This response is also available in Welsh.

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

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Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Pwnc / Subject:	**Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings**

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.

Response

Introduction

The 'Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings' document provides useful guidance and support for leaders and practitioners. We welcome the fact that the curriculum has been co-constructed with practitioners and supports high quality early education for our children. The 'team ethos' comes through well with the emphasis on valuing the work of practitioners in this very important education sector. The document builds on current good practice and links well to the Curriculum for Wales framework guidance and the four purposes. We are pleased that the 'Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings' document recognises that all children are unique and develop at different rates. As such, we value the emphasis placed on practitioners using the curriculum along with their knowledge and experience to meet the needs of individual children. The repeated references to effective pedagogy throughout the document are useful, as are the 'points for reflection' to support their professional development. The reflective questions are a useful way for practitioners to consider their own skills and to identify ways to improve their practice. This could be better replicated in other sections of the document to ensure greater consistency.

We feel that the document sets out clear expectations regarding pedagogy, observations and assessment and the role of the enabling adult. In addition, the links made between the curriculum and child development also provide practitioners with useful reference points to support their planning. For example, the information on schemas may be used by practitioners to observe and plan learning experiences to develop children's skills. We are pleased to see that the document refers to the link between the developmental pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences.

The document explains the purpose of the developmental pathways well and makes appropriate links with child development and 'Progression step 1' of the Curriculum for Wales. We agree that in general, the developmental pathways are based on key principles of child development which support the delivery of a developmentally appropriate curriculum for children of different ages, abilities and aptitudes. Overall, the developmental pathways set the scene at a developmentally appropriate level for the learning articulated in the 'what matters statements' for the six areas of learning. However, we consider that the intention in the Languages, Literacy and Communication what matters statement: "to equip learners, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world, with the ability to use Welsh, English and international languages" is not reflected strongly or explicitly enough. We feel that this could be strengthened further, such as by including direct reference to developing children's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language across all the pathways, and particularly the 'Belonging' and 'Communication' pathways. In addition, the Welsh version of the document doesn't read as easily as the English version and uses terminology which may not be as familiar to practitioners. A glossary or links to the Welsh Government's training documents for the sector may help practitioners to understand the true meaning of some technical terms or academic vocabulary.

We believe that the document, and in particular the section on cross-curricular skills, makes it clear that literacy, numeracy and digital competence are mandatory skills across the whole curriculum and should be firmly embedded in practice. The incremental statements which lead to progression step 1 are likely to be welcomed by practitioners. This will help them to understand how children develop specific skills over time and support their own planning. However, we feel that at times, further consideration should be given to strengthen incremental steps leading to progression step 1, particularly with regard to the Welsh language.

In general, the curriculum document does not place enough emphasis on developing the Welsh language or the Welsh dimension. It does not refer to important policies such as Welsh Government's vision for Cymraeg 2050 and how the curriculum would help realise its ambitious targets. We feel that the document does not give enough consideration of the different contexts of developing the Welsh language in all areas of Wales, for example the use of immersion techniques to develop the Welsh language skills of children from predominantly English-speaking homes. It could also be beneficial to provide opportunities for practitioners to reflect on their own Welsh language skills.

Consultation questions

Question 1 – Do you work in or support the delivery of education in a funded non-maintained nursery setting?

Yes	✓	No	☐

i)   If yes, in which type of setting/organisation do you work? (If no continue to iii below.)

Private day nursery	☐	Umbrella organisation	☐
Playgroup	☐	Third sector	☐
Pre-school	☐	Training provider	☐
Cylch Meithrin	☐	Government	☐
Local authority	☐	Regulatory body (includes inspectorate)	✓
Regional consortium	☐	Other (please specify)	☐

ii)   What is your primary role?

