

Wales' curriculum to put "citizens first" – Kirsty Williams

The curriculum – which is being co-constructed with teachers, universities, international experts and civic society – will be available for testing and feedback, with all schools having access to the final curriculum from 2020.

This will ensure schools are fully ready and prepared for statutory roll-out in September 2022.

Delivering the 2018 Raymond Williams Memorial Lecture at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff, Kirsty Williams said:

"I believe that the Welsh education system must be a 'citizens first' system. That's why, on taking office, I re-affirmed the Government's commitment to a new curriculum that as well as raising standards of literacy and numeracy will also develop ethical and informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.

"The curriculum will represent what we want – what we expect – the citizens of the future to become, to know, and to have gained from their teachers.

"But the process of working together to shape that curriculum also represents what we want from our education system.

"A profession that collaborates; that is open to new ideas; that is always learning and that seeks to raise standards for all pupils.

"We are setting an international example on how progressive education reforms can be undertaken through collaboration, creativity and confidence.

"A curriculum and education system that, as Raymond Williams wanted, provides everyone with the opportunity to "grasp the real nature of our society"."

During the lecture, the Education Secretary made the case that the Welsh Government's 'national mission of education reform' was "stepping forward in the spirit of a Raymond Williams's long revolution".

Covering issues such as identity politics, social mobility and human rights, the Education Secretary quoted not only from Raymond Williams, but a range of thinkers including Ted Kennedy, Mark Lilla and Orson Welles.

She said:

“I want an education system that seeks to build a common culture and ideas of shared citizenship, from our new curriculum through to adult education.

“A common endeavour that encourages questioning and challenge. To challenge the established ways of thinking and of organising.

“But also to challenge definitions and differences where appropriate. To be curious about others and the wider world beyond your own identity – however you choose to define.

“A common set of purposes, but based on combining the knowledge and skills that enable individual citizens to become part of that process of social change.

“Education itself should be a common effort and for the realisation of a common good.”

Welsh success in top EU awards

Nant Gwrtheyrn, a Welsh-language and cultural heritage centre, in Gwynedd, won the top award in the Investing in Culture Heritage category and Swansea University’s ASTUTE (Advanced Sustainable Manufacturing Technologies) project was shortlisted in the Supporting Smart Industrial Transition category.

Nant Gwrtheyrn beat competitors from across Europe to win the 2018 RegioStars award. The project has helped to transform a former quarry village on the Llyn Peninsula into a thriving education centre and visitor attraction. Around 45,000 visitors a year visit the local area and 600 people attend residential Welsh language courses at the centre, providing a significant boost to the local economy.

ASTUTE and the follow-up ASTUTE2020 programme promotes collaboration between universities and the Welsh manufacturing industry. More than 250 companies and eight universities have engaged with ASTUTE, resulting in more than £200m of economic impact; 383 new products; 174 jobs and the creation of 10 new enterprises.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“I’m delighted to see these exceptional EU-funded projects in Wales being recognised in Europe.

“Nant Gwtheyrn is an inspirational example of how EU funds have a positive impact on a local area, attracting visitors and creating jobs to drive forward the economy.

“ASTUTE has achieved high levels of innovation through its industry and academia collaboration.”

Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning Eluned Morgan added:

“Nant Gwrtheyrn is an icon of Welsh culture and has helped thousands of people to learn Welsh.

“I am delighted its contribution to the local community and to Wales as a whole has been recognised at a European level. Llongyfarchiadau!”

“The future of Welsh is ‘in good hands’ – Minister

The Minister was responding to the results of National Survey for Wales 2017-18, published today, which show that more 16-24 year olds say they can speak Welsh or have some Welsh speaking ability than any other age group.

While the Census is the main source of information about the proportion of people who can speak Welsh the National Survey is used to monitor trends for adults between censuses and asks questions about confidence and attitudes towards the language as well as ability.

The Minister also welcomed the fact that that 62% of those who couldn't speak Welsh would like to be able to speak it, and 85% of those with some ability in Welsh wanted to speak it better. She said:

“The Welsh language belongs to all of us, whether we're fluent speakers, can just get by, are starting to learn or can manage a “Iechyd Da” with a drink. It's great news that so many people would like to learn or improve their Welsh and it's even better news that the help you need is out there.

“When it comes to learning or improving, there is something for everybody, whether that's an online course, a taster session, a Clwb Cwtsh course where you can learn alongside your children or grandchildren, work based courses or courses that lead to formal qualifications. There are so many different ways to learn and I would encourage anyone in that 62% or 85% to find the right course for them and to give Welsh a go.”

The survey also revealed that, unsurprisingly, those who can speak Welsh fluently and those who use the language daily are the most confident when speaking, while those who are less fluent or who don't speak Welsh as often are most likely to lack confidence and to fear of being judged as the main barrier to speaking the language.

