

Curriculum and Assessment

Introduction

The National Curriculum is divided into four Key Stages, Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7), Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11), Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) and Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16). Local education authority maintained schools must teach the basic and the National Curriculum. Pupils are statutorily assessed to establish their starting point when they first enter school in reception or first year and there are further statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. At Key Stage 1, pupils are assessed by their teacher in the National Curriculum core subjects (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science). At Key Stage 2 the tests and tasks are optional, but there is statutory teacher assessment in the core subjects. At Key Stage 3 statutory assessments are required for all 14 year-olds in all National Curriculum subjects, core and non-core (Welsh second language, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art, music, physical education, religious education and modern foreign languages). At Key Stage 4 there are only five mandatory National Curriculum subjects (English, Welsh or Welsh second language, mathematics, science and physical education). There is no legal requirement to enter pupils for GCSE examinations in National Curriculum subjects.

The Welsh Baccalaureate (the Welsh Bacc) is a new qualification, introduced in pilot centres in September 2003. It is an over-arching qualification formed of approved qualifications, such as those currently taken in school or college and the compulsory Core which includes four components, Key Skills; Wales, Europe and the World; Work-related Education and Personal and Social Education. The Welsh Baccalaureate is currently offered at two levels - Intermediate and Advanced. From September 2007, it will be available at 76 centres across Wales with a staged roll-out to make it widely available across Wales¹.

Table 1: Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 summary

Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected level in teacher assessments

	Key Stage 1 (L2+)			Key Stage 2 (L4+)			Key Stage 3 (L5+)		
	2005	2006	% change 2005/06	2005	2006	% change 2005-06	2005	2006	% change 2005-06
English	83.8	83.1	-0.7	79.3	78.6	-0.6	67.2	67.8	0.6
Welsh	89.5	88.6	-0.9	76.3	75.5	-0.9	74.9	71.9	-3.0
Mathematics	87.3	87.2	-0.1	79.9	81.0	1.1	72.9	71.7	-1.2
Science	89.4	89.4	0.1	86.6	85.6	-1.0	71.8	73.3	1.5

Source: Statistical First Release: National Curriculum Assessments of 7, 11 and 1 Year Olds: Wales, 2006

Table 2: GCSE and A Levels and vocational equivalents

	2005	2006	% change 2005-06
<i>Pupils in their final year of compulsory education</i>			
GCSEs or vocational equivalent			
Percentage achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C	52.2	53.8	1.6
Percentage achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G	85.2	86.0	0.8
<i>Pupils aged 17 at the start of the academic year</i>			
A Levels or vocational equivalent			
Percentage achieving two or more A levels grade A to C	67.6	68.1	0.5
Percentage achieving two or more A levels grade A to E	94.4	93.9	-0.5

Source: Statistical First Release: GCSE/GNVQ and A, AS and AVCE results in Wales 2006

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

- The *Education and Inspections Act 2006*ⁱⁱ received Royal Assent on 8 November 2006. Section 178 of the Act contained wide powers for the Assembly to make subordinate legislation, known as 'framework powers'. A draft Order in Councilⁱⁱⁱ to convert the framework powers in the Act into powers for the Assembly to make Assembly Measures in the same policy areas was debated and approved by the Assembly in Plenary on 7 March 2007. Powers included in the Order include those in connection with the curriculum in schools maintained by local education authorities.
- "Education and training" is field 5 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over education matters through Legislative Competence Orders.

Key Welsh Government documents from the Second Assembly:

The *Learning Country: Vision into Action*^{iv} is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010.

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills proposes to revise the National Curriculum Subject Orders and phase in the implementation of a revised National Curriculum with effect from September 2008. The consultation period closed on 30 March 2007. The intention is for a single coherent framework for curriculum, assessment and qualifications 3-19 which will help schools to raise standards of achievement and widen educational opportunity.^v

The Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following curriculum and assessment issues for the attention of the Third Assembly:

- Monitoring the review of the National Curriculum that is currently underway;
- General monitoring of the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills performance and delivery, following the merger of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Qualifications and Assessment Authority (ACCAC);
- Continued monitoring of Estyn focussing in particular on corporate plans; scrutinising the performance of the body during the reporting period and considering priorities and challenges for future years; and how the body is working with the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS).

Useful Links

- Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales whose aim is to raise standards and quality of education and training in Wales through inspection and advice, in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government: <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/home.asp>
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering education and lifelong learning issues: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>
- School performance information (assessment and qualification results) can be viewed for individual schools on the Local Government Data Unit Wales website: <http://www.npd-wales.gov.uk/index.cfm?task=login&LOGINPASSWORD=joepublic&LOGINUSERNAME=public&disclaimaccept=1&lc=E>
- The Welsh Baccalaureate website provides a range of information on the Welsh Bacc qualification: <http://www.ngfl-cymru.org.uk/wbq-home.htm>

Further information

For further information on any aspect of Education in Wales, please contact Anne Thomas, Members' Research Service (Anne.Thomas@wales.qsi.Gov.UK), 029 2089 8966

ⁱ Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, *Green Light for the Welsh Bacc*, 18 October 2006

ⁱⁱ The *Education and Inspections Act 2006* (C40)

ⁱⁱⁱ The *National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Conversion of Framework Powers) Order 2007* (No.910/2007)

^{iv} Welsh Assembly Government *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* 26 October 2006

^v *Statutory consultation on the proposals for the National Curriculum Subject Orders*