

Palmantu'r Ffordd / Paving The Way

A Strategic Review of 3-19 Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Carmarthenshire

Executive Summary of Findings

1. Background to report

1.1. Future Historians may be minded to conclude that 2015 constituted a watershed moment in Welsh education, whereby old paradigms were dispensed with, heralding a new dawn of fresh and remodelled thinking. It is thus timely that Welsh Government has initiated a programme of curriculum and assessment reform. Certain revisions to practice have already been instigated under the *Qualified for Life (QfL)* agenda (October 2014). Furthermore, and of great significance, is the publication on February 25th, 2015 of Professor Graham Donaldson's much awaited '*Successful Futures – an independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales*' which spans the 3-16 age range. Allied to this is Professor John Furlong's report on Initial Teacher Education and Training, '*Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers*' – 2015), both of which will be marshalled by the Ministerial *New Deal* for the education workforce.

1.2. Prof. Donaldson's report and its wide-reaching implications will feature prominently in our thinking as a nation and as a Local Authority in the years ahead. It is up to us now to harness its potential for the benefit of every learner, school and teacher within our Authority. Working closely with our regional consortia colleagues in ERW, there are a number of firm recommendations provided within '*Paving The Way*' – which will strive to build upon our strengths, whilst also moving forward in concert with the philosophical and practical proposals espoused by Prof. Donaldson and the overarching QfL agenda. The adopted title, '*Palmantu'r Ffordd / Paving the Way*' alludes to a path which can be forged for the benefit of our young people, both present and future.

1.3. A **six year** programme has been outlined. *Paving the Way* is considered primarily a **bridge between Donaldson's vision and the reality of how it might start to look on the ground**. With due regard to the component parts of *Successful Futures*, conceptual tools, models and scaffolds are proposed which might serve to provoke further debate as to the practicalities and requirements of implementation. With an integrated approach, other policy drivers can be harnessed and channelled in the same direction – in a complementary rather than a contradictory manner.

2. Purposes of Report

- To outline the main themes and challenges in present-day curriculum planning, in response to imminent and far reaching curriculum reforms at a national scale;
- To propose original responses to complicated problems posed by impending curriculum reform – with proposals at strategic, operational and tactical levels
- To cultivate a debate as to ways forward in developing, adapting and improving curriculum planning in Carmarthenshire schools – in order to improve outcomes for all;
- To provide preliminary ideas for developing a bespoke programme of school leadership development in the field of curriculum planning, pedagogy and assessment for school leaders in Carmarthenshire;
- To provide pointers for further work in respect of raising standards which can be supported by curriculum reform;
- To offer firm strategies for implementing meaningful curriculum change, in order to benefit the education of all learners in Carmarthenshire.
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3. Report Outcomes

3.1. The Qualified for Life agenda offers a programme of **major reform**. The educational landscape or change setting to which this reform may be applied is considered at three scales:

- **Macro Scale** – curricular implications of worldwide trends such as globalisation and the growth of the knowledge economy, coupled with national policy directives
- **Meso Scale** – Regional and Local Authority initiatives and structures
- **Micro Scale** – implications for school curriculum planning and classroom practice

3.2. There are **39 recommendations** in total which offer **strategic, operational** and **tactical** proposals, the following being the main conclusions:

- The development of an **Intelligent Curriculum**, which is faithful to the following strap line:

'Ensuring that all children and young people in Carmarthenshire are both well qualified and well educated'

- An intelligent curriculum ensures the **holistic development** of young people, prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of:
 - 21st century **life and living** and nurtures their attributes as independent lifelong learners
 - **Pursuing career pathways** into FE, HE and the world of work (in the local, regional, national and international labour market)
- Embraces the concept of **Subsidiarity**, with its stress on **locally determined educational solutions** to local challenges and opportunities, under the guidance of a degree of national steer and primary legislation
- Advocates further work on extending initial ideas offered in developing:
 - A **Carmarthenshire Curriculum Statement**
 - A **Local Curriculum** and **Prospectus** – thus developing pupils' sense of place, sense of time and promoting the Welsh Dimension in an **ethical**, international context
 - A **Carmarthenshire Curriculum Entitlement** and **Learner Guarantee**
 - Will be **complementary** to the work being developed by Matt Morden (see background papers and Appendix below)
- Recommends approaches to integrating various policy initiatives impinging upon curriculum design and delivery – *Qualified for Life*, *Successful Futures*, *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers (2015)*, *The New Deal (2013)*, *Lead Creative Schools (2015)* and *Bilingual+1 nation (2015)*
- Proposes that the education system in Carmarthenshire continues to evolve into a '**Global 4th Way**' system, resonant of approaches adopted currently in Scandinavia, and favoured by Welsh Ministers
- Advocates nurturing the **employability** of learners in the local, regional and worldwide economy, with particular stress on developing **thinking** skills as a foundation for content learning:
 - Teaching for thinking
 - Teaching of thinking
 - Thinking about thinking
- Proposes adopting a '**teach less, learn more**' philosophy, to facilitate **deep learning**
- Building upon **Successful Futures** in particular, this report (in Chapters 2 and 4 particularly) proposes several **curriculum, pedagogy and assessment models and concepts** which can be incorporated **to cultivate an initial debate** as to how the Donaldson Review might start to be implemented on a

practical basis, with particular reference to establishing the **four core purposes** within the curriculum.

