

**STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

The Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment: Next Steps

4 March 2015

Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills

It was just under a year ago when I asked Professor Donaldson to undertake a fundamental and wide-ranging review of the school curriculum and of our assessment arrangements here in Wales.

Professor Donaldson brought with him a wealth of experience of education both in Scotland, where he was Chief Inspector for a number of years and played a key role in the introduction of their Curriculum for Excellence, as well as having an important international reputation.

I know that he has been tireless in this task and I am sincerely grateful to him for the dedication and care that he has taken to produce his final report– *Successful Futures*, which was published last week.

I believe this is a seminal piece of work – and I welcome it.

During the review I know that Professor Donaldson met with very significant numbers of children and young people, practitioners and other interested parties. In addition, his call for evidence received over 700 responses, over 300 of which came from children and young people themselves. He also undertook research and looked at a range of international curriculum models.

I know the evidence was very positive about key aspects of our education system, and that Professor Donaldson's recommendations have built on those. They include, the Foundation Phase, Routes for Learning, our focus

on literacy and numeracy and our emphasis on the Welsh language and culture. We should be proud of *all* of this.

But Professor Donaldson's report also builds a powerful case for change – which he argues is necessary if we are to give our children the best chance of a successful future in the twenty first and indeed the twenty second centuries.

As he points out in his report – the first national curriculum was introduced as long ago as 1988. This was before the World Wide Web, and before the very significant advances in technology and globalisation which have fundamentally changed the way we live and work today

Professor Donaldson's report argues that our curriculum needs to be simplified, reorganised, and modernised – if we are to ensure our learners have the best chance of a successful future.

His proposals are radical and wide ranging and envisage a new and exciting approach to the curriculum that will generate better learning and higher standards. Better learning because it focuses on what really matters in a modern school curriculum – higher standards because it will set high expectations for learning and seek to help young people meet and exceed them.

At the heart of his report is a vision for what a well educated young person in Wales should look like. He articulates this vision through four *purposes* of the curriculum and argues that they should underpin everything that happens in schools – including providing us with a measure for our success.

He recommends that the four purposes should help all our children and young people to become:

- ambitious, capable learners;
- enterprising, creative contributors;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals.

One of Professor Donaldson's principles of curriculum design is that of subsidiarity – and in this vein he argues that to enable schools to achieve this vision, schools need to have much greater scope to provide a creative, engaging and challenging curriculum – within the context of an overarching national curriculum framework.

I believe that Professor Donaldson has set out an exciting vision of the future of learning in Wales – a vision that I find extremely convincing and inspiring.

But neither I, nor the Department for Education and Skills, can or should develop this curriculum on our own. I am clear that it has to be built for the profession, by the profession.

As I said earlier – Professor Donaldson's report has at its core the principle of subsidiarity – and I think he is right. That's why I am determined that we engage – from the outset – with as many people from across Wales as possible. With the profession, parents, children and young people and with the wider community, including businesses. I intend to listen to what they have to say about Professor Donaldson's recommendations and about how we implement them. That is why, today, I am launching the Great Debate.

I will ensure that the Great Debate gives maximum opportunity for engagement by providing a programme of activities that include classroom debates, webinar sessions and some face-to face sessions with Professor Donaldson. The on-line engagement pack will contain information about the report and film clips from Professor Donaldson explaining his vision.

I want to make sure everyone has a chance to contribute, so the pack will contain an adult and child friendly questionnaire.

I would urge everyone to take time to complete this questionnaire. In this way – I can be sure that my formal response to the report – which I intend to publish in the summer – reflects the views of the citizens of Wales.

If change is to come, which I firmly believe it must, that change will take many years to achieve. We will need to maintain pace and momentum – and hold our nerve.

The ongoing Great Debate will sustain that momentum and will help us develop manageable and realistic plans. We need to take time to get this right, whilst maintaining pace, passion and professionalism.

Critically, we also need to focus on building understanding, commitment and capacity– Professor Furlong’s review of Initial Teacher Education and Training and the New Deal to improve teachers’ professional development, details of which I will be announcing in the next few weeks, will help do just that.

At this stage, it would be neither appropriate nor possible for me to quantify the exact cost of implementing the new curriculum envisaged by Professor Donaldson. That said, I have already identified £1m to support initial scoping work. I have also earmarked a further £2m in 2015–16 to begin to develop the new curriculum and the New Deal.

Professor Donaldson has given us a blue print for a world class curriculum – which will give us better learning and higher standards. We must work together to embrace this opportunity to build a successful future of all our children and young people.