools, including improving outcomes for learners in our sixth forms
- secure the most effective safeguarding practices (including online safety) and support improved well-being by developing a workforce that is ACE (adverse childhood experiences) aware
- encourage positive behaviour dispositions and improved transition for all our learners across all key points.

To action our plan, we will do the following.

• Establish a formal accreditation board to accredit ITE programmes that will be operational from September 2019. • Work on the passage of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill through the National Assembly for Wales. • Make available new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership for use in schools. • Support the development of pathways for HLTAs – to be agreed and delivered by regional consortia. • Launch the digital professional learning framework and programmes for schools as learning organisations. • Introduce a national approach to reduce infant class sizes.	During autumn 2017
• Support the adoption of new professional standards by serving teachers and headteachers. • Make new professional standards available for use in ITE programmes. • Launch a national approach to professional learning (to include teachers/practitioners, learning support and supply staff). • Launch the overarching Workforce Development Plan, to include a focus on small and rural schools, developing Welsh language skills and improving the quality of the supply workforce.	By autumn 2018
• All students commencing ITE programmes will be subject to new professional standards. • Develop a framework for a pay and conditions system that contributes to a highly motivated teaching profession which will underpin the delivery of our new curriculum. • Undertake the first statutory collection of workforce data to better inform workforce planning and policy decisions.	By autumn 2019

Teachers should be the most dedicated students in the classroom. We will support them to be lifelong professional learners to help raise standards for all our young people.

Enabling objective 2: Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards

To deliver on our national mission of education reform, Wales needs inspirational leaders that are well prepared and supported to lead their organisations through the changes ahead. Following its visit to Wales in 2014, the OECD said we should 'treat developing system leadership as a prime driver of education reform'. Promoting and supporting effective, collaborative leadership will therefore be central to our reforms.

The establishment of a National Academy for Educational Leadership, alongside new professional leadership standards aligned to professional standards for teachers, will ensure that leaders at all levels across our education system are well supported to develop and inspire colleagues and to work collaboratively to embed the new curriculum.

So far, we have:

- worked with the regional consortia to adapt the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) to provide more effective preparation for headship
- reviewed and consulted on the existing school governance framework
- worked with leaders to develop new professional leadership standards for schools.

During the period until 2021, we will:

- establish and develop a National Academy for Educational Leadership that will secure, nurture and inspire leaders now and for the future across the entire system in both Welsh-medium and English-medium settings
- support the implementation of new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership which will embed the role of headteachers as leaders of change in our system
- develop options for more flexible, skills-focused governing bodies and expand the utilisation of highly skilled business managers in order to provide more effective support for school leaders.

To assess progress in this area, we will:

- be able to identify a wider range of opportunities becoming available to develop present and future leaders
- evidence an improvement in the number of high-quality applicants for leadership posts in schools
- evidence more effective support being given to school leaders by a growing body of effective business managers and governing bodies.

To action our plan, we will do the following.

• New Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership are made available for all teachers and leaders to adopt from September 2018. • Regional consortia to continue to collaborate to ensure effective alignment of support for school leaders.	During autumn 2017
• Formally constitute the National Academy for Educational Leadership. • Respond to consultation on school governance with proposals for a revised regulatory framework.	By summer 2018
• Ensure that the first provision of leadership programmes endorsed by the National Academy for Educational Leadership become available. • A revised National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) becomes available to support the new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership and to better equip leaders to plan for the new curriculum.	By autumn 2018
• An extensive portfolio of endorsed leadership development opportunities become available for the education community.	By autumn 2019

Wales needs inspirational leaders working together, committed to raising standards and reducing the attainment gap.

Enabling objective 3: Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being

All learners must be supported to be emotionally and physically ready to learn in a safe and supportive environment. Equity requires that we ensure that the system, at school, local and national level takes account of and responds to the unique challenges that present themselves to individuals or groups of learners. We will strengthen partnership working to improve the early childhood experiences of children and ensure a widespread understanding of the importance of the first thousand days in a child's life.

Our twenty-first century curriculum will help schools focus effectively on learner well-being, equity and excellence. Each learner must be respected and challenged to achieve the best that they are capable of, including our most able learners, while being supported to overcome barriers that inhibit their learning. Children and young people who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self – and who can understand and manage their own health and emotions – are in a better position to reach their full potential in the future.

Working in partnership, we are determined that no challenge should prevent any learner from reaching their potential, including those learners who experience several ACEs.

So far, we have:

- implemented *Rewriting the future: Raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* (2014) and delivered the Pupil Development Grant (PDG), formerly known as the Pupil Deprivation Grant, to break down the barriers faced by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, with results now showing improvements for those learners at all key stages
- published new safeguarding in education guidance – *Keeping learners safe: The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002* (2015) – to ensure that education services are supported in safeguarding the welfare of their learners, working where necessary with investigative agencies
- established an expert panel to guide improvements in sex and relationships education.

During the period until 2021, we will:

- expand the PDG so that schools can improve on the life chances of our most deprived younger learners through earlier intervention, which will support the ambition to improve the first thousand days of our most vulnerable children
- work with partners to identify the most effective means of measuring and improving learner well-being; we will also strengthen the work of schools and their partners to enhance the safeguarding and resilience of all learners and deploy approaches designed to reduce the incidence of negative behaviours in the classroom, and potentially in later life
- ensure that looked after children and those educated other than at school (EOTAS), including at pupil referral units (PRUs), are better supported to succeed through the development of strengthened collaborative working designed to substantially improve provision and outcomes for these learners
- build on the success of the Seren Network, designed to support Wales' brightest sixth formers to deliver improved provision for our most able younger learners, raising standards for all
- support high-quality summer learning programmes, ensuring that our young people don't lose ground in learning over the summer, helping to reduce the attainment gap
- build on our commitment to equity in education by bringing forward a new legislative framework for the identification and support of learners through an Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill designed to strengthen provision across Wales for all learners with ALN, in all language settings
- support schools to work more effectively with local health boards in order to improve provision for learners with matters relating to their mental health
- establish a National Endowment for Music to ensure that all our young people, from whatever background, can develop their talents and skills through music
- implement the Wales Charter for Youth Work and establish an independently chaired National Youth Support Services Board to secure a shared vision for effective youth work
- provide young people with high-quality, independent careers advice and guidance to help them make sound learning choices, develop their career management competencies and succeed in the world of work.

To assess progress in this area, we will:

- work with our key partners in Wales and beyond to identify ways of measuring progress in learner well-being
- develop and utilise effective learner, workforce and parental surveys
- benchmark effectively within Wales and with our international partners
- ensure that policy is evidence-driven and its implementation open to regular evaluation
- monitor the performance of different groups of learners, using all available data, with a particular focus on reducing the attainment gap between learners from deprived backgrounds and their peers.

To action our plan, we will do the following.

• Expand the PDG from April 2017. • Work on the passage of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill through National Assembly for Wales processes. • Publish the first annual review of the LAC Education Strategy. • Strengthen partnership working to deliver better outcomes for looked after children and those in EOTAS, including in PRUs. • Deliver mental health support for schools and learners, in partnership with local health boards, starting with regional pilots. • Support activities to enhance summer learning. • Establish a National Endowment for Music.	By autumn 2017
• Evaluate our youth work funding streams. • Identify and disseminate good practice in relation to school-based counselling. • Establish an independently chaired National Youth Support Services Board. • Develop and deliver provision to identify and support our more able learners.	By spring 2018
• Work with partners, in Wales and beyond, on effective measurements of learner well-being. • Explore the introduction of youth work sufficiency assessments. • Support key partners to develop professional learning opportunities to enable key practitioners to become ACE aware.	By autumn 2018
• Subject to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill receiving Royal Assent, deliver a new ALN code and regulations underpinning the statutory framework. • Implement the Wales Charter for Youth Work.	By autumn 2019
• Work with key partners to implement our ALN transformation programmes.	During 2019/20 – date subject to consultation

We are committed to the success and well-being of every learner. We believe in a system that combines equity with excellence.

Enabling objective 4: Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system

In order to ensure effective delivery of the new curriculum, we must be clear about those things that we wish to value and measure across the entire system – in relation to learners and their teachers, schools and their leaders and the range of partners who play key roles in the system.

In addition to valuing and measuring new aspects of learning, we are committed to ensuring that we will also value schools that are collaborative and supportive of each other. This is needed so that Wales can move ahead as a community of educators to achieve great things for our young people.

Through the use of evidence-based approaches and co-construction, we will create a coherent assessment and evaluation framework that will ensure effective accountabilities across the education system so that all partners play their full part in delivering the best for our learners and their teachers. Working with key partners we will ensure that smaller and rural schools are better supported to play their full part in a collaborative self-improving school system.

So far, we have:

- developed a regional model for school improvement, based on many of the principles of a self-improving system, which is now enabling us to plan together for the new curriculum
- strengthened the notion of a self-improving system through the role of schools in providing leadership for others, e.g. the Pioneer Network, the National School Categorisation System with its focus on support, the emerging ITE partnerships, the growing number of schools committed to developing as learning organisations, and many initiatives designed to share subject or leadership expertise
- significantly engaged in policy co-construction across the Welsh education system three-tier model (see model on page 10), with a growing, shared understanding between the three tiers – Welsh Government, local authorities/regional services and other partners, and schools.

The self-improving system

A self-improving system is one in which school leaders and teachers have the skills, capacity and commitment to continually learn and improve their practice so that every child achieves their potential and is prepared for life in an increasingly complex world.

Over recent years schools have become better at sharing their best practice for the benefit of all learners. Our Welsh self-improving system needs every professional and institution to become aware of their own strengths and areas for improvement, and with this knowledge seek support for their own improvement and offer support for others to improve.

It is our ambition and expectation that all parts of the education system become participants in this model, so that strengths are spread across the system, and areas for improvement are tackled through peer engagement and support.

In achieving this we will ensure that our education professionals can thrive in a supportive and collaborative environment to raise standards and ensure that every young person can fulfill their potential.

During the period until 2021, we will:

- develop revised assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements which focus on the key work of schools and all other tiers in the system to deliver the best for all learners; this will underpin a national approach to the self-improving system, so that all schools grow as learning organisations and are encouraged to share their expertise for the benefit of all learners, including through federations
- build the knowledge, expertise and research base of the self-improving system by supporting collaborations within and between schools, regional consortia and higher education institutions and committing to sharing research evidence and effective practice across the system
- increase university–school engagement beyond ITE and build on their role in supporting a research-engaged profession; working with higher education institutions, we expect to build on the success of programmes such as those in modern foreign languages, taking the Student Mentoring Project into other disciplines
- improve outcomes for sixth-form learners, those in PRUs and those EOTAS by promoting the extension of the self-improving model to those settings
- develop a national approach to small and rural schools within the self-improving system.

To assess progress in this area, we will:

- gather evidence of whole-system improvement through agreed measures
- monitor the deepening of collaborations between schools and their partners
- measure the growth of educational research in Wales to better support collaborations
- continue to be open to external advice and scrutiny across the whole system.

To action our plan, we will do the following.

• Celebrate our successes with activities such as the annual Professional Teaching Awards Cymru.	From May 2017
• Respond to Qualifications Wales' review of GCSE early entry, and take action where appropriate. • Agree transitional assessment and evaluation arrangements with schools in order to support deeper collaborations between schools and secure the raising of standards for all learners. • Issue support and guidance and an incentive for schools to federate. • Consult on amendments to the School Organisation Code to ensure that all viable options, including federation, have been considered before closing a small or rural school. • Introduce a small and rural school grant to support greater collaboration between schools.	During autumn 2017
• Agree a longer-term model of assessment and evaluation for schools that will clearly identify what schools are accountable for and encourage all schools to pursue the success of all learners in our changing context.	By summer 2018
• Publish an assessment and evaluation framework for the entire education system, showing clearly what each component part of the system is responsible for, ensuring that responsibilities are appropriately distributed and accountabilities clearly identified in order to embed collaboration and raise standards for all of our learners. • Publish the Wales Education Report Card.	During autumn 2018

For the first time in a generation, educators right across our system are working together to craft a new and innovative vision for our schools.

Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21

Every child should be taught in a school system that sets high expectations for all our learners and teachers.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21 will be implemented in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 five principles of working.

- **Long-term:** This is a long-term approach to reforming education in Wales. The short-term needs of the education system will continually be balanced against the longer-term needs as outlined in this plan.
- **Prevention:** We will seek to maintain an emphasis on prevention, in terms of early interventions with children to reduce the risks of difficulties in later life. Approaches such as those designed to reduce the risks associated with adverse childhood experiences and those to improve the quality of a child's first thousand days (from conception to age two) will underpin our approaches to well-being in an effort to minimise the risks of escalation of childhood challenges into significant adult and inter-generational difficulties for those children in later life.
- **Integration:** The plan will see key partnerships emerging which show an unprecedented level of integration across the system. Local authorities, regional services, higher education institutions, groups of schools and health professionals are increasingly active participants in planning as we seek to develop cross-sectoral approaches to the implementation of the plan.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration is already being seen with extensive joint working on design and implementation plans. The plan commits us to promoting transformation through collaborative innovation and system-wide improvement for the benefit of all learners.
- **Involvement:** We have involved and will continue to involve partners with an interest in our reform agenda. We also recognise the need for continued support from effective practitioners and other expert input. Schools and the teaching profession are at the heart of planning and will be the deliverers of the transformation and they will work to reflect the diversity of the areas in which they operate.

It is our collective responsibility to inspire, engage and motivate the next generation of learners as we bid to develop a brighter, more prosperous Wales.

Well-being objectives

This document, *Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21,* will seek to support all well-being objectives.

- Support people and businesses to drive prosperity.
- Tackle regional inequality and promote fair work.
- Drive sustainable growth and combat climate change.
- Deliver quality health and care services fit for the future.
- Promote good health and well-being for everyone.
- Build healthier communities and better environments.
- Support young people to make the most of their potential.
- Build ambition and encourage learning for life.
- Equip everyone with the right skills for a changing world.
- Build resilient communities, culture, and language.
- Deliver modern and connected infrastructure.
- Promote and protect Wales' place in the world.

Conclusion

Prosperity for All: the national strategy sets out our long-term aim to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.

“There is no doubt that Wales, and the world, face significant challenges and rapid change. Huge economic and technological transformation necessitates that our education system can’t stand still. Doing nothing is simply not an option.

Taken together, our reforms will meet these challenges and deliver on the high expectations we all share for our young people. These are exciting times for education in Wales.

For the first time in a generation, educators right across our system are working together to craft a new and innovative vision for our schools. We have to grasp with both hands the opportunity to create something that will be the envy of the world. It is a plan that can help us provide a school system that will instill in our learners an ambition to make the most of their potential, lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning and achievement, and equipping them with the right skills for a changing world.

This renewed vision for education in Wales is built around our evolving curriculum, which empowers the education workforce to take a lead in driving us forward. We must be confident in setting high expectations, raising standards for all and reducing the attainment gap. By doing this, we will break down barriers and unleash the potential within all our learners and the education workforce.

We must not, however, forget the solid foundations on which our plan of action for our national mission is built. A lot has been achieved in a short space of time and we can be proud of how we are already reducing the attainment gap and of our renewed commitment to collaborate and innovate.

It is our collective responsibility to inspire, engage and motivate the next generation of learners as we bid to develop a brighter, more prosperous Wales. We live in challenging times and building a system of which we are all proud will not be easy. But our vision for education is unashamedly ambitious.

Our nation needs compassionate and well-rounded individuals who not only have a strong grasp of literacy, numeracy and digital competency, but also the critical thinking skills, imagination and resilience to excel in – and create – the new jobs of tomorrow. We must ensure that every voice is heard and no child is left behind.

There has never been a better time to be involved in Welsh education, but we all have to stand up and be counted. Now is the time to make a difference. Together we can achieve our national mission.”

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary
for Education

Further information

Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017) sets out the long-term aim to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.
gov.wales

Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales (2014) indicated the key areas of development from 2014, including the move towards the model of a self-improving system.
gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/qualified-for-life-an-educational-improvement-plan/?lang=en

A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life (2015) builds on Professor Graham Donaldson's proposals for a new curriculum and approaches to assessment for Wales, driven by four key purposes.
gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/151021-a-curriculum-for-wales-a-curriculum-for-life-en.pdf

Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales (2015) outlined Professor John Furlong's proposals for reforming ITE.
gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/teaching-tomorrows-teachers/?lang=en

Taking Wales Forward 2016–2021 (2016) sets out priorities to deliver an 'ambitious and learning' Wales along with priorities for delivery.
gov.wales/about/programme-for-government/?lang=en

National model for regional working outlines principles to transform school improvement in Wales.
gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en

The *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* sets out clear well-being goals for public services.
gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en

The *Progressive Agreement* outlines the agreement between the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Education where they agreed to work together to bring forward a number of ambitious and innovative proposals.
gov.wales/newsroom/firstminister/2016/160623-working-together-to-take-wales-forward/?lang=en