

Kirsty Williams praises schools following year of major reforms to Welsh education

Last September, the Education Secretary announced a national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap, and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.

At a conference held in Cardiff today, the Education Secretary explained how major changes to what pupils are taught, how they are taught and how their teachers are trained and developed are helping to transform schools as we know them.

One of the most significant and wide-reaching of these changes is the new curriculum to be rolled out from 2022. Over 200 pioneer schools across Wales are involved in developing six different Areas of Learning and Experience. This work includes embedding digital competence into all areas of teaching and learning and supporting teachers to develop the new curriculum.

A new independent report published today found that these schools strongly support the changes being made and are enthusiastic about their part in developing Wales' new curriculum.

Teachers' professional learning and development has been similarly instrumental to the national mission for education, with this school year seeing:

- New professional standards for Teaching and Leadership developed with the profession, for the profession;
- The establishment of a new National Academy for Educational Leadership to support all leaders in education at all stages of their careers;
- New accredited Initial Teacher Education programmes to be delivered in the academic year 2019/20;
- Plans for a new part-time PGCE and Employment Based Route into teaching from 2019/20.

Teachers and pupils will also soon begin to see the benefits of a £36 million fund to reduce infant class sizes, with the appointment of over 80 new teachers across Wales and a capital fund to build new classrooms.

Reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for teachers continues to remain a priority, with this year seeing a £1.2 million investment in the appointment of school business managers – helping headteachers to manage their workload and focus on raising standards and school improvement.

Kirsty Williams said:

“When I announced our national mission for education last September

I said that we would never be able to achieve our ambitions if we just stayed still.

“That’s why the past year has been all about momentum – a drive for self-improvement that reaches right across our education system.

“We still have much work to do but I’m proud of the reforms that we have introduced in a relatively short space of time. I am also genuinely impressed by how everyone in the education system has responded.

“When I visit schools and talk to teachers and pupils, I am always struck about what they’re achieving and how they are improving – whether that’s in developing the new curriculum or discovering new ways of teaching and learning.

“In return, we are introducing the most comprehensive changes to teacher training and development in years, ensuring that our teaching profession are fully prepared and equipped when they start to teach our new curriculum.

“Our schools are changing, education in Wales is changing and I’m confident that our national mission is well on course to deliver the wholesale reforms that we need.”