

Consultation on proposals for revised curriculum and assessment arrangements for Wales

Consultation response form

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Organisation (if applicable): National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Cymru

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Responses should be returned by **17 January 2014** to

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Legislation Team
Corporate Services Division
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Freepost NAT 8910
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: CurriculumforWales@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

Question 1 – Do you agree that the new Areas of Learning/programmes of study for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development in the Foundation Phase, and English, Welsh and mathematics in Key Stages 2–4 should be based on year-on-year expectations to complement the LNF?

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

NDCS Cymru agrees that it is absolutely critical that the areas of learning programmes of study should reflect / be based on the expectations in the LNF if educational standards are to be improved as this will help teachers to make the most of the information gained from the LNF.

In addition, 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 hear 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. Data provided by the Welsh Government’s School Statistics Branch in May 2013 shows that there is a significant gap in attainment at every Key Stage between deaf pupils (with no secondary additional educational needs) and their hearing peers. NDCS Cymru is particularly concerned that the attainment gap at Key Stage 4 (GCSE), which had previously narrowed, has again widened. In 2012 there was a relative gap of 26% between deaf pupils who achieved 5 A*- C at GCSE and their hearing peers. The full set of data can be seen here:
http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/education_data_in.html.....**

Question 2 – Do you agree that the LNF should be extended to include emergent literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase for 3 to

4-year-olds?

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

NDCS Cymru would strongly agree that the LNF should be extended to include emergent literacy (including oracy, writing and reading). This level of detail is required to ensure the effective teaching of deaf children at this critical stage in their language and literacy development – it provides a developmental framework that helps practitioners and teachers to identify exactly what is known / mastered by the child while also identifying the next steps..

Question 3 – Do you agree in principle that ‘wider skills’ should become statutory elements of the national curriculum?

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

NDCS recognises the advantages, *in principle*, for including ‘wider skills’ as statutory elements of the national curriculum and can identify benefits for deaf children. However, many deaf children would require direct teaching in these areas as most of these ‘wider skills’ require relatively sophisticated language, as well as good working and auditory memories and these are areas that can prove challenging to many deaf children.

Further, NDCS Cymru would want reassurance that the curriculum was not going to be overloaded / overcrowded especially in the later Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, where all children are learning many new skills. There is a danger that some children, including many deaf children (who often need longer processing time and therefore learning time), may not have sufficient time to master all of the new skills that are being introduced to them.

Question 4 – Do you agree that these skills should be critical thinking and problem solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation, personal effectiveness and digital literacy?

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

NDCS believes the suggested skills would seem appropriate, while recognising that they could be quite challenging for many deaf children – please see response to question 3 above.

Question 5 – Do you agree that at the end of each phase/stage of education schools should report progress in Language, Literacy and Communication Skills/Mathematical Development or English, Welsh and mathematics – including literacy and numeracy as defined by the LNF, to learners, parents/carers and the Welsh Government?

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

NDCS (Cymru) agrees strongly that the detailed reporting based on progress on the LNF (a meaningful narrative report) and on performance in the annual reading and numeracy tests should certainly be given to *parents and learners* each year, which, at certain points, would include the end of a phase / stage of education.

NDCS (Cymru) also strongly agrees that the Welsh government should receive the results of the annual reading and numeracy tests each year and which, for some year groups, would be the end of a stage / phase.

However, NDCS (Cymru) does not feel there is enough compelling information in the current document to make an informed judgement about providing end of phase / stage summative progress information to the Welsh Government that goes beyond the results of the annual reading and numeracy tests.

NDCS (Cymru) acknowledges the wish to avoid ‘tests’ at the end of a phase / stage (‘there was little appetite for the reintroduction of end of stage tests’ page 19’), but notes that the consultation document states (page 21) that there will be ‘a requirement to undertake assessments at the end of each phase / key stage.’ NDCS (Cymru) accepts that there are pilot approaches currently being undertaken, but would have concerns if an approach based on the exemplar given on page 37 was adopted for the following reasons:

NDCS (Cymru) acknowledges the importance of the cross curricular nature of literacy and numeracy; however, the performance of some deaf children can be significantly lower in numeracy and literacy when they are concentrating (and therefore using much of their available working memory) on the demands of the particular subject being pursued at that time, e.g. science, history etc. It is not clear how, or if, such discrepancies in performance would be resolved,

recorded, acknowledged

NDCS (Cymru) find it unclear whether or not there is any 'weighting' attributed to the different elements within the aspects, e.g. in oracy, the cell on the table for speaking is much bigger than that for listening. Similarly, in writing, meaning and purposes is a much bigger area than language. If this discrepancy in area is significant and if it does represent weighting, NDCS (Cymru) would like to know the rationale behind it.

NDCS (Cymru) can see the value of assessing the individual elements within each aspect and ascribing them an appropriate colour (albeit with the reservations for deaf children given above) but cannot see any value of assigning a final colour rating to the overall aspect – seems a somewhat crude and unhelpful step.

Question 6 – Do you agree that schools should continue to undertake and report an end of phase assessment of Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity?

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

NDCS (Cymru) understands that this assessment would take place at the end of the Foundation Phase and so would support its continuation as it would ensure that these topics are given adequate focus and attention within this phase of education and also provide early identification of any children (and this might well include deaf children for the reasons given below) who might not be progressing as expected.

These topics are particularly important for deaf children as it is well documented that language delay can adversely affect the development and understanding of these topics and as noted above too many deaf children are still experiencing language delay in the Foundation Phase and beyond. Further, these topics at this age are also building the base for resilience and self esteem that is so important for good mental health; but currently it is estimated that deaf children have a higher prevalence of mental health problems than their hearing peers (40% compared to 25% of their hearing peers.¹)

Question 7 – Do you agree that rich learning tasks should be included as part of an overall end of Key Stage 2 assessment model?

¹ Department of Health and National Institute of Health (2005) 'Towards Equity and Access'

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

NDCS (Cymru) understands the rationale for introducing such tasks and supports them in principle, especially if they are used as a discrete part of a description of a child's progress.

NDCS (Cymru) would not want them to become part of one overall judgement of progress in a particular subject area as some deaf children could find these tasks particularly challenging due to the load on their working memory and their slower auditory processing speeds - their reading, writing, spelling skills can also deteriorate when they are focussing on another skill such as problem solving.

Question 8 – Do you agree with the proposals that at Key Stage 3 we retain the requirement to report to the Welsh Government an end of Key Stage 3 summative assessment of progress in the new English, Welsh and mathematics programmes of study, science and Welsh second language and remove the requirement to report to Welsh Government an end of Key Stage 3 assessment of progress in other statutory foundation subjects?

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

NDCS (Cymru) would certainly want to retain the requirements to report to the Welsh Government an end of Key Stage 3 summative assessment of progress in the new English, Welsh and mathematics programmes of study, science and Welsh second language so that the progress of deaf children in these important subjects can be monitored. However, NDCS (Cymru) has no strong views about whether or not the other statutory foundation subjects should be included.

NDCS (Cymru) would ask that the reporting of such assessments should be by specific special educational need and / or disability (e.g. language and communication; deaf; visually impaired etc) rather than through one generic SEN category.

Question 9 – Subject to the outcome of this consultation, do you agree with the proposed timetable for introduction for changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales?

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

NDCS (Cymru) can make no judgement on this as a successful implementation will depend on all the schools feeling confident about its delivery.

Question 10 – 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.

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: