

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru | Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

CR 33

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru & Cymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru

Response from: Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) & Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales. The three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA is pleased to be able to respond to the CYP&E Committee's *Review of Curriculum Reform*. This response has been informed by the knowledge and expertise of the Association of the Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW). As such this is a joint consultation response on behalf of the WLGA and ADEW and represents the collective views of the 22 local authorities in Wales.
4. The following response is structured around the specific questions as set out in the Committee Chair's letter requesting evidence.

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| | Comments: |
| <p>Progress towards producing a draft Curriculum for Wales in time for its publication by the Welsh Government for public feedback in April 2019;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In too many cases, not enough of what <i>actually</i> matters has been included in the AoLEs. • Currently, mathematics appears to be the best-defined AoLE. The detail provided by the “low-level” knowledge, skills and experiences will help teachers with their planning and support continuity and progression in pupils’ learning. • In the main, too many statements are generic, poorly defined and weak on knowledge and skills development. As a result, it is likely that pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills development will be left-to-chance, i.e. relying heavily on the knowledge and experience of individual teachers as opposed to an entitlement defined by the curriculum. Pupils <i>without</i> strong family support are at risk of missing out the most. • In addition, in its current form, the new curriculum has a large number of “what matters” statements for teachers to plan for and deliver. In total, there are 30 “what matters” statements across the AoLEs that teachers will need to plan, teach and assess from Foundation Phase to GCSE. This will be particularly challenging for primary teachers where the load is not shared across departments/faculties. In addition, the overlap with the LNF and DCF cross-curricular planning documents will potentially add to teachers’ workload and planning difficulties. It could be beneficial in certain AoLEs to consider a different approach for packaging the primary curriculum. For example, a general science “what matters” statement might simplify teachers’ planning in primary schools. In addition, the DCF might be sufficient to deliver themes related to computer science in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. • Problem-solving strategies (heuristics) are not clearly defined in the curriculum. • References to Wales, UK and Europe are not consistent through AoLEs. Occasionally, the documents refer to “Wales and wider world”, in others it is “Wales and UK”, and elsewhere “Wales and Britain”. A consistent approach would be beneficial. Moreover, it would be desirable if the curriculum supported pupils’ awareness and understanding of Wales’s position in the UK, the relationship between the other home countries and the UK’s relationship with Europe more clearly. • Foundation Phase – appropriate consideration has not been given to pupils’ earliest starting points in most of the |

what matters statements, nor do the progression steps include enough detail. Many statements are too generic.

- Practitioners would value more focus on the 'how' alongside the 'what'

Publication dates for all AoLEs have been scheduled for December and January. All AoLE's are on schedule for completion.

The region provides curriculum updates via a network based in Hwb, individuals in schools and local authority officers are able to join this network and access to the latest updates. There is an expectation that people will be accountable for accessing the information for themselves. However, this has not been made sufficiently clear enough to people. Other than information heard anecdotally or sourced directly, the systematic methods for informing the sector of developments are weak. It would appear that *Dysg* - the Welsh Government Newsletter is the main source of information cited by Challenge Adviser teams. Information was shared via National Challenge Adviser training in June. It is also reported that Network Leaders of Learning appear to have far greater knowledge and awareness than Challenge Advisers.

Lang/Lit AoLE (5 WMs)

- It is difficult to understand how this area of learning can map out progression equitably between English, Welsh and modern foreign languages as it attempts to treat mother-tongue languages alongside second languages. Language acquisition and grammatical understanding will start at very different points depending on whether the language is a first or second language.
- The well-established fields of oracy, reading and writing in language development, while referenced, are not that well defined.
- It is a concern that modern foreign languages, such as French, are not explicitly identified in this AoLE; they are referred to as "other languages". The lack of prominence is likely to undermine their importance in the curriculum, and, given there has been around a 50% decline in the uptake of MFL languages at GCSE since 2002, it is likely that modern foreign languages, such as French, German and Spanish, will diminish further.
- This AoLE does not highlight how the English language had evolved, for example, by making explicit links between English words and their derivations from Greek,

French/Latin and Norse. This would be beneficial in assisting pupils with their English language acquisition.

- The outcome statements are very general, and at times lack clarity, for example, “I am interested in different languages and cultures” and “I reflect critically on my language and the language I hear/view/read, adapting my own responses to different audiences and purposes”. In essence, the progression steps do not always clearly map out progression, and, in their current form, are likely to be difficult for teachers to use.
- There is limited detail, in contrast to the mathematics AoLE, which is not helpful in aiding teachers’ planning.
- There are no specific references to significant British & UK culture/events, which have been pivotal to language development in the British Isles.
- There are many high-level & grandiose themes at the expense of the nuts & bolts of language development – speaking, reading & writing.
- Overall, this AoLE is likely to be difficult to use when planning the language development of pupils in the separate areas of English, Welsh and modern foreign languages.

Maths/numeracy AoLE (4 WMs)

- The “what matters” statements follow well established mathematical domains, which are broadly – number, algebra, shape and statistics. Teachers of mathematics, and indeed non-specialists, are likely to welcome this approach, as they are well defined/understood areas in mathematics.
- Progression is broadly mapped out well in the progression steps, although the outcomes statements are not particularly helpful if used as assessment criteria as they are too general, (e.g. “I illustrate data in different ways”, and “I analyse connections between shapes”).
- Important problem-solving strategies (heuristics) are not identified well enough. These strategies are not only important to mathematics but also other subject areas. Strategies would include:
 - Draw a diagram / model, break a problem down, use guess-and-check (trial & improvement), Be systematic – listing/ordering/grouping/tables, work backwards, look for a pattern, graph it, Generalise and use algebra, Use before-after concept, Restate the problem in another way, Think of a related problem.
- Teachers will welcome the low-level skills appendix; it will provide them with some of the detail that they will need

to plan effectively, which is not provided by the outcomes statements. This detail will assist with continuity between primary and secondary phases.

Science/Tech/Computing AoLE (7 WMs)

- At the time of writing, this AoLE appears to be the least developed.
- For the science aspects, the wordy “what matters” statements are “Biology”, “Chemistry” and “Physics”. It seems odd that the pioneers are re-wording these well-understood and defined domains.
- Furthermore, it might be worth considering taking different approaches at primary and secondary – is there a need to take Biology/Chemistry/Physics individually down to progression steps 1/2/3? It might be better to package a general science for primary section, which then becomes more subject-specific in secondary. A concern is that the separate sciences have been split across five what matters statements, which will be cumbersome for teachers’ planning, and particularly in primary schools.
- WM4 (chemistry) appears the most underdeveloped science area at this point. There is a lot of repetition between the achievement outcomes over the progressions steps, e.g. PS3 “I select and use appropriate techniques to separate simple mixtures and am able to justify my choice”. This statement is repeated in PS4. This happens with many statements and raises the question – how will teachers use them to meaningfully assess pupils’ progress?
- Computing has a distinct “what matters” statement, however, there is a significant overlap with the computational-thinking strand of the DCF. The danger here is that it could overload the curriculum, particularly in primary schools. There are some key aspects missing – logic (Boolean operators), database design/interrogation, artificial intelligence, module/procedural programming, and iteration for example.
- The “what matters” statements do not cater for design technology well. This section contains little reference to the craft or skill of working with different materials and components, for example, food, cloth, wood, metal, plastic, circuitry components, for example. The related “what matters” statements contain a lot of design-thinking jargon. While design principles are important, the art of learning a skill/craft with different materials is not well defined.
- It could be there are too many subject domains in this very large and unwieldy AoLE. In addition, consideration of a

different structure for primary and secondary schools, to mitigate against over-loading of the primary curriculum, is worth some thought.

Humanities AoLE (6 WMs)

- A lot has been included in this area. There are six “what matters” statements. These include aspects of philosophy, sociology, politics, media, economics, citizenship, entrepreneurship as well as the significant domains of geography, history and RE. While this is laudable, it raises the question “how will teachers deliver it all?”
- Many of these themes might be better delivered through the Wellbeing AoLE or on a cross-curricular basis.
- Paradoxically, the statements refer to pupils recognising the interconnections between the disciplines of Geography, History & RE while explicit references to teaching these disciplines are less well defined.
- It is helpful that references to Britain and the UK have been included, after initially being absent. However, across all AoLEs, references to Wales, UK and Europe are not consistent. It is important geographically, historically, politically and economically that pupils should develop an awareness of Wales’ position in the UK, the relationship between the other home countries and the UK’s relationship with Europe.
- There is a large variation in the degree of knowledge specified between the “what matters” statements at this point. The lack of knowledge in history appears to be a gap as there are no references to the development of Europe over the last 2,000 years, for example, key events linked to: Romans, Vikings, Normans, discovering the Americas, World Wars I and II. Pupils should develop a core knowledge that will help them understand the world they live in and how it has developed.
- Overall, while this AoLE is very well intentioned, due to a lack of sufficient detail and the inclusion of many additional themes (e.g. citizenship, sociology, business, media etc.), it could lead to large inconsistencies in the knowledge and understanding gained by pupils across schools, i.e. too much will be left to chance at classroom or school level.

AoLE Wellbeing (5 WMs)

- One of the main disciplines in this area is physical education, however, physical and sporting development is not mapped out well.

- Physical development and food nutrition are grouped together in the first “what matters” statement. The risk is that pupils will spend more time talking about being healthy rather than being physically active.
- Furthermore, sport, and what sport entails, is absent in the progression steps. In fact, there is no mention of the word sport. For a proud sporting nation, that Wales is, and the value sport brings to individuals and communities, the lack of prominence of sport is a concern. As a result, there are no references to team and individual sports, and the essence of teamwork/roles is missing. In addition, there is no progression with developing an understanding of the differences between sports (e.g. winter, summer, team, individual, contact, racquet etc.). The concepts of scoring, rules, refereeing, fair play and sportsmanship are not evident.
- It is not clear whether this AoLE replaces the need for the “basic curriculum”, which includes aspects such as sex education and careers and the world of work etc. There are references to some aspects of the basic curriculum (mainly relationships), but it is not clear, particularly, for example, with the world of work/careers.
- Overall, there are too many poorly defined “what matters” statements and achievement outcomes (e.g. particularly in WM2, WM3, WM4) at the expense of PE/sport that is poorly defined. Also, the question of whether the basic curriculum (PSE/RE/SRE/CWW) is incorporated is unclear.

AoLE Expressive arts (3WMs)

- This AoLE attempts to deliver art and music through three “what matters” themes, namely; Explore & Experience, Create & Express, and Reflect & Respond. However, this approach has led to poorly defined and repetitive achievement outcomes across the progression steps. For example, WM1 PS2 “ I experience and explore creative works from Wales and the wider world, reflecting different people and time periods”, and, WM1 PS3 “I have experienced artworks from Wales and the wider world to enrich my own creativity”. The progression between these steps is not clear. This lack of clarity is evident in many of the achievement outcomes between the progression steps.
- At the time of reviewing this AoLE, there was insufficient knowledge and skills mapped out in the disciplines of art and music; for example aspects such as:
 - artistic knowledge/skills – shading, blending, definition, colour, light, perspective etc., or

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| | <p>working with paint, chalk, clay, other materials or digital representations etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ musical knowledge/skills – pitch, octaves, tone, balance/pan, melody, rhythm, instruments, styles, effects, amplification and digital manipulation etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The danger is that the curriculum, and the teaching of it, will not develop pupils’ subject-specific knowledge & skills well enough to allow them to be expressive, creative and reflective in <i>meaningful</i> ways. |
| <p>The role of Pioneer Schools and any opportunities and challenges in their involvement in curriculum design;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the secondary phase, pioneer schools have been tackling the challenges of Donaldson’s curriculum design. Several strategies adopted, such as collapsed weeks and thematic approaches to language development, have been unsuccessful and schools have had to rework their approaches. In the secondary phase, the humanities AoLE has been the most popular area for schools to work with. A few pioneer schools have adjusted their leadership structures to align responsibilities more closely to the new curriculum. Overall, it is too early to judge the impact of any of these changes. ● Most pioneer schools in the primary sector have restructured their leadership teams to support the development of AoLEs. Alongside this, a few schools are reviewing the development of the creative approaches established in foundation phase through into key stage 2, for example, outdoor learning opportunities. Wider consideration to developing the pedagogical principles are beginning to take place, with a few very good examples evident. ● Overall, at this stage, the curriculum reform has been more straightforward to implement in primary schools than in secondary schools. ● Curriculum Pioneer Schools have been directed to work during and in-between AOLE workshops. Individual practitioners working with the AoLE curriculum development groups have demonstrated significant professional development in line with reform. The practicality of releasing staff has been appeased by scheduling regular meetings to aid forward-planning of schools. There have been issues with engagement of some pioneer schools with some clusters reporting a lack of knowledge about the way the new AOLEs are developing. ● Pioneer schools have generally engaged well with other headteachers through their headteacher networks. Individual pioneer schools have engaged their local |

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| | <p>networks whilst trialling aspects of the pioneer work. Local authorities have generally engaged well with other pioneer schools as appropriate across Wales.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This engagement tends to be informal and sporadic with individuals receiving information on an anecdotal basis. • There have been challenges related to the release of teachers from schools, but they appear to have been alleviated somewhat by regular scheduling of meetings well in advance. • This has been a challenging and significant programme of work for pioneer schools, but most have demonstrated good engagement with the work required. |
| <p>The latest position regarding the work of the Working Groups which have been established for each of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE);</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group is nearing the final stages of the development of their respective AoLE frameworks. Much of the information remains within the working groups with information not being shared as there has been much adaptation and revisions to the AOLES. • There is limited knowledge of this at school level as this has not been sufficiently shared with schools or local authorities. |
| <p>The involvement of academic and other external expertise in informing curriculum design</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is awash with experts getting “excited” about curriculum reform however, the reality is that workload-weary teachers will have to try to make it work on the ground. • Dr Steve Munby has made strong contributions in the area of accountability (WG conferences). • A range of experts have been funded to support AoLE groups in curriculum design. The CAMAU project has provided a range of HEI’s and professors to oversee development of professional learning. Members of the Learned Society, the Foundation Phase expert panel, Estyn and Qualifications Wales have consulted on the curriculum frequently. Again the information regarding this being shared with schools is patchy and not consistent. • The engagement of the Learned Society with regards to the Welsh Dimension and International Perspective is to be welcomed. <p>All headteachers have had updates on schools as learning organisations and assessment and progression steps updates through regional conferences. Local authority officers have joined these.</p> |

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| <p>How the 'What Matters?' statements, published in December 2017, are evolving into the design of curriculum content in each of the six AoLEs;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The What Matters statements have evolved from the initial statements developed in December 2017, through several iterations, following on from feedback provided by a range of stakeholders. Academic expertise has directed the feedback and led to revision of the What Matters statements and supporting narrative in each AoLE. The design stage has predominantly revolved around the pioneers and again the sharing of information has been variable. The begs the question how consistent are the key messages and are some schools marginalised and not as engaged as they could or should be? • What matters statements have been shared on learning Wales and have been shared by local authorities as part of headteacher briefings and through LA to school newsletters. • Anecdotally, LAs have had to find out about the 'What Matters' statements themselves and updates and training appear to be limited. |
| <p>Progress in defining achievement outcomes at the various progression steps within the new curriculum;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each AoLE developed a progression narrative in the spring of 2018, linked to each What Matters statement. From these narratives, draft Achievement Outcomes were developed. Each AoLE has been supported by colleagues from CAMAU in developing their progression framework and subsequent Achievement Outcomes. This information again is held within the AOLES and not shared widely with stakeholders and subsequently there is little information within schools. • This has been shared with some local authority officers through various groups that they meet with for example in one authority the Foundation Phase expert group. |
| <p>How the development of the new Curriculum for Wales is aligning with the development of the new national professional learning offer for teachers;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEW has emphasised that not enough is being done to attract high-quality graduates to the teaching profession, particularly with regards to attracting high-calibre graduates to key/core areas of the curriculum. • Information and guidance related to schools as learning organisations (SLOs) has been confusing. Recent autumn WG conferences on the approach to professional learning have not been particularly well organised or delivered. • The development of the new national professional standards is an aspect that schools require further training and support on. • Potentially, workload issues, curriculum reform and other priorities might deter high-calibre graduates from choosing a career in teaching. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national professional learning offer for teachers is currently being developed at a consortia level with Welsh Government, and will align with the new curriculum. • Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) leads are aware of this alignment through WG-led NQT training and development. There has been a consistent message to focus on the four core purposes, with the development of the new curriculum being developed by other groups that are not necessarily linked. |
| <p>Communication with schools and teachers of the curriculum development work being undertaken and the engagement of all schools (not only Pioneer Schools);</p> | <p>This remains weak but there has been some improvement. The timeline is understood but there is little information on how things are progressing. It would be fair to say that initially even the pioneer schools did not know their role for a long period of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pioneer schools are sharing their work (success/challenges) in network meetings. Non-pioneer schools are asking more questions and are beginning to plan for the forthcoming changes. • Further consideration could be given to sharing the work and developments of pioneer schools across clusters in the primary sector. • Curriculum and Professional Learning Pioneers have been supported to engage with Pioneer and partner schools on specific aspects of the design. • This has been shared through regional conferences, however the tone of this is sometimes difficult for people to engage with. • It was recently shared with ADEW by Kevin Palmer and Steve Davies. <p>Each local authority, region and consortium has a role to play in ensuring this happens. Communications through <i>Learning Wales</i> and <i>Dysg</i> take place on a regular basis, however not currently sufficiently effectively. A Series of training events have been delivered for challenge advisers for example through newsletters and training updates regionally and nationally.</p> |
| <p>Effectiveness of the governance arrangements, role of the Independent Advisory Group and Chair Board, and involvement of the</p> | <p>This work is not well known or understood by local authorities and schools. There might be a clearer understanding of this at regional (consortia) level.</p> |

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| <p>Education Reform Strategic Stakeholder Group;</p> | |
| <p>The preparedness of schools and teachers for delivering the new curriculum and to what some extents of the concepts of Professor Donaldson's Successful Futures review are being tested and carried out already;</p> | <p>Schools are already trialling aspects of this work. However the movement of knowledge around the system is insufficiently captured and shared. In some regions, the work of network leaders of learning between clusters and across the region is not transparent or available for all to see.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary schools, in general, are not particularly well prepared for delivering the new curriculum now. Key stage 4 outcomes and changes to GCSE examinations have been more to the front of their minds. However, schools are engaging more. Pioneer schools are still grappling with the challenges of Donaldson's curriculum design. Several strategies adopted, such as collapsed weeks and thematic approaches to language development, have been unsuccessful and schools have had to rework their approaches. Importantly, pioneer schools are sharing these experiences with non-pioneer schools. Overall, it is difficult to gauge the preparedness of the profession as the system is still waiting for the AoLEs to be completed. Many schools are taking a pragmatic wait-and-see approach before making significant changes. • Several schools are adopting a three-year KS4 curriculum. In these schools, pupils effectively have 1½ years of key stage 3 before choosing GCSE courses. This curtailment of key stage 3, will potentially result in too many teachers over-focusing on examination performance at key stage 4 at the expense of delivering a rich, broad and deep curriculum in key stage 3. In effect, the new curriculum might be marginalised in the pursuit of examination performance. • The continuing uncertainty around arrangements/outcomes at KS4 poses a serious risk to our secondary schools devoting sufficient attention to curriculum development at KS3. This is worrying, and better, or more co-ordinated thinking by the Welsh Government could have (and perhaps still could) alleviate this. • Most primary schools are developing the delivery of the new curriculum, building on practice already established within the foundation phase. Many schools adopt a theme or story-based approach which lends itself well to promoting the delivery of the new curriculum. The |

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| | <p>development of pupils' voice in promoting children to be actively involved in contributing to their own creative learning opportunities is promoted well in a few schools although there is wide variance. There are examples of local authorities establishing 'directories of good practice' which aim to facilitate signposting of schools who identify as exhibiting good practice in this and other areas.</p> |
| <p>The role of the Curriculum and Assessment Group in ensuring the development of the curriculum is on track and the outcome of its 'checkpoint' meeting of 13-14 November 2018 to review progress;</p> | <p>This does not appear wellknown to schools. However nationally it is known that there is further work to do in improving 'what matters' statements and the progression steps following inputs from a range of professionals.</p> <p>The Curriculum and Assessment Group (CAG) have reviewed progress and provided advice at specified stages in the process.</p> |
| <p>Progress in developing new assessment arrangements;</p> | <p>Pioneers from each AoLE have begun to develop a line of work linked to developing new assessment arrangements, supported by Qualifications Wales. This is very limited in respect of schools as the current statutory curriculum still takes precedence over what schools have to do, this has resulted in wasted time and energy which could have been used effectively in helping schools to move forward with assessment.</p> <p>Headway in developing the progression steps does not appear to be well known.</p> <p>Glasgow University, in conjunction with TSD, released weighty tome-like reviews on assessing the AoLEs. These reports have been shared with schools, but the main messages from them are not well understood. Overall, the reports are too long, and given the academic style, they are impenetrable for busy teachers. Therefore, currently, schools have little awareness of this aspect.</p> <p>Primary schools continue to use ongoing formative assessment arrangements.</p> |
| <p>The steps being taken to ensure that the new Curriculum for Wales</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are concerns around the ability to recruit sufficient numbers of Welsh-speaking practitioners to deliver and support the new curriculum in the context of the Welsh language and Welsh dimension, and an educational |

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| <p>complements other Welsh Government priorities, including (but not restricted to) Cymraeg 2050;</p> | <p>contribution to policies such as the one million Welsh-speakers by 2050. Regions, supported well by local authorities, have prioritised this but the targets are daunting to say the least.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not clear how all the Welsh Government’s strategies for improvement such as LNF (lit/num framework), PDG, MAT (more able pupils - PISA), national testing, GCSE reforms, new interim KS4 indicators, NNEM (maths), NNEST (science & technology), Bilingual +1 (MFL), lead creative schools (art), Cymraeg 2050, inspection reform, regional consortia and post-16 development all sit together under the umbrella of curriculum reform. In and amongst all the change and reform in the system, potentially, leaders and teachers will be distracted from focusing on what matters – teaching children. • Given the reduction in the uptake of languages and arts at key stage 4 and A-level, it will be challenging to meet specific priorities moving forward. • The draft Curriculum for Wales work to date is fully supportive of Welsh Government Priorities. • Literacy, Numeracy and Digital competence are the three Cross-Curricular responsibilities in the new curriculum. Statutory requirements are being adhered to and included in each AOLE and the overarching documents. • Steps being taken to ensure alignment with other priorities is variable depending on the priority, for example aligning to professional learning is developing well, recruiting sufficient Welsh speakers for the 2050 Welsh target not so well. The development of skill shortages such as leadership and teachers of STEM subjects is poor and as yet undeveloped. |
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| <p>Any other issue stakeholders wish to draw to the Committee’s attention.</p> | <p>None</p> |
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