

Agriculture and Countryside Education

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 9 June 2020
Petitions Committee | 9 Mehefin 2020

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-950

Petition title: Agriculture and Countryside Education for 4-16-year olds in our schools

Text of petition: We call on the Welsh Government to provide Agriculture and Countryside Studies in our schools.

It is important that young people learn how the process of producing food works and learn about the relationship between Food and Agriculture. It is also important that they learn about the basic skills involved in producing our food products. This will also promote respect and understanding of the work of farmers.

Welsh Government action

In her letter to the Committee, Kirsty Williams, the Minister for Education states that the **current curriculum** provides flexibility within Personal and Social Education for teaching and learning about topics relating to agriculture, the environment and food. Also, learners may carry out cooking tasks and understand a healthy diet in Design and Technology.

The new curriculum for Wales

Following a [feedback exercise](#) on a [draft version of the new curriculum](#), the Welsh Government published the final Curriculum for Wales on 28 January 2020. The documentation on the new curriculum is available as either a [series of web pages](#) or a [single PDF](#).

The Welsh Government has emphasised that the new Curriculum for Wales is **purpose-driven rather than content-driven**. Specific learning **content is not stipulated in the same way as under the current national curriculum**.

The Welsh Government has adopted the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) for the new curriculum:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology

The new age 3–16 Curriculum for Wales will be introduced in all maintained schools and publicly funded nursery settings **from September 2022 on a phased basis**.

In her letter to the Committee, the Minister states that the AoLEs relating to Health and Well-being, Humanities and Science and Technology include learning and guidance which support learners' understanding of food and its production. Schools will have flexibility to determine how their curriculum can reflect their locality, community and the issues relevant to their learners.

The guidance for the **Health and Well-Being AoLE** states:

An understanding of diet and nutrition could be enhanced by a knowledge of food supply both within Wales and internationally, and how it has changed over time.

The guidance for the **Humanities AoLE** (which includes geography; history; religion, values and ethics; business studies and social studies) states that, for geography, the school curriculum should:

[...]

provide a rich context for exploring the issues of sustainability, climate change, energy choices, nature, natural hazards and disasters and hazard risks, pollution, scarcity of natural resources, food security, population, identity, ethnicity, migration, settlements, globalisation, consumerism and trade, initiatives to tackle poverty, inequality and injustice, contrasts between countries at different levels of development.

Review of Learning Report

In 2014, the [Welsh Government commissioned](#) Professor Wynne Jones OBE, former Principal and Chief Executive of Harper Adams University College, to carry out an independent review. Professor Jones' final report, [Review of Learning Delivered by Further Education Colleges and the Relevance of that Delivery in Supporting Farm Businesses](#) (January 2015) recommended that a group should be established to develop an Agricultural Education and Development Strategy for Wales. It also recommended:

that the strategy group engages in an informal discussion to establish momentum within the school curriculum for a more widespread adoption of a GCSE in Agricultural Science. Moreover, it is recommended that teachers in Wales should be given the opportunity to embrace examples from agriculture, food and natural resources more broadly in school curriculums. The profile of staff development in agricultural education should be reviewed within the school and FE sectors.

This was [accepted in principle by the Welsh Government](#) who said:

The development of a new GCSE needs to be taken up by Qualifications Wales. Qualifications Wales will be reviewing the whole of the GCSE science suite in 2016. This will ensure that there is a relevant and coherent suite of science GCSEs available to learners in Wales. The strategy group should engage in this activity to establish the need for an Agricultural Science GCSE.

Qualifications Wales has held an [initial consultation](#) regarding the qualifications that will be needed alongside the new Curriculum for Wales. This centred on high-level issues such as whether the GCSE brand should be retained and whether qualifications at age 16 were still needed. Qualifications Wales is undertaking further development work and will hold additional consultations in the future on more detailed design principles for qualifications.

UK Government

On [7 February 2018, a debate in Westminster Hall](#) led by Jim Sturdy MP called for there to be a GCSE in agriculture in England and Wales. He argued that such a course would help equip GCSE pupils for a career in agriculture and support the farming sector by providing a better and larger pool of young, educated and skilled workers. In response, Anne Milton, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills said that a number of subjects taught at key stage 4 and earlier include some core knowledge about food production and the environment.

She also stated that the agriculture, environment and animal care T level will be rolled out in 2022. In England, T Levels are new courses which will begin in September 2020. They follow on from GCSEs and will be equivalent to 3 A levels. The 2-year courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content should meet the needs of industry and prepare students for work.

The Debate Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without the Question being put.

Northern Ireland

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment in Northern Ireland introduced a [GCSE in Agriculture](#) in 2013. The qualification has been revised for first teaching from September 2019 and includes units on Soils, Crops and Habitats; Animals on the Land; and Contemporary Issues in Agriculture and Land Use.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.