
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:	029 2044 6446
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Pwnc / Subject:	Statements of what matters code

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

Generally, the Statements of What Matters Code provides a suitable and broad overview of the Curriculum for Wales. The statements of what matters promote a continuum of learning and, in most areas of learning and experience, they provide a clear rationale that will support schools and settings to plan and develop their curriculum.

Overall, the statements of what matters cover the breadth and depth needed to support learners from 3 to 16 to make meaningful progress. However, in a few cases, particularly in Languages, Literacy and Communication, the amended statements may have a negative impact on the breadth and depth of the curriculum. The main issues we raise are concerned with:

- the lack of clarity in a few of the statements of What Matters
- the use of the terminology 'bilingual', 'multilingual' and 'plurilingual'
- the impact the changes may have on the development of Welsh language skills
- the removal of the terms 'speaking' and 'writing'

Consultation questions

Respondent type (please select one from the following)

Child or young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer/business representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional body/interest group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools governor or member of school management committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary sector (community group, volunteer, self-help group, social or co-operative enterprise, religious, not for profit organisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstream school practitioner (head, teacher, teaching assistant, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortium	<input type="checkbox"/>
EOTAS provider (PRU staff, independent school staff, other provider, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education (including universities/academic institutions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Further education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politician (Senedd member, county councillors, MP, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other respondent group not listed above, please specify:	✓
Lobbyist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a school, setting or organisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	As an individual
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a school/setting/organisation

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

Generally, the Statements of What Matters Code provides a suitable and broad overview of the curriculum that pupils in Wales are entitled to. The statements of what matters promote a continuum of learning and, in most areas of learning and experience, they provide a clear rationale that will support schools to plan and develop their curriculum.

Overall, the statements of what matters cover the breadth and depth needed to support learners from 3 to 16 to make meaningful progress. However, in a few cases, particularly in Languages, Literacy and Communication, suggested changes may have a negative impact on learner development.

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

The Mathematics and Numeracy, Expressive Arts, Humanities and Health and Well-being statements of what matters have a clear rationale that should support schools and settings to develop their curriculum to improve learners’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The statements of what matters align well to the principles of Curriculum for Wales. We

welcome the additional focus on developing learners' understanding of the broad cultural heritage of Wales.

The Science and Technology statements of what matters are generally clear and suitable. However, it is important to note that the six statements of what matters for this Area encompass a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Whilst the statements presented encapsulate the essence of the underlying disciplines, in a few instances, sentences are occasionally unclear, for example:

- By being encouraged to use logic, evidence and creativity, learners will be supported to inquire into and apply scientific knowledge to further understanding of how our world works.
- The behaviour of matter determines the properties of materials and allows us to use natural resources, as well as to create new substances.

It may be useful to consider how these statements could be updated to provide more clarity for schools.

It is important to note that we have strong concerns about the changes to the Languages, Literacy and Communication statements of what matters.

The changes described in the consultation document have resulted in an important loss of clarity for schools and practitioners. This is partly due to the fact that the statements no longer refer to speaking or writing. Although the descriptions of learning contain references to speaking and writing, their omission from the statements of what matters, and a loss of clarity about the modes of communication, creates a disconnect which makes it more difficult to interpret what the statements of what matters mean. It may be helpful for Welsh Government to consider how the statements could be updated to minimise any ambiguity to ensure all practitioners can understand them and use them to create their curriculum.

The following are examples specific to individual statements of what matters:

Languages connect us

The suggested changes to this statement make it difficult to understand and interpret and may cause confusion for practitioners when they use them to inform their curriculum development. The use of overcomplicated discipline-specific terminology in a single sentence, for example, 'This area is designed to equip learners, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world, with the ability to use languages in a plurilingual context', makes it particularly difficult to understand and use in the curriculum design process. It may also have an unintended consequence of encouraging Welsh and English teachers to focus too heavily on developing learners' ability to make links between languages that they do not develop their Welsh or English skills well enough.

Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication

We agree that the skills of listening and reading, speaking and writing are clearly reflected in the descriptions of learning for Welsh, English and other languages. However, the changes to the statements of what matters do not reflect the skills of speaking and writing sufficiently. The main focus of this statement of what matters is expressive (or productive) language skills. It would be more helpful to include the word 'gesture' and/or 'sign' alongside 'spoken and written', to be more inclusive to learners, rather than removing reference to 'spoken and written language'. For example, 'Clear and effective

communication through spoken and written language, gesture or sign, is an important life skill'. This would ensure that the productive language skills of speaking, writing and signing or gesturing, are expressed clearly within the description. The proposed changes to this statement of what matters make it more difficult to understand and may limit practitioners' ability to plan for a cohesive and effective curriculum.

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?

We welcome the increased reference to the teaching of Welsh histories and diversity and the clear focus on the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history and culture.

In the Expressive Arts statements of what matters, the increased focus on Wales' unique traditions, history and diverse cultures is positive. However, it may also be useful to make clear the link between this aspect and the study of Wales in the wider world.

In the Humanities area of learning and experience, the statements in respect of the story of Wales are clear with an emphasis on local, Welsh and the wider world. It might be helpful to clarify the meaning of a few terms, such as, 'pluralistic' so that practitioners can fully understand the meaning in this context. The statement 'These stories are diverse, spanning different communities as well as in particular the stories of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people' may be updated to make clear that it is referencing the story of the locality, Wales and the wider world. It may be useful to reword this as 'These local, Welsh and global stories are diverse, spanning different communities as well as, in particular, the stories of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people'.

When writing about Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, the guidance for capitalisation notes (UK government style guide notes) that all Ethnic groups are capitalised, it might be helpful to follow this approach in all of the Curriculum for Wales guidance.

Welsh Government may wish to consider if stronger reference could be made to diversity in the health and well-being area of learning and experience.

We welcome the increased focus on diversity within this Code. It may be helpful to emphasise the meaning of diversity throughout the statements of what matters. Whilst it is helpful to refer specifically to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history and culture, it is important that practitioners understand the need to teach the full range of diverse cultures, including that of LGBTQ+ people.

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

The amendments to the statements are clear when referencing climate change. In the Science and Technology statements of what matters, the references are suitable. However, this could be strengthened to emphasise the impact we have on the natural world. For example, by adding the words shown in italics below:

‘Developing an understanding of the factors which affect the health and success of organisms allows us to make informed decisions **about how we impact upon the natural world**, including about the prevention and treatments of diseases.’

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

Across most areas of learning and experience, the statements of what matters ensure relevance for the full range of languages. However, the Languages, Literacy and Communication statements of what matters raise a few concerns.

The changes to the Languages, Literacy and Communication statements of what matters now refer to ‘bilingual’, ‘multilingual’ and ‘plurilingual’ language development. While this still indicates the breadth of languages that learners need to learn, this terminology makes this statement less clear for schools and practitioners. The original statements explicitly stated that learners would develop their ‘*ability to use Welsh, English and international languages*’. This provided a clear and equal status to each language. The updated statement is open for interpretation and may mean that practitioners do not give a strong enough focus to developing learners’ Welsh and English language.

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

The statements of what matters for most areas of learning and experience support schools and practitioners suitably to develop their curriculum in both Welsh and English. However, there are important shortcomings in the changes to the statements of what matters in the Languages, Literacy and Communication that may have a negative impact on the development of learners’ Welsh language skills.

Since the statements have been updated, there is now no direct reference to the Welsh language or the use of Welsh. As a result, the meaning of ‘bilingual’ could be interpreted as English/French and may limit practitioners’ opportunities to plan for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills.

The original statements of what matters clearly state ‘*with the ability to use Welsh, English and international languages*’. This makes clear the importance of developing each language. Welsh Government may wish to consider using this original statement.

There are a few missed opportunities to strengthen the focus on learners developing their ability to communicate in Welsh, English as well as international languages. For example, originally the statements of what matter expected learners to experience opportunities to express themselves for different 'audiences in both Welsh and English as well as international languages'. However, this is not clear in the new and updated statements. This could have a negative impact on the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 vision.

The use of terms such as 'bilingual', 'multilingual' and 'plurilingual' risk weakening rather than strengthening the treatment of the Welsh language. These effects could be mitigated by using the original statements of Welsh, English and international languages.

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

It would be helpful if the Code made clear that learners should be given opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, regardless of the school's context, in all areas of learning and experience. The focus on learners expressing themselves in Welsh, English as well as international languages is important in guiding leaders to plan strategically and, in particular, to raise the profile of Welsh.

When considering the Languages, Literacy and Communication area of learning and experience we would suggest using the original statements of what matters. These stated clearly '*with the ability to use Welsh, English and international languages*' and showed the importance of each language.

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.

We have expressed our concerns around the Languages, Literacy and Communication statements of what matters and would like to take this opportunity to provide additional information on this area.

We feel that these statements could be refined further through this consultation process to improve their clarity for practitioners.

Languages connect us

The Languages, Literacy and Communication area of learning and experience identifies 'translanguaging' as a key skill or pedagogical practice when using language in a plurilingual context to make connections between languages. It features in the descriptions of learning (Welsh Government, 2020, p.133) and in the section on pedagogical considerations (Welsh Government, 2020, p.160). Currently, translanguaging is not referred to, either directly through use of the term, or indirectly through description, in the 'Languages connect us' statement of what matters. Within the glossary in the Curriculum for Wales guidance, 'translanguaging' is referred to as a 'pedagogical practice' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.250) but it is also included as a 'skill' within the descriptions of learning. It would be helpful to provide clarification for practitioners around use of this term.

With reference to the same statement, it is unclear how learners are 'provided' with the skill of 'creativity' through developing an understanding of the origins, evolution and features of a range of languages. Brief exemplification would be useful.

In addition, it would be helpful to contextualise the sentence that begins with the words 'Meaningful learning experiences' by inclusion of the word 'language' so that it reads 'Meaningful language learning experiences'.

Understanding languages is key to understanding the world around us

In the sentence 'They enable us to make sense of what is heard, read and seen, and thus to develop our understanding, empathy and our ability to respond and to mediate effectively', the use of terms such as, 'and thus to develop', may not be helpful to practitioners. Currently this aspect lacks the clarity and accessibility required to support practitioners to design and deliver their curriculum. It may be helpful to update this part of the statement to make it more accessible.

It is important to ensure that receptive and expressive skills are not taught in isolation. It is unclear if the intention is to draw a link between the receptive skills which are the focus of this statement of what matters, with the expressive skills which are the focus of the next statement of what matters. Although, the introduction to this area of learning and experience identifies that the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing should be explored in relation to one another (Welsh Government, 2020, p.126), it would be helpful to re-emphasise this as a principle, so that the statement is clear.

Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication

The statement 'In this area, learners should be given opportunities to use language in order to be effective as they interact, explore ideas, express viewpoints, knowledge and understanding and build relationships' does not provide sufficient clarity of expectations. It would be helpful to make clearer the expectation of schools to provide learners with worthwhile opportunities to develop and use language effectively. Without this clarity, there is a concern that practitioners may present contrived opportunities that they perceive will meet requirements.

While the final sentence of this statement of what matters conveys the importance of learners using a range of languages, it is also important to reflect that learners need to know how to use and adapt language suitably for different purposes and audiences within the context of an individual language, as well as across languages.

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: