
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Dyddiad / Date:	04.01.23
Pwnc / Subject:	Curriculum for Wales – Clarifying the Humanities area in relation to the history of Wales and the world

Background information about Estyn

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

Our 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, we 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.

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

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have 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

Overall, we welcome the explicit reference to the history of Wales and the world. We feel this will make a positive addition to the existing guidance because:

- It provides more clarity for schools and settings within the statement of what matters and associated guidance about the need to teach Welsh history.
- It ensures that learners in Wales are provided with experiences that include the history of Wales as a country.

We welcome the reference to 'consistent exposure to the story of their locality and the story of Wales'. We believe this makes clear the expectation that schools plan regular opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of local and Welsh contexts and make links to the story of the wider world.

We believe an overarching timeline of Welsh history would be welcomed by schools as a resource to support curriculum planning. Most schools surveyed by Estyn when collecting evidence for our thematic report on the teaching of Welsh history referred to a lack of suitable resources for the teaching of local and Welsh history.

Where possible we believe that resources should be subject to a review process with a range of stakeholders including teachers from settings and schools across Wales. Particular attention should be given to ensuring Welsh and English resources are published at the same time and are considered by practitioners working in Welsh-medium, English-medium and bilingual schools. Consideration should be given to how any timeline refers to all areas of Wales and the diversity of its communities over time. Opportunities to make links with other areas of Wales and the wider world should be signposted.

We believe that the amendments to the Humanities Areas provides an opportunity to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the Welsh language and the role it plays in the identity, culture and history of Wales. In addition, we believe the proposed amendments could encourage school improvement services to provide professional learning and regional resources to support the development of local and Welsh history.

Teachers with no Welsh language skills, entry and foundation skills can be supported through professional learning and resource development to introduce more Welsh into classrooms. Support should include how to pronounce key words and phrases to build confidence when teaching pupils about Wales and its history.

Other considerations:

- A lack of transition work for the humanities over time means that teachers in secondary schools have little knowledge of what pupils have learnt about their locality and Wales. This leads to repetition when choosing and teaching themes. As a result, planning for progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding of local and Welsh history is often not considered well enough.
- A minority of secondary schools focus heavily on preparing pupils for GCSE examinations. These schools often start teaching GCSE topics during key stage 3. In a few instances this limits how much local and Welsh history pupils' study.
- We believe a key risk when developing a timeline resource for Welsh history is that schools will perceive any events included on the timeline as compulsory aspects of Welsh history to include in their curriculum. On the one hand, this may help ensure a baseline to encourage and develop provision for Welsh history across all

schools. However, this may lead schools to solely focus on the timeline and not consider their local context well enough.

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 cooperative enterprise, religious, not for profit organisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstream school practitioner (head, teacher, teaching assistant)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortium	<input type="checkbox"/>
EOTAS provider (PRU staff, independent school staff, other provider)	<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 councillor, MP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other respondent group not listed above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lobbyist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 – Does the addition of ‘history of Wales and the world’ better clarify the importance of the teaching of Welsh history as part of the teaching of heritage in the statement of what matters and associated guidance?

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

We welcome the explicit reference to the history of Wales and the world. We believe that this provides more clarity for schools and settings within the statement of what matters and associated guidance around the need to teach Welsh history. We believe the reference to the ‘history of Wales and the world’ is a positive step to encourage teachers to plan opportunities for pupils to make meaningful links between the history of their locality, Wales and the wider world. Any further materials to outline and explain the changes made to the statement of what matters and associated guidance should continue to make this explicit. It will be important for Welsh Government to consider approaches to publicise these changes widely. In addition, practitioners should be provided with high quality professional learning to help them understand the implications for their planning and teaching.