Leader	☐	Development officer	☐
Practitioner	☐	Policy development	☐
Early years advisory teacher (or equivalent)	☐	Member of management committee	☐
Inspector	✓	Volunteer	☐
Consultant	☐	Other (please specify)	☐

iii) If you do not work in or support the delivery of education in a funded non-maintained setting, in what capacity would you like to provide feedback?

Childminder	☐	Child or young person (under 18)	☐
Practitioner in a non-funded non-maintained setting	☐	Student/academic	☐
Parent/carer	☐	Other (please specify):	☐
Adult 18-plus (not a parent or carer)	☐		

iv) Are you providing feedback on behalf of an organisation or group?

Yes	✓	**No**	☐

If 'yes', please specify.

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Question 2 – To what extent will this curriculum support effective planning in funded non-maintained settings?

Very unsupportive	**Slightly unsupportive**	**Neither supportive nor unsupportive**	**Slightly supportive**	**Very supportive**
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We feel that the curriculum will support effective planning for provision that reflects the four purposes. We welcome the strong focus on the individuality and needs of each child, grounded in a thorough knowledge of child development, as a starting point for planning the curriculum. We feel that the document sets out clear expectations regarding pedagogy, observations and assessment and the role of the enabling adult. The developmental pathways encourage practitioners to plan provision that is appropriate for the learners' stage of development. Overall, we think this should support practitioners to plan to develop children's skills holistically in appropriate contexts. We feel that the incremental steps towards developing the cross curricular skills will help practitioners identify what they should plan to do to ensure that individual children make good progress.

Question 3 – Is it clear how the four purposes underpin the delivery of this curriculum?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We feel there is sufficient direct reference to the four purposes in the document. Throughout the document, suitable consideration is given to creating dispositions and supporting learning that will set learners on the path towards realising the four purposes. We do not consider that it is appropriate to make any more detailed reference to the four purposes at this stage.

Question 4 – Are the statements of what matters reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways?

Yes	✓	No	☐	Not sure	☐

Please explain your answer.

We consider that, in general, the statements of what matters are reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways, establishing a useful foundation for learners to explore the areas of learning as they progress. Overall, the developmental pathways set the scene at a developmentally appropriate level for the learning articulated in the 'what matters statements' for the six areas of learning and experience. However, we consider that the intention in the Languages, Literacy and Communication what matters statement: "to equip learners, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world, with the ability to use Welsh, English and international languages" is not reflected strongly or explicitly enough. We feel that this could be strengthened such as by including direct reference to developing children's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language across all the pathways, and particularly the 'Belonging' and 'Communication' pathways.

Question 5 – Can you see how delivery of this curriculum will ensure children's progression from the developmental pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1?

Yes	✓	No	☐	Not sure	☐

Please explain your answer.

We believe that the document makes the link between the developmental pathways and the descriptions of learning at progression step 1

clear. The delivery of this curriculum should ensure that children can be free to learn at their own pace and to consolidate their learning over time. We feel that the five developmental pathways link closely to the principles of child development as well as to the six areas of learning and experience. It would be beneficial to include more specific reference to the Welsh context in all developmental pathways. It is clear how the appropriate delivery of the curriculum should ensure progression from the developmental pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1 for all children.

Question 6 – Is the purpose of the developmental pathways clearly explained?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We think that the document explains the purpose of the developmental pathways well and makes appropriate links with child development and progression step 1 of the Curriculum for Wales. It is clear that the five developmental pathways are child-centred and are interdependent, allowing children to develop at their own pace. The importance of adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning to ensure purposeful progress through these developmental pathways is also clear in the document.

Question 7 – Is anything missing from the statements in the developmental pathways?

Yes	✓	**No**	☐	**Not sure**	☐

If 'yes', please specify.

It would be beneficial to include more specific reference to the Welsh context in all developmental pathways.

Question 8 – Are the developmental pathways inclusive for all children?

Yes	✓	**No**	☐	**Not sure**	☐

Please explain your answer.

