

**Welsh Government
Curriculum for Wales
Draft Statements of What Matters Code
16 July 2021**

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation on Curriculum for Wales: Draft Statements of What Matters Code
2. .NASUWT - The Teachers' Union, represents teachers and headteachers in Wales and across the United Kingdom.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT maintains that securing high outcomes for all children and young people means that action is needed to:
 - a. provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum experience fit for the 21st century;
 - b. ensure parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways and the cognitive, emotional, cultural, creative, ethical and social dimensions of learning;
 - c. require all state-funded schools and colleges to work together to secure a comprehensive curriculum entitlement for all 14 to 19 year-olds;
 - d. equip children and young people to be research-driven problem solvers;
 - e. extend entitlements for all children and young people to high-quality academic and vocational education, coupled with equality

- of access to high-quality, practical, hands-on, work-based learning opportunities;
- f. refocus the accountability system to reflect and support the expectation that all young people should remain in education and training until the age of 18;
 - g. restore the morale of the teaching profession by tackling poor employment practices, including workload, securing professional entitlements and respect for teachers, and refocusing the efforts of teachers and headteachers on their core responsibilities for teaching and leading teaching and learning;
 - h. establish a Masters-level profession and raise the pay of teachers in recognition of the increased knowledge and skills that they bring to the job; and
 - i. ensure access to high-quality professional development for all teachers throughout their careers.¹
4. It is clear that in many respects, the current curriculum framework does not meet these important tests. For this reason, the NASUWT supported the Welsh Government's decision to commission a fundamental review of curriculum and assessment arrangements.
5. In general, the report of the review of the curriculum undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson, *Successful Futures*, set out a coherent and rational basis for the future development of the curriculum framework in Wales.
6. However, in a range of critical respects, the proposals for the curriculum published by the Welsh Government have failed to reflect many of the key principles articulated in *Successful Futures*.
7. In particular, the recommendation that the curriculum should be developed by the workforce, for the workforce, has not been given practical effect. The exclusion of the voice of the profession has resulted

¹ NASUWT (2013). *Maintaining world class schools*. NASUWT; Birmingham.

in a proposed curriculum model that would, if implemented, generate significant workload burdens for teachers and undermine the ability of schools to secure for all children and young people their entitlement to a broad and balanced range of learning experiences.

8. The NASUWT continues to have profound concerns about current proposals for curricula reform. These concerns relate to critical aspects of the structure and content of the curriculum; its implications for the qualifications system and assessment practice; and the intention to proceed with implementation of the curriculum without a coherent evaluation of its workforce and resource requirements.
9. The NASUWT considers that the current health crisis and the recovery phase that will be necessary is the wrong time to initiate wholesale changes to, not only, the curriculum but also the accountability and assessment framework aligned to it. Space is needed to allow teachers and schools to recover from this time of extreme stress. Progressing at this time could lead to irretrievable mistakes being made.
10. The Union has also called on the Welsh Government to delay the implementation of the new curriculum in the face of the disruption to schools and the education system, stemming from the health emergency owing to the pandemic of COVID-19.
11. Teachers and teaching will remain disrupted for the foreseeable future, and teachers and schools have learnt a whole new way of working online and have poured their efforts into secure blended learning opportunities for pupils. The NASUWT considers that it is entirely unreasonable to place additional burdens on teachers at this time
12. The Union remains clear that in these circumstances, it would not be appropriate to proceed with implementation of the proposed curriculum by the start of the academic year 2022/23.

13. The NASUWT is therefore pleased by the Education Minister's recent decision to postpone the planned roll out of the New Curriculum for Year 7s in September 2022. This was the right decision given that the teaching profession continues to operate at full capacity providing education in the midst of a global pandemic. The Union remains concerned however at the Welsh Government's decision to retain the 2022 roll-out date for primary schools and the decision to require the New Curriculum for Year 7 and 8 to be introduced simultaneously in 2023.
14. The NASUWT is also very concerned regarding the offer of greater "flexibility" to secondary schools in deciding for themselves whether to delay the introduction of the new curriculum. The Union maintains that this is much too vague and leaves too much to the determination of individual school leaders. We are concerned some schools will choose to plough on regardless of whether they are ready for these changes.
15. "This is not helped by the decision to make schools which do choose to delay roll out the new curriculum to both years 7 and 8 next year.
16. "A universal and unified approach by the Welsh Government would have helped avoid a rushed and disjointed patchwork approach to the new curriculum which risks jeopardising its success, pushing up workload and stress for teachers and sowing confusion for pupils and parents."

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

17. The following comments must be read in the context that the NASUWT continued concerns, set out above, regarding the delay in the implementation of the new curriculum and the associated assessment and accountability frameworks to allow for a period of sustained recovery from the crippling effects of the pandemic.
18. The NASUWT's response is informed directly by serving teacher and headteacher members and also by the work of its representative

committees and consultative structures, made up of practising teachers and school leaders working in the education system.

Question 1 – In response to feedback on the draft Curriculum for Wales guidance in 2019 the statements of what matters are being made mandatory through the development of this Code. Do the 27 statements as refined through this draft Code sum up the priorities for children and young people’s learning throughout the continuum for 3 to 16 year olds?

Supporting comments

The NASUWT maintains that the statements speak to 'What Matters' but this is a poor Code to work from as is stated in the NASUWT response to Q2.

Question 2 – The statements of what matters will become the key organising curriculum structures for each area of learning and experience. Are the amended statements clear and accessible, providing understanding of the breadth for curriculum development?

Supporting comments

The NASUWT considers that this is not a working documents. There is a lack of clarity and accessibility. The statements are also structured differently. A Humanities teacher may be able to find some direction in the final paragraph of each statement but this is not true of teachers in the other AoLEs which have their own styles.

Question 3 – The statements of what matters have been refined following consideration of issues as part of the passage of associated legislation through the Senedd in 2020/21.

3a – Are the amendments to statements in respect of Welsh histories and diversity suitably clear?

In Humanities teachers will struggle to understand what is required of them in the teaching of Welsh History. There is a welcome development of the issue of diversity but there seems to be a clumsy attempt to combine this with Welsh History.

3b – Are the amendments to statements in respect of the climate emergency suitably clear?

The NASUWT accepts that these are suitable

3c – Are the amendments to statements suitably clear to ensure relevance for the full range of languages that learners may encounter?

The NASUWT are unclear as to whether there is any prospective workload or staffing implications that would stem from the amendments to the statements but remains concerned at the potential impact

The Union considers that one of the most important issues will be is not the What Matters statements in and of themselves, but rather how the qualifications, assessments and examinations that follow, interpret the statements. This will inevitably bring challenges regarding delivery, particularly with the range of complex learners.

Question 4 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the Statements of What Matters 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

It is essential that both languages of Wales are given parity so as not to disadvantage learners in either medium.

Historically, there have been issues with parity of resources. There has been a delay in provision of Welsh-language text books in many subjects which has disadvantaged learners who study in their native language. In turn, this has created a workload burden on teachers who have to improvise

to fill in these gaps so that the learners do not suffer because of it.
NASUWT would expect this oft-repeated error not occur again.

Question 5 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed Statements of What Matters 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

See answer to question 4

Question 6 – 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.

The NASUWT has no further comment.



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For further information on the Union's response contact:

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