The Minister added:

“When it comes to languages, using them regularly is key to learning, improving and feeling confident so I would urge all those who have some Welsh to use the language every day to build their skills and confidence. Fluent Welsh speakers can also play their part, either informally by encouraging learners they know to use their Welsh or by volunteering for the ‘Siarad’ scheme, which pairs fluent speakers and learners for a minimum 10 hours of chatting over a coffee or a pint.

“With so many opportunities for adults to learn and the language being strongest amongst 16-24 year olds, the future of the language is in good hands.”

Save a Life Cymru to create a life-saving chain of survival across Wales

Called Save a Life Cymru, the project which will be developed over the next two years, will improve access to cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and increase the awareness and use of defibrillators for people from all walks of life.

As more people learn CPR, they will be encouraged to share their knowledge, strengthening the chain of survival that will help improve survival rates for people suffering a cardiac arrest.

Welsh Government will provide funding totalling £586,000 for the first two years of the project.

Vaughan Gething said:

“It is a sad fact that a patient's chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest decreases by an estimated 10% with every passing minute. Survival rates are low but there is the potential for many more lives to be saved through prompt and effective CPR and use of a defibrillator.

“Save a Life Cymru will actively target and support groups who are already teaching CPR within their communities. It will help them to build local networks, identifying communities across Wales who have less CPR training opportunities, helping them share their knowledge and skills. This will strengthen the chain of survival and build local community resilience.

“This work will build on the sterling efforts already made by the Welsh Ambulance Service to teach CPR in schools – last October during the ‘Shoctober’ and ‘Restart a Heart’ campaigns, nearly 13,000 schoolchildren were taught CPR.

“Learning from the excellent example of Scotland as well as initiatives in other parts of the world, Save a Life Cymru will lead the work improving access to CPR training and defibrillation. We are inviting all third sector, public and other organisations with an interest to become a member of the partnership and work with us to lay the foundation for building lifesaving activity across the country.

“The more people aware of CPR, and confident to use it in a life or death situation, the more lives will be saved. That’s why setting up the Save a Life Cymru partnership is so important.”

Welsh Government continues to deliver improvements for Wales – First Minister

Last September, the Welsh Government published its national strategy, Prosperity for All, setting out its ambitious programme for government and priorities for delivering for the people of Wales.

6 priority areas have been identified for cross-government action:

- early years
- housing
- social care
- better mental health
- skills and employability
- decarbonisation.

Together, these 6 areas reflect the support people need throughout their lives and where, if the right help is provided, dramatic improvements can be made to their life course.

The Welsh Government has published its Annual Report, setting out the progress it is making made towards delivering its commitments to the people of Wales.

One of these commitments is to provide 20,000 more affordable homes, a target that the Welsh Government has made significant progress on in the past year.

To hear more about how Welsh Government's support for house builders has helped keep it on track to meet this ambitious target, the First Minister visited the Tonyrefail site of Lewis Homes, which is providing a mix of market housing, much of which is supported by our Help to Buy – Wales scheme, and affordable housing.

Lewis Homes have benefited from loans from the Development Bank for Wales through the Property Development Fund, which have allowed the company to expand its plans to build new homes across a number of sites, and increase its workforce.

Speaking during the visit, the First Minister said:

“Lewis Homes is an excellent example of where our commitment to supporting business is helping them to grow and bringing added benefits to our communities, from creating job opportunities to providing a better choice of affordable homes right across Wales.”

The First Minister added:

“Throughout my time as First Minister I have been open about the progress we are making as a government. I am proud to say we have never been afraid to make the choices that are right for the people of Wales, even when that means taking a different approach to others.

“We've delivered improvements despite a decade of cuts from the UK government. We recognise that in the face of austerity people need support more than ever, and as a result have set out priorities that will not only deliver improvements that directly impact the lives of people today, but are laying the foundations for longer-term benefits that will be felt well-beyond this government term.”

Progress in the past year includes:

- delivering the £80 million New Treatment Fund, to allow people everywhere in Wales can have the same fast access to new drugs and treatments
- prioritising school spending to remain on track to invest £100 million to improve schools' performance
- increasing the amount of money people can keep before they have to fund the full cost of their residential care to £40,000

- increasing spending on mental health services by a further £20 million to nearly £650 million
- delivering tax cuts for small businesses through our High Street Rates Relief Scheme.

The Director of Lewis Homes, Ifan Glyn, said:

“To build the homes that our communities require, it is vital that small house builders are provided the appropriate support to thrive. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) has been working closely with the Welsh Government to develop some of these support streams. There is plenty of work still to do, but we have already seen some positive government interventions taking place over recent years.

“One such example is the Property Development Fund, administered by the Development Bank of Wales. Access to finance became a major barrier to small developers post-recession as traditional lenders virtually ceased loaning to small building firms. This Welsh Government intervention provided many with a lifeline and FMB members throughout Wales have been able to make use of it to build homes that would not have otherwise been built.”