In October 2021 we published our report on ‘The teaching of Welsh history including Black Asian and Minority Ethnic history, identity and culture’¹ The report states, *‘In a majority of schools, pupils have little knowledge of the historical events that have shaped their local area and can name few significant Welsh people from history. They do not make connections between individuals and events in Welsh history to British and global history and do not develop an understanding of how key historical concepts apply to local, national and international contexts. As a result, they do not develop a progressive and coherent conceptual understanding of the history of Wales. This is often because opportunities to study local and national history are not strategically planned.’*

Since we resumed inspection activity following the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation remains similar particularly in relation to the teaching of Welsh history in secondary schools. In many secondary schools, lessons continue to offer only cursory references to local and Welsh history. Teachers plan one-off lessons on local and Welsh history which often do not make sufficient links across historical periods or to the wider world. Too often, teachers make very brief references to Wales when looking at historical events. For example, pupils spend significant time studying topics such as the sinking of the Titanic where teachers make superficial links to Welsh history by referring to Fifth Officer Harold Lowe from Barmouth. We therefore welcome the specific reference to the history of Wales in the Curriculum for Wales guidance.

In many primary schools, teachers incorporate aspects of local and Welsh history into their planning. In a few schools where planning is highly effective, staff use Welsh history and wherever possible, the local context of the school as a driver for topic planning. They make links between local, national and international histories to develop pupils’ understanding of their place in the world. In a few schools, Welsh history remains a ‘bolt-

¹ [‘The teaching of Welsh history including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history, identity and culture’](#) Estyn, October 2021

on' element to other curriculum planning and is not considered as an integral part of the school's planning.

Question 2 – The statements of what matters are key elements of the curriculum structures for each Area of Learning and Experience (Area). Is the proposed addition of 'history of Wales and the world' to the Humanities Area statement clear and accessible, providing understanding of the breadth for curriculum development?

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

We believe stating 'history of Wales and the world' is clear and accessible as it allows flexibility for curriculum planning while clarifying the need to include the history of Wales within any curriculum offer. This is a positive addition as it ensures that learners in Wales are provided with experiences that include the history of Wales as a country while making links with the history of the wider world. It will be important that any messaging around this is clear. Professional learning or communications should help schools to understand that it is important that pupils learn about their locality, Wales and the wider world. In a few instances practitioners are focussing solely on their locality which is limiting pupils' knowledge skills and understanding.

Our thematic report on the teaching of Welsh history notes *'in a few primary schools, pupils have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the history of their local area and Wales. They understand the contribution that local and Welsh events and individuals have made to history. In a very few primary schools, pupils develop a knowledge of the history of their locality and begin to make connections between their local area and the history of Wales and the wider world. In these schools, many pupils can explain how individuals and events have helped shape the community they live in today'*. In many secondary schools, pupils do not develop a secure and cohesive knowledge and understanding of the history of their local area or Wales as a whole. They do not make connections between individuals and events in Welsh history to the history of the wider world. We believe the changes to the Humanities Area statement reference how curriculum planning in the humanities should allow pupils to make links and connections. We also welcome the references to the diverse history, cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, identities, experiences and perspectives of their local area, Wales and the wider world. We believe that there is a need for high quality professional learning and resources to support practitioners to develop their knowledge and understanding of Welsh history in the context of the wider world. Subject specific support for the humanities is key to developing this aspect.

We would like to draw attention to the use of the phrase 'common understanding'. We believe this may reinforce the notion that any resource/timeline produced to support the Humanities area of learning and experience includes compulsory elements. Please see comments relating to Question 4.

Question 3 – The statements of what matters have been refined following consideration of issues as part of the passage of associated legislation by the Senedd in 2021. Do the proposed changes to the Humanities Area provide sufficient clarity and support to schools and settings in their curriculum planning?

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

We believe the statement of what matters is clear and provides detail which will support schools to plan their curriculum. We welcome the reference to ‘consistent exposure to the story of their locality and the story of Wales’. We believe this makes clear the expectation that schools plan regular opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of local and Welsh contexts and make links to the story of the wider world. We also believe this supports the concept of planning for progression within the humanities.

Our thematic review on the teaching of Welsh history including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history, identity and culture notes a lack of transition work for history in general. Only in a very few cases, do cluster primary schools work together with their secondary school to agree what is taught. We believe this is a key consideration when developing guidance to support schools to plan for pupils’ consistent exposure to the story of locality and Wales. A lack of transition work for the humanities means that teachers in secondary schools have little knowledge of what pupils have learnt about their locality and Wales. This leads to repetition when choosing topics. As a result, planning for progression in pupils’ knowledge and understanding of local and Welsh history is not taken into account well enough. In addition, a minority of secondary schools focus heavily on preparing pupils for GCSE examinations. These schools often start teaching GCSE topics during key stage 3. In a few instances this limits how much local and Welsh history pupils study. Ensuring pupils have consistent exposure to local and Welsh contexts is a key consideration for the development of new qualifications within the humanities.

We welcome the addition of ‘as a part of Welsh history’ to paragraph 4 in the humanities introduction to strengthen the focus on Welsh history. We believe the changes to the statement helps clarify some misconceptions around ‘cynefin’. In a few schools this is cited as a reason why they do not make links to wider and diverse contexts. In addition, in primary schools where pupil voice is not used effectively enough, teachers allow pupils to choose topics without consideration of how they can make links to the local area, Wales and the wider world. The inclusion of ‘the history of Wales and the world’ helps mitigate this.

Question 4 – To support schools in engaging with the proposed changes to the statement of what matters and the associated guidance, we will also be commissioning the development of an overarching timeline of Welsh history. How could such a timeline and any other supporting resources support schools to engage with the proposed mandatory requirements highlighted in this consultation?

Supporting comments

We believe an overarching timeline of Welsh history would be welcomed by schools as a resource to support curriculum planning. Most schools surveyed by Estyn when collecting evidence for our thematic report on the teaching of Welsh history referred to a lack of suitable resources for the teaching of local and Welsh history. In many schools, teachers continue to have limited access to professional learning for local and Welsh history. Schools said that local authorities and regional consortia offer little specialist professional learning and opportunities for teachers to share practice on these specific areas. Teachers often cite difficulties around finding suitable historical source material when planning authentic and meaningful learning experiences, particularly for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils. In particular, professional learning and resources to support teachers to access and use authentic source materials would be welcomed. This includes professional learning to enable the adaptation of source material to support pupils' literacy skills in the classroom. For example, the development of pupils translanguaging skills in the context of historical resources and adapting sources to ensure readability while preserving their authenticity. This would be particularly valuable for non-specialist teachers in the humanities to ensure the effective teaching of subject specific skills in history and humanities.

We believe a key risk when developing a timeline resource for Welsh history is that schools will perceive any events included on the timeline as compulsory aspects of Welsh history to include in their curriculum. This may help develop more consistent provision for Welsh history across all schools. However, there is a risk that this will lead schools to solely focus on the timeline and not consider the local context well enough. In addition, it may lead to the repetition of topics as noted in our response to Question 3. We believe Welsh Government should provide clear guidance around these issues to mitigate risks including the appropriateness of topics for pupils of different ages and the need to plan for progression in knowledge and understanding. This aspect should be revisited regularly to avoid any emerging misconceptions.

We believe resources should be subject to a review process with a range of stakeholders including teachers from settings and schools across Wales. Particular attention should be given to ensuring Welsh and English resources are published at the same time and are considered by practitioners working in Welsh-medium, English-medium and bilingual schools. Consideration should be given to how any timeline refers to all areas of Wales and the diversity of its communities over time. Opportunities to make links with other areas of Wales and the wider world should be signposted.

Question 5 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the proposed amendments to the Humanities Area would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

We believe that the amendments to the Humanities Areas provides an opportunity to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the Welsh language and the role it plays in the identity, culture and history of Wales. We believe that the development of resources including the timeline provides opportunities to include key historical events around the history of the Welsh language. This should provide pupils with an opportunity to better understand the importance and significance of the language and the development of Wales as a bilingual and multilingual nation.

We believe that the proposed resources provide an opportunity to promote the use of the Welsh language for example by introducing Welsh words and phrases in English-medium and bilingual settings and schools such as Cofiwch Dryweryn, Llywelyn ein Llyw Olaf.

In addition, we believe the proposed amendments could encourage local authorities and regional consortia to provide professional learning and regional resources to support the development of local and Welsh history. Support for area of learning and experience and subject specific aspects of curriculum planning should be promoted. This will promote teachers' awareness of local and Welsh history including the history of the Welsh language across Wales. Teachers with no Welsh language skills, entry and foundation skills should be supported through professional learning and resource development to introduce more Welsh into classrooms. Support should include how to pronounce key words and phrases to build confidence when teaching pupils about Wales and its history.

Question 6 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed amendments to the Humanities Area could be formulated or changed so as to have 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, and 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

Please see our response to Question 5.

Question 7 – 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: