

Curriculum for Wales

Revised Areas of Learning (Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development) and programmes of study (English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics) – Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4

Questions applicable to all proposals

Skills

Question 1 – One way of presenting the additional expectation statements from the Areas of Learning (AoL) and programmes of study (PoS) is to incorporate them directly with the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) statements. This has been done for the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development Areas of Learning and the mathematics programme of study.

Do you agree?

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

NDCS Cymru welcomes the intention to incorporate expectation statements from the AoL and PoS directly with the LNF statements. NDCS Cymru believes this clear developmental (year-on-year) approach is particularly helpful to deaf children especially in the areas of language, literacy and communication skills in the Foundation Phase (and beyond) as the year-on-year breakdown in both structures:

- Should help teachers to identify early any lag in a deaf child's language development and then to identify the next step in their teaching programme. We have anecdotal evidence from Teachers of the Deaf that since the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme there has been some improvement in speech levels at school entry, but despite this improvement too many deaf children are still starting school at 5 with language below the level expected for their age group.
- Should help teachers with their ongoing monitoring of deaf children's progress in language as the initial disadvantage identified above can continue throughout their school career. NDCS Cymru has been concerned for some years that there is a significant attainment gap at every Key Stage between deaf pupils and their hearing peers (with no additional learning needs).

The latest set of data from the Welsh Government Schools Statistics Branch indicates that the gap had narrowed slightly in 2013, but it is a great concern that the gap still exists. NDCS Cymru is particularly concerned that there is a 27% relative gap in attainment in the number achieving A*-C in English/Welsh, Maths and Science at GCSE. Deafness is not a learning disability in itself and there is no reason why deaf pupils, with the appropriate level of support, should not reach the same attainment levels as hearing pupils. The full set of data for 2013 can be seen here: http://www.ndcs.org.uk/about_us/campaign_with_us/wales/close_the_gap/attainment_data_2013.html

Question 2 – An alternative way of presenting is to place the year-on-year skills for English and Welsh (first language) as a discrete section to follow the LNF section.

Do you agree?

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

NDCS Cymru's main concern lies with being able to identify any gaps between deaf pupils and their peers and then to track their progress (see response to question 1 above). This would be possible with either arrangement, but perhaps slightly easier with the integrated approach described in 1 above.

Range

Question 3 – Stakeholders have indicated that if the Range section from the current national curriculum Orders was to be dissected into year-on-year expectations, this could lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and to more prescription.

It is proposed that the current Range statements will be renamed 'Range of experiences' to describe the range of content and contexts that learners should experience. Do you agree?

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

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Progression

Question 4 – Do you agree there is clear progression between each year group and between each key stage for the AoL and PoS? If not, please suggest suitable alternatives.

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

NDCS Cymru welcomes the clear progression between each year group and between each key stage for the AoL and PoS. For the reasons outlined above in response to question 1, it is of vital importance that the progress of deaf pupils is tracked and monitored closely to enable teachers to identify exactly what is known / mastered by the child while also identifying the next steps. It will also enable early identification of any emerging issues and help narrow the attainment gap between deaf and hearing pupils.

While NDCS Cymru welcomes the emphasis on monitoring each pupil’s progression, we would like to highlight the importance of ensuring that this focus does not perpetuate a culture of low-expectation for a pupil. The term ALN encompasses children who, although they require support to access the curriculum, are capable of achieving on a par with their peers. This is especially true in the case of deaf children, many of whom have no other learning needs. There is no reason why a deaf child who has the appropriate support cannot progress and achieve to the same level, or higher, than his/her hearing peers. While progression in the development of such a pupil’s literacy and numeracy skills should be welcomed, the emphasis should be on helping the pupil to reach his/her potential, which should be the age group target level, or higher.

Question 5 – Do you agree the expectations for year-on-year expectations are pitched correctly? If not, please explain why and suggest alternatives.

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

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Question 6 – Do you agree the statements for ‘Range of experiences’ are pitched and worded correctly? If not, please explain why and suggest alternatives.

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

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Question 7 – Do you agree the right skills are emphasised? Do you think any have been missed?