- This can lead to a **structured programme of professional learning for school leaders and practitioners in Carmarthenshire**
 - **Pioneer Schools** in Carmarthenshire will be at the vanguard of developments initially, but clearly expected to network and interact within their local clusters in an **ethos of curriculum co-construction** from the outset:
 - Our **Pioneer Curriculum Schools** will develop the **6 Areas of Learning and Experience** and investigate learning **of** subjects, learning **between** subjects and learning **through** subjects and will decide if their solutions to curriculum development will be **conservative, prudent** or **radical**
 - Our **Pioneer New Deal Schools** will forge developments in the professional learning and development required to realise curriculum reform
 - Our **Pioneer Digital Schools** will help realise the **National Digital Competence Framework** by September 2016
 - Curriculum reform will be '**for the many, not the few**', with all schools - irrespective of Pioneer status - encouraged and expected to buy in to the developments in their respective localities
- Discusses practical ways of developing:
 - Leadership of **Curriculum** (at whole school and departmental/phase level);
 - Leadership of **Pedagogy**;
 - Leadership of **Assessment** (Assessment **of** learning, Assessment **for** learning and Assessment **as** learning);
 - Leadership of **Standards**;
 - **System** Leadership;
 - Leadership of **Change**;
 - Leadership of **People and Resources**
- Provides a pragmatic model for taking forward Donaldson's recommendations 21-30 (**the Role of the Welsh language and teaching through the medium of Welsh in the curriculum**)
- In Chapter 3, highlights **quantitative evidence** where performance standards require attention and where **curriculum development and school improvement** can interact jointly to bring about further improvements:
 - Focuses on **Performance at various Key stages**, with particular **emphasis on KS4**
 - **Closing attainment gaps** between groups of learners
 - On an LA level, exemplifies and proposes methods of tackling:
 - **Between school** variation
 - **Within school** variation
 - **Between subject** variation
 - **Within subject** variation
- Proposes developing a **culture of curriculum design** to unleash 'greatness in the classroom'
- Drawing on empirical curriculum data, offers an **evaluative examination of Carmarthenshire secondary school curricula and timetabling models** with recommendations for ways forward
- Provides recommendations as to the **Governance of Curriculum reform – with a stress on school to school working in a self-improving system**
- Considers a **change management strategy**, **implementation phases** and proposed **timelines**

4. Conclusion

The Donaldson review is about unleashing professional creativity; it is also about raising the bar. It is about equipping 21st Century teachers to truly lay the foundations of 21st Century teaching and learning for learners of the present day and learners of the future. Irrespective of whether the vagaries of politics pose risks to this reform agenda, the genie is out of the bottle. We might decide to do a lot of this regardless of the affairs of state - because it is inherently right to do so. Paving the way to the future is within our gift; it is up to us to forge that path intelligently and with reverence to the insightful steer that we've been given. It is up to us to realise that future, and it may even become our legacy to future generations.

Postscript / Appendix

Pioneer Schools in Carmarthenshire (announced by the Minster 5.11.15)

- **New Deal Pioneer Schools**: Bryngwyn & Glanymor; Coedcae; Strade; Bro Banw.
- **Curriculum Pioneer Schools**: Bro Myrddin; Llandybie; Bryngwyn & Glanymor
- **Digital Pioneer Schools**: 'Ar Garlam' Group – Teilo Sant, Llangadog, Peniel, Y Dderwen and Nantgaredig

Lead Creative Schools in Carmarthenshire (announced July 2015)

Rhyd y Gors; Coedcae, Bigyn, Stebonheath, Halfway; Maes y Morfa; Heol Goffa; Peniel; Burry Port; Bro Banw, Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydaman, Y Bedol; Ffwrnnes; Dyffryn Taf

Additional Complementary Information:

Developing in parallel with Paving the Way, since July 2015, Matt Morden - the Learning Transformation Manager - has been undertaking a review of 11-19 education in Carmarthenshire. This work follows discussions between the local authority and Coleg Sir Gar regarding the development of a strategic vision for education in the County. This element will focus particularly upon the local learning network and the collaboration/partnership agreements which will be deemed necessary in order to realise mandatory curriculum requirements. Furthermore, it will propose new ways forward in light of changes such as the GCSE 'capped 9' measure which will be operative from 2017 and take account of proposed changes to post 16 funding.

Given the strength of current partnership working between schools, the college and the local authority, it was felt that that a shared strategic approach is needed to deliver the 11-19 education and training in Carmarthenshire in the future. This approach also informs the future plan for curriculum delivery in the county and is complementary to the main overarching 3-19 report.

The 11-19 review component will identify the universal curriculum offered to young people at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in Post 16 Learning and the learning pathways that link these educational phases. It will also highlight the **range of targeted support** available for young people with additional needs. The combination of the universal curriculum offer, related subject choices **and their content** and the targeted support (e.g. counselling, Careers Education and Guidance) available will make up a Carmarthenshire learner entitlement at each of the three stages in 11-19 education and training. This will link directly with local labour market needs, with the vocational pathways being prioritised around key industry growth sectors both locally and regionally.

Following scoping of the relevant policy and the development of provisional curriculum models a draft report for this element of the global review is currently in development. Informed by consultation with all relevant parties, it is hoped that this will be completed by early January 2015, with the recommendations focussing on:

- The agreement of the key and common components of 11-14, 14-16 and 16-19 shared curriculum offer;
- The agreement of the shared governance and commissioning structure for revised curriculum offer ;
- An implementation plan for an agreed curriculum model across all Carmarthenshire Secondary Schools and the FE Sector .

Pending consultation on the contents of the report, synergy with the 3-19 review in its totality will be in place by January 2016 for final reporting. Subject to consultation on the contents of the final report and progress through the democratic process it is envisaged that an agreed Carmarthenshire curriculum could be implemented from September 2016.