
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

Enw / Name:	Meilyr Rowlands
Rôl / Role:	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
E-bost / Email:	ChiefInspector@estyn.gov.uk
Rhif Ffôn / Tel No:	02920 446 446
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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

INTRODUCTION

Estyn support providing additional time for Professional Learning for the new curriculum. Given the scale and breadth of the reform, Estyn agrees that allocating additional time for schools to focus on the professional learning of teachers and support staff to implement the new curriculum is the key to its success. Additional time would enable schools to collaborate further with Welsh Government, regional consortia and other partners in preparing for the new curriculum. Providing additional time for professional learning would encourage schools to collaborate with one another and also provide time for staff within schools to come together.

In a period of such innovation in education where the key priorities of education reform in Wales include:

- Curriculum design and development
- Assessment
- Leadership
- ALN transformation
- The Welsh Language
- Digital Competency Framework
- Accountability

Time to plan, reflect and implement is imperative if the national mission for education in Wales is to succeed. Estyn welcomes the Welsh Government's recent commitment¹ to develop a *National Learning Approach to Professional Learning*². This announcement recognises the crucial role professional development of our teaching workforce will play in securing curriculum transformation.

The new National Approach to Professional Learning sets out an ambitious, high-level framework for teachers' professional development and focuses on developing:

- Individual Professional Learning
- Schools as Learning Organisations
- A Professional Learning Blend
- Collaborative Networks
- Professional Teaching and Leadership Standards
- Pedagogy for Professional Learning
- The Professional Learning Offer
- Accreditation/Recognition.

There is a need to ensure that the Professional Learning model is anchored firmly to the development of the Curriculum for Wales.

¹ National Assembly for Wales (2018) *Statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education: Valuing our Teachers – Investing in their Excellence*. [html] Available online at: <http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5363#A46717> Accessed on: 20/11/2018

² Welsh Government (2018) *National Approach to Professional Learning* [.pdf] Available online at: https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-11/national-approach-to-professional-learning-napl-model-a4_1.pdf Accessed on: 19/11/2018

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do you think an additional INSET day is necessary to prepare for the new curriculum?

Yes. Our inspection and other evidence suggests that a few primary and a very few secondary schools have started to embed the concepts of Successful Futures across their curriculum. Overall, a small minority of secondary schools and around half of primary schools are beginning to trial a few new ways of working, in line with the recommendations in Successful Futures. In order to support more schools to prepare for the new curriculum, pedagogy and assessment arrangements, it would be helpful if the professional learning offer was now tailored more towards meeting the needs of and addressing the different starting points of individual providers. This would support schools, whatever their state of readiness, to start to prepare for the creation of a new curriculum. Bringing practitioners together locally, regionally and nationally to develop a common understanding of the key principles of the new Areas of Learning is key to ensuring clarity and consistency across Wales in planning an innovative curriculum.

Question 2: Do you think one additional INSET day per year for three years will be sufficient additional resource to help preparations for the new curriculum?

One additional INSET day alone is not enough time to tackle the volume of change facing schools in Wales. Although the challenges for primary and secondary schools to deliver the new curriculum are different, a challenge for both sectors will be to ensure the smooth transition for pupils in their learning experiences across phases so as to build on pupils' prior learning. Cluster working on a local or regional level will be important to enable planning and to provide opportunities to upskill teachers in pedagogical practices. There is scope to review the proposed arrangements after the first year to evaluate whether the additional INSET day is sufficient.

As this additional INSET day is intended to focus on professional learning to support the implementation of the new curriculum, it will be essential that there are clear guidelines on in the intended outcomes expected. Clear guidance to help schools monitor and evaluate the impact of the additional INSET day on pupils' performance will be fundamental. One of the challenges for schools will be how this INSET day links closely with other professional learning within the school. Our thematic report on *Statutory INSET in schools*³ identified that the characteristics of effective organisation and delivery of INSET days include:

- using the expertise of staff to provide in-house training, which helps to build and sustain capacity for improvement;
- ensuring that training provided by external organisations and experts is carefully tailored to the specific needs of the school;
- using approaches for training sessions that involve staff actively, such as seminars, workshops and demonstration lessons;
- collaborating with other schools so that staff have opportunities to benefit from sharing experiences, expertise and good practice; and
- seeking ways to involve learning support staff in INSET training

³ Estyn (2013) *Statutory INSET in schools*. [.pdf] Available online at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Statutory%20INSET%20in%20schools%20-%20June%202013.pdf> Accessed on: 28/03/2019

Piecemeal 'twilight' sessions would not support an integrated approach to curriculum reform, and the need for a whole day session should be clearly specified in the set criteria. Building incrementally on the successes of the first year of additional professional learning is important when planning a cohesive approach to reform.

Question 3: How many years should the additional INSET days be available for?

For at least three years and should be reviewed thereafter. With the publication of the draft curriculum in 2019, the final curriculum in 2020, and roll out statutory from 2022, schools are in a period of transition from current arrangements to introducing the new curriculum. The vision for a transformational curriculum, set out by *Successful Futures*, is far-reaching. The majority of pioneer schools have contributed over-and-above expectations over extensive periods of time: involving most or all staff members in the school in different ways, trialling different methodologies with pupils, sharing their practice and discussions on Hwb, and bringing their findings back for discussion to share ideas. For the remaining schools, the challenge to plan, co-construct and explore different methodologies with cluster schools remains a further challenge and raises a case to extend the amount of time which is allocated for professional learning. The effectiveness of pioneer schools in supporting partner schools varies considerably. Evaluating the impact of the additional INSET day and the impact on all new curricular developments on pupil progress after the first year of implementation will inform all parties of the key messages learnt and the areas which need further development.

Question 4: What do you think about how INSET days are currently used?

Our thematic report *Statutory INSET in schools*³ gave clear messages about how INSET days are used effectively in schools. The recommendations in this report are still relevant. In summary, INSET impacts on school improvement and pupils' standards, most effectively when:

- the dedicated training time for staff is used fully and is focused clearly on school and national priorities;
- it forms an integral part of the wider CPD programme for staff;
- it is incorporated with school improvement planning;
- the training is used to bring about significant changes in practice;
- staff update their professional knowledge and skills;
- staff broaden and enrich their teaching and leadership skills;
- there is support for and challenge to the way staff work;
- the dissemination of good practice is shared within and between schools;
- there are opportunities for schools to collaborate as professional learning communities and network with others; and
- staff gain greater job satisfaction as a result of the training.

However, our thematic report on statutory INSET days found:

"a small minority of schools do not always use INSET time productively. Often, in these schools, the content of the INSET programme is not determined enough by the priorities of the school improvement plan, the individual needs of staff or national priorities. Inspection evidence suggests that in a few schools, INSET time is spent on inappropriate activities, such as organising classrooms and displays. In a very few schools, staff use INSET time at the beginning of each term for planning, which already has dedicated time set aside during the school week. Overall, in these schools, the INSET days do not contribute enough to continuous professional development or school improvement" (p.7)³.

“Over recent years, an increasing number of schools have worked together on joint INSET days, often leading to the development of professional learning communities. Where schools collaborate with others for INSET, staff benefit from sharing information and good practice. Collaboration between schools can provide substantial benefits for staff and pupils” (p.24)³.

Working locally and regionally, and within clusters gives schools a greater autonomy to ensure that there is a clearer and strategic approach to planning and schools do not work in silos. Therefore, in the most effective schools, statutory INSET days are an integral part of a larger strategy that involves other strands such as focused task groups, professional learning communities, and the production of guidance for wider dissemination among teachers and cluster schools.

Question 5: Do you think we should provide mandatory content for these additional days?

Overly-strict criteria would be contrary to the principle of innovation which is an important feature of the new reforms. As teachers are on different stages of the reform journey, caution should be taken in being too prescriptive.

However, as noted earlier, it would be useful to have clear guidelines about the intended outcomes of these additional days for the next three years. It would be important to expose all teachers to a nation-wide professional learning package, specifically targeted at providing them with the necessary learning to engage with the considerable shift that the new curriculum in Wales represents. There are fundamental themes which need to be explored on this additional closure date to support effective transition. These would include:

- Familiarisation with the content of all areas of learning
- Familiarisation with the progression steps and transition implications when planning in cluster meetings
- Audit current provision
- Analyse links between subjects in and across areas of learning
- Audit staff skills to deliver the new curriculum
- Consideration of new learning contexts
- Professional learning and changes to pedagogy
- Focus on interdisciplinary learning
- Curriculum organisation and curriculum time for each area of learning
- Blend of approaches in pedagogy e.g. formal, non –formal, informal
- Experiences, knowledge and skills in each AoLE when planning
- Holistic, integrated or interdisciplinary approach for each AoLE?
- How to create autonomy, flexibility and creativity to ensure authentic learning?
- Connecting experiences, knowledge and skills within and across AoLEs to bring rich opportunities
- Ensuring more seamless transition between each progression step for learners
- How to get a better balance between knowledge, acquisition and skills development through real-world learning experiences
- Integrate outdoor learning to enhance pupils’ learning experiences

Time to reflect, plan, and evaluate the effectiveness of the planning will enable teachers, in collaboration with their peers, to create authentic, valuable learning experiences for pupils. Key to the success of this new curriculum is building-in time for staff to evaluate and refine, to ensure that what is delivered has rigour and appropriate challenge.

Question 6: Do you think having a specified date for the National Professional Learning INSET day would be beneficial, or do you think a period should be specified (i.e. within a particular term or half term)?

A set date for the additional INSET would work practically on a regional rather than a national level as it would create a valuable network for schools to collaborate. This model would enable secondary and cluster primary schools to have valuable professional learning conversations about curriculum transition planning between the different progression steps. This would also be a worthwhile forum to discuss the experiences, knowledge and skills that are acquired cross-phase to ensure that the learning experiences are suitable across sectors. The opportunity to work regionally on a set INSET day would encourage Welsh-medium schools to share resources and practices, and pair innovation schools with those who were not previously pioneer schools to upskill and develop a professional dialogue.

Other comments

Supporting support staff in schools to work alongside classroom teachers on professional learning opportunities is also extremely important. They play a key role in developing resources and supporting a range of pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills key posted in the new curriculum. Our INSET thematic report noted that:

“The conditions of pay and service of learning support staff often vary between schools. As a result, not all of these staff attend INSET sessions with teachers. Only in a minority of schools are learning support staff included. In a few schools, support staff are involved in planning and leading INSET, which further develops and makes good use of their professional skills” (p.3)³.

This is an important aspect that should be considered when planning for additional professional learning opportunities for all staff.

[END]