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

NDCS particularly welcomes the fact that oracy across the curriculum is included at Foundation Phase and at all Key Stages as this can be a particularly challenging aspect / skill for deaf pupils and can determine their learning outcomes – hence the importance of focussing on it at all stages.
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Question 8 – Do you agree that the language used in the AoL/PoS is precise enough? If not, please give specific examples of changes needed.

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

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Question 9 – What additional support/training will practitioners in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools need to implement the new PoS and to develop strong bi-literacy skills? Please qualify and quantify this.

NDCS Cymru is clear that practitioners in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools (with deaf children on roll) will require specific training to understand the particular challenges facing any deaf pupils who communicate either partially or completely using BSL so that those deaf pupils have **equality of access** to the curriculum. Training and support should include the following aspects:

- The fact that BSL is a language in its own right with its own grammatical structure which differs from both Welsh and English. Deaf pupils in Welsh medium education who use BSL are therefore likely to be using three languages.
- The importance of working memory. Auditory / verbal memory is a main component of working memory and so deaf children may experience challenges in developing their working memory, which will, in turn, have an effect on the development of both literacy and numeracy skills.
- Processing time. Related to the above, deaf children often need longer processing time when, for example, responding to questions and or working out problems in maths. For deaf children using three languages this can be particularly challenging.
- The role of the communication support worker. Some deaf children, particularly those who use sign, may have a Communication Support Worker. While it remains the teacher's responsibility to teach the child literacy skills, it is important that the teacher works closely with the Communication Support Worker and that lesson plans are shared in advance to ensure the teaching is accessible to the deaf child.

Questions applicable to Foundation Phase

Foundation Phase philosophy

Question 10 – It is proposed that there will be an overarching Foundation Phase pedagogy range of statements at the beginning of all AoL to highlight the importance of Foundation Phase philosophy. Do you agree with this proposal? If not, please explain why and suggest alternatives.

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

Nursery

Question 11 – It is proposed that the skills for Nursery, but not related to the AoL, will become a non-statutory LNF for this age group. Do you agree with the proposal set out above?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Implications for learners with additional learning needs (ALN)

Question 12 – It is proposed that in order to ensure an appropriate progression is maintained for learners with ALN (after incorporating the skills for very young children – Nursery – into the LNF), minor modifications will be made to C steps and B steps statements in the Numeracy component of the LNF. Do you agree? If not, please suggest a suitable alternative.

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

NDCS Cymru asks that it be noted that the term ALN encompasses children who, although they require support to access the curriculum, are capable of achieving on a par with their peers. It is important to ensure that these pupils are given the necessary support not just to progress, but ultimately to reach their full potential.

As outlined above, deafness is not a learning disability therefore it should be expected that deaf pupils, with no additional learning needs, achieve similar educational outcomes to their hearing peers with no additional learning needs. Care should be taken not to lower expectations with regard to the progression and attainment of deaf pupils by assuming that deaf pupils cannot achieve the same age-related expectations as their hearing peers.

While progression in the development of such a pupil's literacy and numeracy skills should be welcomed, the emphasis should be on helping the pupil to reach his/her potential, which should be the age group target level, or higher.

Question 13 – In the AoL we follow the LNF approach by using year-on-year expectation statements across the Foundation Phase. Is this the right approach? If not, please suggest a suitable alternative.

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

NDCS Cymru welcomes this approach to use expectation statements across the Foundation Phase. Such an approach will make it easier to identify any developmental gaps in literacy, numeracy and oracy in deaf pupils enabling teachers to put in place remedial measures and support at the earliest possible stage.

Question 14 – 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.

NDCS Cymru notes that the Welsh Government intends to collect and analyse data from the reading and numeracy tests on a national basis. We would urge that, as part of this analysis, the Welsh Government publishes the test results by ALN type. This would help to monitor whether the needs of vulnerable groups of learners, such as deaf pupils, are broadly being met and whether gaps in attainment between deaf children and hearing peers of similar ability are being closed. Publishing the data in this way would also complement the Welsh Government's publication of Key Stage attainment levels by ALN type

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: