

Curriculum for Wales – Draft Progression Code

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by 16 July 2021 to

Curriculum Realisation Unit
Curriculum and Assessment Division
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: curriculumforwales@gov.wales

Respondent type (please select one from the following)

Child or young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer/business representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional body/interest group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools governor or member of school management committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary sector (community group, volunteer, self-help group, social or co-operative enterprise, religious, not for profit organisation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mainstream school practitioner (head, teacher, teaching assistant, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortium	<input type="checkbox"/>
EOTAS provider (PRU staff, independent school staff, other provider, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education (including universities/academic institutions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Further education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politician (Senedd member, county councillors, MP, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other respondent group not listed above, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lobbyist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a school, setting or organisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	As an individual
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a school/setting/organisation

Question 1 – How useful are the principles of progression for education practitioners in designing and developing their curriculum? And how might they be improved?

Building a Social Model Curriculum

We believe that this code includes a lot of positive elements that will positively affect learners with learning disabilities and neurodivergences. In particular, we are happy to see the strong focus on holistic development and seeing different areas of learning as connected. For children and young people with learning disabilities and neurodivergences school can be an alienating and scary experience. Being confronted with expectations that are based on typical development of neurotypical children can mean that children who do not quite fit the models feel that they are constantly failing and not living up to expectations.

According to the Improving Lives Strategy¹, “Recent data (January 2017 Pupil Level Annual School Census) detail 92,975 children with special educational needs in maintained schools without a statement and 12,602 SEN children in maintained schools with a statement. Therefore 105,577 (22.6%) of children have a special educational need out of 466,508 children. 4,727 children with SEN, with or without a statement, are in special schools.”

In 2016 there were 105,143 children with known additional learning needs in Welsh schools². This is just under a quarter of the children in Wales. It is important to point out that these were only the children who had known ALNs. While we cannot know how many people are neurodivergent we know that a significant number of children go through school with undiagnosed learning disabilities, learning difficulties and neurodivergences. We believe that because of this the Curriculum for Wales should put a much stronger focus on how understanding of disability issues informs teaching. This might, for example, include a more critical use of the concept of “additional learning needs” and an endorsement of the social model of disability. The term “additional learning needs” implies that there are “normal” learning needs and that everyone who struggles with the way things are being taught needs “additional” help. Rather, we believe it makes sense to understand learning needs as something individual and develop a way of learning in which everyone’s needs are met.

What does progression mean?

One thing that concerns us about this code is that it seems to understand progression as a linear concept. It makes reference to children with additional learning needs progressing at *different paces*, but it does not look at how children might *progress differently*. On page 6 of the code you write:

“While there may be particular threshold concepts that represent a significant shift in a learner’s understanding, these are not linked to specific ages, nor will they happen at the same time in different areas for individual learners. Learners with additional learning needs (ALN) will also progress at a rate individual to the learner and this may not correlate with the broad two to

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/learning-disability-improving-lives-programme-june-2018.pdf>

² [Pupils with special educational needs by major need and year, to January 2016 \(gov.wales\)](#)

three year progression step. Pace of progression should be evaluated by the professionals working with learners with ALN.”

Further down you write “A number of conceptual models of progression exist. No single model has been employed in the creation of the descriptions of learning. Instead, practitioners should be mindful of a variety of ways in which learners may progress at different points in the learning journey, and over different lengths of time, as they develop their curriculum.”

We believe that a more flexible approach to progression would mean not just accepting that learners might progress at different speeds but also that progression might look different for individual learners. School should nurture the different capabilities and strengths that learners have and make sure students feel empowered by their learning experiences instead of feeling disempowered by being measured against criteria that are unsuitable to them. Being inclusive towards learners with learning disabilities and neurodivergent learners means working out how their skills and potential can best be developed on an individual, person-centred basis. This might include progression along pre-selected criteria like in this code, but it also may mean people developing in different and unexpected ways. This code should reflect that.

Self-advocacy

On page 11 you write about the way that learners will progress in developing their social consciousness. You write that “Learners will progress from feelings of caring and respecting others to the capacity of advocacy on behalf of others”. We would like an acknowledgement here about the role of people advocating for themselves here too. People with a learning disability often do not get to have control over their own lives and decisions. School should encourage advocacy about learners' own rights as well as caring for others. On a related note, learners should be empowered to advocate for their own education to be accessible to them. They should be taught about their educational rights and the Equalities Act. We would like to see an acknowledgement of the learner's right to equal access in this code.

Question 2 – In terms of the overarching principles of progression, are these clear and accurate in setting out what it means for learners to progress in their learning, 3-16 across the whole curriculum?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

We have some concerns regarding the progression standards in language and communication:

On Page 11 you write:

“Languages, literature and communications

The descriptions of learning for Languages, Literacy and Communication Area are intended to reflect the pace and depth of learning in different contexts and have been developed based on a continuum or framework of progression in languages, starting with little or no language and working towards proficiency. (...). **Page12**

Progression in this Area is also seen in the production of language. As learners become more accomplished, they can adapt and manipulate language to communicate effectively to a range of different audiences. This allows learners to form and develop strong relationships and the confidence to use their voice in society.”

We would like to emphasise that disabled children may have different communication needs and should be accommodated in these. Learners should be encouraged to explore different forms of communication in order to find the forms that work best for them. This should be reflected in the guidance in that proficiency at language can mean different things for different people.

Question 3 - In terms of the principles of progression specific to each area of learning and experience, are these clear and accurate in setting out what is unique and distinct about progression, 3-16 within each area?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Question 4 – How well do the overarching principles and the principles specific to each area of learning and experience form a clear and coherent whole? Are the specific principles consistent with the overarching ones?

Question 5 – What further support could be provided to help practitioners develop their approach to progression and assessment as an integral part of their curriculum, in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales?

In “Curriculum for Wales: The journey to 2022³” you write about what you call the “Engagement Phase”. You state that this phase should include efforts to “develop all staff’s understanding of the principles and practice of person-centred planning in relation to learners with additional learning needs (ALN)”. We want to emphasise here the importance of this. All teachers need an understanding of disability issues and the social model of disability. This must include an awareness of the needs of neurodivergent and learning disabled students who have not been diagnosed and that all students deserve to have a person-centred learning environment in which they can develop according to their own needs and preferences.

Question 6 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the Curriculum for Wales Framework Progression Code would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

³ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-wales-the-journey-to-2022>

Question 7 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed Curriculum for Wales Framework Progression Code could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

Question 8 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

In our focus group with parents and teachers our participants were very clear that the curriculum can only ever be successful if the material circumstances in which the teaching is delivered are met. These are in particular:

Discrimination

Learners might be facing interlocking and complicated systems of disadvantage and discrimination. The Curriculum should include commitments to making schools free from discrimination of all kinds. Schools should also commit themselves to engaging with children and families from hard to reach communities. This, for example, means reaching out to communities and building connections. It also means working against bullying and prejudice within schools, both in terms of how it manifests in behaviour from other students and teachers.

Funding

Schools need to be adequately funded in order to be able to fully implement the curriculum.

Training

All teachers and teaching staff in schools need far more extensive training on disability and neurodiversity than they receive now. The training itself should be looked at to make sure that it is rights-based training that teaches about the social

model of disability and encourages teachers to make an inclusive learning environment the default, not something “additional.”

It is also important that teacher training itself becomes more inclusive. Teachers need to experience an inclusive environment themselves in order to be able to create one for others. Furthermore, having more disabled and neurodivergent teachers will also create a more inclusive environment for learners.

Staff/student ratios

Similar to the widening funding issues, it is of vital importance that there is actually sufficient staff to be able to implement the curriculum. It is also important that there is consistency in teaching and support staff. Children with learning disabilities and neurodivergent children need consistency in their relationships and it is important that teaching assistants and other support staff are offered good working conditions.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: