

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i weithredu diwygiadau addysg](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Implementation of education reforms](#)

IER16

Ymateb gan: Impact School Improvement Ltd

Response from: Impact School Improvement Ltd

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**Nodwch eich barn mewn perthynas â chylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad. | Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference.**

**The level of consistency and equity of learning opportunities for pupils across Wales, given the flexibility for schools to develop their own curricula within a national framework.**

Prior to the implementation of CfW in all primary schools and across some secondary schools, variation of provision was an issue, now this is a given. CfW is a model of curriculum that has variation baked in. What this means for educational opportunity across Wales is that children are learning widely different things, in widely different ways to widely different standards. Indeed, the fact that there are no standards evident within the CfW framework makes not only assessing the quality of learning impossible in all bar literacy and numeracy via the national tests, but also impossible to know exactly what is being learnt, but more importantly what is not being learnt. This means that children are currently experiencing widely different curricula. From a pupil-led curriculum, where planning is driven by pupil requests, so could be a half term on dinosaurs, or pirates, through to a thoroughly pre-planned, coherently sequenced curriculum that includes Greek myths, the classics and democracy. This we feel is a result of the nature of the curriculum model and the autonomy that has been handed to schools, but the lack of a core content or core requirement that would account for up to 25% of what schools teach, with the other 75% of curriculum time enabling local context choice is also a consideration.

We have seen exactly the same issue being grappled with by schools in Scotland and widely reported on not only by the OECD in their [2021 CfE Review](#) but also by standards in schools in Scotland, which have dipped in the last 10 years, and also

reflected in a narrowing of the curriculum described in the [recent study](#) by Stirling University within CfE.

Our experience of working with schools in Wales is that this stems from the level of uncertainty around the accountability system. This may seem to be a leap from equity and consistency to accountability, but schools and teachers want to do the right thing. The right thing is currently measured by accountability. Official monitoring, by Estyn, by LAs and by consortia has an enormous influence over how schools approach their work. The pressure of accountability on the choices that teachers take for their pupils in terms of curriculum, learning experiences and indeed teachers and headteachers wellbeing cannot be underestimated. Only today a headteacher in England committed [suicide](#) after a poor Ofsted report. Of course, you will be told that Estyn is different, but it is not different enough to free headteachers and teachers to disregard its influence when deciding what to include in their curriculum provision.

We believe the level of variation in terms of consistency and equity of learning opportunities is the biggest threat to standards of learning in Wales that we have seen in several decades.

**The professional learning and other support settings are receiving to ensure effective implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.**

Curriculum for Wales is a curriculum framework. This means that schools still need to design their own local curriculum. They need to decide from all that we know and understand in the world, what exactly it is that is essential for children to learn, in what order and how deeply. The complexity and breadth of this challenge has been completely underestimated by Welsh Government. In recent months there has been an attempt to provide high quality pan Wales professional learning in the theory and practice of curriculum design through a number of opt-in, or pilot projects. These are not enough. The fact that very, very few of the professional learning offers available to school are designed to take into account what the [research](#) tells us are the mechanisms of effective professional learning according to the Education Endowment Foundation, is criminal. Welsh Government have made a commitment to create a self improving system that is research-informed and yet they have allowed the large majority of professional learning in Wales that supports implementation of Curriculum for Wales to be anything but. We believe this omission of high quality, research-informed professional learning to support curriculum implementation will in future years be cited as one of the key reasons that Curriculum for Wales has failed

to deliver on Welsh Government's own targets of closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils and creating a world class education system.