We believe that the document makes it clear that the curriculum has been designed to support the holistic development of all children and recognises the variation in their entry points and their needs. The developmental pathways are based on key principles of child development which support the delivery of a

developmentally appropriate curriculum for children of different ages, abilities and aptitudes.	

Question 9 – Are the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences clearly explained?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	✓	☐

Please explain your answer.

We think that the role of the practitioner is clear and that the way that it is written reflects well that this curriculum has been co-constructed by practitioners for practitioners. In a few places we think that it may be useful to explain terms before they are introduced. For example, Section 8.3 that explains authentic learning comes later in the document than the first reference to it in Section 6. The word 'scaffold' is used through this section, and we wonder if this requires further explanation to make the intention completely clear. It may be beneficial to make clear links between this document and the Enabling Pathways document, particularly the role of the enablers.

Question 10 – Is the link between the pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences clearly explained?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We think that the link between the pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences come through strongly in the curriculum document. This is supported well by the column 'my sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who' and links well to the expanded section on the role of the practitioners, engaging experiences and effective environments.

Question 11 – Does this curriculum clearly explain how the developmental pathways will support development of the mandatory cross-curricular skills?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We believe that reference to elements of the mandatory cross-curricular skills throughout the 'I am learning to' section of the developmental pathways supports the understanding that the mandatory skills will be threaded through the work of the setting in a holistic way that supports play and playful learning. In addition, the introductory paragraph to section 9 makes this clear. It would be useful to also reference the 'ABC steps' to support pupils who may require additional support to develop their cross-curricular skills prior to progression step 1.

Question 12 – Is it clear that development of the mandatory cross-curricular skills should be embedded within holistic practice across the whole curriculum?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We believe that the introductory paragraph to section 9, Cross-curricular skills, makes it clear that literacy, numeracy and digital competence are mandatory skills across the whole curriculum and should be firmly embedded in practice. This section describes in detail the skills children need to develop as part of the progression in their learning. The detailed explanation for the development of each cross-curricular skill, along with purposeful examples of how they may be developed and supported by practitioners, is particularly useful. In addition, the direct link between the incremental steps leading to progression step 1 and progression step 1 itself provides useful guidelines and purposeful examples for practitioners.

Question 13 – To what extent are the incremental statements for the mandatory cross-curricular skills helpful in supporting practitioners to understand how children develop these skills?

Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
☐	☐	☐	✓	☐

Please explain your answer.

We think it is appropriate to include these incremental statements. We feel that this will support practitioners to consider the way children develop specific skills over time. The incremental statements which lead to progression step 1 within the Curriculum for Wales are likely to be welcomed by practitioners.

In places, we feel that further consideration should be given to strengthen incremental steps leading to progression step one, particularly with regard to the Welsh language.

Question 14 – What, if any, additional information would be helpful?

It may be useful to consider additional incremental steps leading to progression step 1, particularly for Welsh language communication skills to highlight the differences between language acquisition in English and Welsh.

Question 15 – To what extend are the separate functions of observation and assessment, as well as the link between them, clearly explained?

Very unclear	Slightly unclear	Neither clear nor unclear	Slightly clear	Very clear
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

The importance of observation is clear in the document. There is suitable emphasis on getting to know children well, although the phrase 'detailed understanding of each child' on page 47 may encourage practitioners to focus on recording information rather than developing a rounded picture of the child. The section explains clearly how observation can benefit practitioners to adapt provision to encourage individualised learning. The document refers to a range of observation techniques and, while we appreciate that listing the range here could have unintended consequences and drive behaviours unhelpfully, we feel that some reference to techniques would be useful possibly as a link to Welsh Government training modules. The function and importance of assessment is also clear, as is the important connection between the two elements. In this section, we feel that the reflective questions included for practitioners and leaders are practical and helpful.

Question 16 – To what extent is the section on enhancing practice helpful?

Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
☐	☐	☐	☐	✓

Please explain your answer.

We feel that this section is particularly useful to support practitioners to reflect on their own practice. It underpins and supports strong early years practice. Giving due consideration to these elements will help practitioners develop their provision for each individual child. The concise explanatory text and clear definitions are supported by a range of useful reflective questions to promote discussion.

Question 17 – What, if any, additional information would be helpful in this section?

It may be useful to include immersion techniques here for developing children's Welsh language skills. We recently published a thematic report ['Welsh Language acquisition'](), Estyn 2021 which includes useful resources, guidance and examples of good practice of early Welsh language acquisition. This could be used to help practitioners.

Question 18 – To what extent are the reflective questions included throughout this curriculum helpful in:

i)   supporting planning?

Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
☐	☐	✓	☐	☐

Please explain your answer.

The reflective questions throughout the document support practitioners in planning their curriculum. In some sections, there are useful and comprehensive reflective questions for practitioners and leaders that will help them to evaluate their practice and support their planning, such as in the sections on assessment and physical literacy. However, it could be beneficial to provide more reflective questions in other places to support practitioners with planning, for example following the section on cross-curricular skills.

ii)   prompting practitioners to consider their knowledge and skills?

Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
☐	☐	☐	✓	☐

Please explain your answer.

The reflective questions are a useful way for practitioners to consider their own skills and to identify ways to improve their practice. In many instances, the questions, such as in the section on schemas, enable practitioners to reflect on their own knowledge and understanding of schemas. We feel that there is scope to develop reflective questions further in other sections. For example, it would be useful to include reflective questions for practitioners around their understanding of adverse childhood experiences and how well they understand the best approaches for dealing with children who have experienced trauma.

iii)   supporting continual improvement in practice?

Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Extremely helpful
☐	☐	☐	✓	☐

Please explain your answer.

> The reflective questions are likely to be beneficial to leaders and practitioners in supporting continual improvement in practice. We feel that, as stated above, it would be beneficial to develop the use of reflective questions further in some areas of the curriculum.

Question 19 – We would like to know your views on the effects that this curriculum 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

> We do not feel that the curriculum has a strong enough emphasis on developing the Welsh language and does not outline how it supports and works towards realising Welsh Government's vision for Cymraeg 2050. The curriculum does not consider well enough the different contexts of developing the Welsh language in all areas of Wales, for example the use of immersion techniques to develop the Welsh language skills of children from predominantly English-speaking homes. In general, we feel that the Welsh context of this curriculum could be strengthened in many areas, such as when promoting the Welsh identity of children in the Belonging section.

Question 20 – Please also explain how you believe this curriculum 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

We feel that the curriculum should be strengthened to promote the positive effects of the Welsh language. It may be beneficial to explore how settings use immersion techniques effectively to develop children's understanding and use of the Welsh language, especially from homes where Welsh is not the home language. We feel that more consideration is needed around the progression of Welsh language skills other than the focus on developing children's understanding of Welsh mutations at progression step 1. We have previously referred to the requirement for additional incremental steps leading to progression step 1 in our response to this consultation.

It would also be beneficial to provide opportunities for practitioners to reflect on their own Welsh language skills.

The Welsh medium translation of the curriculum is complicated in places and does not use easily understood vocabulary and phrases commonly used in the sector. This could inhibit the use of the Welsh language version by leaders and practitioners.

Question 21– 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.

Typo? Page 12 'Appropriate delivery of this curriculum should ensure progression from the pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1 for all children in our setting.' Settings?

Page 41 'Digital competence should not be confused with information and communication technology (ICT)' – this is factually incorrect and it would be better to remove it completely to avoid confusion.

Page 42 'identify digital images of themselves and familiar people.' This should read 'myself' as the root of the sentence is from the perspective of the child.

Page 45 'follow one or two-step instructions to undertake a process e.g. programmes a toy to move forwards/backwards etc.' This should read 'programme' as the root is again from the child's perspective.

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: