

**WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE:
REGIONAL EDUCATION CONSORTIA AND AN UPDATE ON THE
DONALDSON REVIEW**

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out written evidence on the Regional Education Consortia and to provide an update on *Successful Futures* the Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales for the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales.
2. The Welsh Government is fully committed to securing excellence throughout the education system in Wales, as set out in *Qualified for Life*. Underpinning one of the most ambitious and radical programmes of educational reform in our history are our four strategic objectives:
 - a. An excellent professional workforce with strong pedagogy based on an understanding of what works.
 - b. A curriculum which is engaging and attractive to children and young people and which develops within them an independent ability to apply knowledge and skills.
 - c. The qualifications young people achieve are nationally and internationally respected and act as a credible passport to their future learning and employment.
 - d. Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools.
3. The recommendations set out in *Successful Futures*, the review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers*, the review of Initial Teacher Education and Training, and the commitment to the "New Deal" for the workforce, provide the foundations to achieve these objectives. As we progress, we will be supported by the regional consortia, Estyn and a wide range of stakeholders.

An update on Successful Futures

4. *Successful Futures* sets out 68 recommendations for Welsh Government and they have been accepted in full. This provides us with the foundations for a curriculum shaped by the very latest, international thinking, which will equip young people with the skills necessary to succeed in life.
5. We are now in the process of building a curriculum that supports our children and young people to be:

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives;
 - Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
 - Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
 - Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
6. We have already made progress. *Successful Futures* highlighted that digital competence is of paramount importance to a young person's life chances and we have accepted that digital competence should be a cross-curriculum responsibility in line with literacy and numeracy. This is something the Welsh Government strongly agrees with. Digital Pioneer Schools have been identified and they have already started working together.
 7. In relation to the wider pioneer model, we have invited consortia to work with their schools across Wales, including primary, secondary and special schools to apply to be Curriculum and New Deal Pioneer Schools. These Pioneer Schools will work with experts to lead on shaping the future of learning in Wales. Teaching professionals must play a central part in the design and development of our new curriculum and I am confident they are both willing and able to take on this challenge.
 8. We are clear that the profession needs to be supported to provide good quality teaching that delivers expected outcomes of learning for children and young people. The New Deal for the Education Workforce has been developed with the requirements of the new curriculum at its heart. We are therefore in a position to make an immediate start to support and prepare the education workforce for the changes ahead.
 9. Alongside this, we are making changes to Initial Teacher Training and Education and will work with training providers to ensure that newly qualified teachers are equipped to deliver the new curriculum.
 10. We have established an independent advisory group to guide us as we develop the new curriculum. This will be chaired by Professor Graham Donaldson with support from Professor John Furlong.
 11. We need to maintain momentum as there is clearly an appetite for change, which we saw during the Great Debate. We are on track to publish our plan, later in the autumn, to take *Successful Futures* forward.

Regional Education Consortia

12. The regional education consortia have a crucial role in the delivery of school improvement and will work to underpin the teaching profession in taking forward the challenges and demands of the new curriculum. The National Model for Regional Working came into operation in April 2014. The core purpose of consortia as outlined in the Model is to improve learner outcomes for all young people; ensure the delivery of high quality

teaching and learning; and to support and empower school leaders to better lead their schools. This is underpinned by a self-improving school system, where school improvement is supported and enabled by schools working collaboratively together. The consortia role is to facilitate and orchestrate this collaboration.

13. Early progress made by the four regional consortia was assessed by the Wales Audit Office and Estyn during fieldwork visits undertaken between November 2014 and January 2015. Their two reports were jointly published on 3 June 2015.
14. Both Estyn and the WAO noted positive progress achieved since the implementation of the National Model and made a number of recommendations to Welsh Government, the four regional education consortia and all 22 local authorities. All recommendations have been accepted in a national collective, system-wide response. Many of the recommendations have already been actioned, reflecting the progress made between the field-work being undertaken to the present time. We are working to ensure that there is clarity between ADEW, Welsh Government and the Diocesan authorities in regard to school improvement.
15. The work of the consortia is kept under review through an integrated cycle of review and challenge sessions. These sessions have clearly set aims and objectives. The summer session focused solely on progress made by the consortia in addressing the recommendations. The Autumn session will continue to monitor progress along with assessing the consortia's impact on learner outcomes.
16. As the National Model beds in, we have seen an increase in the sharing of good practice with joint good practice seminars delivered across Wales. More recently the four consortia arranged to facilitate a two day sharing good practice to be held on 10 and 11 September. The outline of the session includes governance and accountability; intervention models and categorisation; impactful strategies for support including school to school working and PDG; value for money and quality assurance. Importantly, the session provides the opportunity to jointly highlight and tackle all-Wales issues with each consortium leading nationally on named issues and priorities, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication. Increasingly, strategic leads are liaising with counterparts in other consortia to share planning, which is helping to ensure greater consistency.
17. Whilst consortia are increasingly sharing good practice within and across their regions, they are also collaborating formally. Working together the four regional consortia formed an independent Partnership to bid for the contract to perform the external verification of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3.
18. Consortia have improved the support and challenge they provide to school leaders. Quality assurance arrangements for consortia challenge

advisers have been strengthened, training has been provided for all challenge advisers, and generally consortia know their schools well, with schools reporting that their performance is scrutinised closely and fairly by challenge advisers. For example, the schools categorisation system is undertaken by regional consortia and moderated and verified at a national level to ensure consistency of approach.

19. Consortia have a key role to play in the identification and support of Successful Futures, New Deal and Digital Pioneer Schools and the rollout of the programme up to 2021. They are fully integrated into the governance arrangements for the development and delivery of the Successful Futures programme.

Measuring Impact

20. Estyn reported that whilst general improvements in standards of pupil attainment over the past three years could not be solely attributed to the development of regional consortia, nevertheless the published data reflects a gradual improvement in pupil attainment across all four regions. Early indications are that this progress has been generally maintained.
21. This year, differences in exam entry patterns have made the summer results only a partial picture of performance in Wales. Thousands of students sat some of their GCSE exams early in November or January depending on the subject. However the successes of those students were not recorded in the summer results. This means it is only in the autumn, when we get the verified GCSE results for the academic year, that we will see the full picture of our performance.
22. In terms of core subject performance, in English Language performance at A*-C for 16 year olds increased to 64.0% while for Mathematics, data from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), indicates performance at A*-C for 16 year olds for the academic year 2014/15 saw an improvement of 1.2 percentage points to 62.8%.
23. The main measure of performance however is the Level 2 inclusive data. This is the percentage of pupils attaining 5 GCSEs/equivalent A*-C including English/Welsh and maths. Provisional data for 2015 will be published on 24th September, and provisional consortia level results will be available from that date. This data includes all qualifications attained by pupils up to the end of KS4, regardless of when taken. The final information will be available in early December.
24. Performance at A levels in summer 2015 was stable with a pass rate of 74.3 percentage at A*-C for All Subjects, with an increase in students achieving A* grades.
25. Performance in the KS2 core subject indicator (CSI) in 2015 was higher across Wales and in each consortium compared to 2014, with over 87% of pupils in each consortium now achieving the CSI. There has been a

steady improvement in each consortium between 2012 and 2015, with increases ranging from 4 percentage points in EAS to 6.8 percentage points in Central South.