Last March I appointed Professor Graham Donaldson to lead a comprehensive, wide ranging and independent review of the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. Over the past year Professor Donaldson has gathered international evidence alongside feedback from the people of Wales to inform his thinking. I understand the response to his call for evidence was an overwhelming success with over 700 respondents, including children and young people, practitioners, parents/carers, organisations and businesses.

Professor Donaldson’s report Successful Futures, is published today and can be accessed at http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/curriculum-for-wales/?lang=en

Professor Donaldson’s report identifies the shortcomings of the current curriculum arrangements, which essentially remain as devised in 1988, a world before the World Wide Web and the advances in technology and globalisation that affect the way we live and work today. His report is clear that the curriculum has become overloaded, complicated and, in parts, outdated. The need for change is clear and Professor Donaldson has identified very real strengths in Wales, the Foundation Phase and the commitment to the Welsh language and culture on which we can build.

The report’s recommendations are radical and wide-ranging and aim to provide a vision for what a successful young person leaving statutory education should look like. It proposes that this vision of a successful young person should be captured in curriculum purposes and form the basis of everything that we do in schools, and that assessment and accountability arrangements should be primarily concerned with whether or not these purposes are being achieved.
The report recommends that the entirety of the school curriculum should be designed to help all children and young people to become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

To support these purposes, Professor Donaldson has set out a new framework for organising the curriculum, with Areas of Learning and Experience providing a means to combine subjects and other important aspects of learning to encourage connections in learning and opportunities to apply learning in different ways. Recognising that confident and creative use of digital technology is increasingly central to life, learning and work, the report proposes that digital competence should become a cross-curriculum responsibility for all teachers alongside literacy and numeracy. These changes combined with the proposals for progression and assessment mark a radical departure from the curriculum of the last century. They provide us with the opportunity to build a new curriculum for Wales built in the 21st Century for the 21st Century.

Professor Donaldson is clear that the sustained and active participation of educational practitioners and the wider community is essential to building a new curriculum and I share the commitment that this will be a curriculum built by all of us.

Professor Donaldson has articulated a compelling, exciting and ambitious vision for the curriculum in Wales. The scope and scale of the changes envisaged are both fundamental and wide-ranging and our new curriculum will take time to create and secure. The New Deal, which will enable the workforce to plan, develop and renew their practice to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead, coupled with Professor Furlong’s review of Initial Teacher Education and Training will be crucial in supporting implementation of any new curriculum for Wales.

Following the publication of Professor Donaldson’s review, we will be launching the ‘Great Debate’ on the curriculum. I envisage this debate taking place over a significant period of time, but the first phase will allow the people of Wales to engage with some of the big issues in Professor Donaldson’s report, including the case for change, and the nature of the 4 purposes of the curriculum. This first phase of the Great Debate will include a series of events across Wales to take the views of the education profession and to talk to businesses, parents, children and young people about the recommendations outlined by Professor Donaldson. Details of the Great Debate will be communicated via Learning
Wales, Digs, Twitter and other channels. We will produce a communication pack which will provide information for all stakeholders to take an active part in the discussion.

There will be a programme of activity to include debates in the classroom, webinar sessions and also face-to face sessions with Professor Donaldson. For those people who might not be able to attend in person, there will be opportunity to feed in to the debate on-line.

Subject to the outcome of this first phase of debate, engagement on the detail will come later – including active participation by the profession with the detailed development of the new curriculum.

Any plans for implementation of new curriculum arrangements will need to take into account the best interests of those children and young people who are already in school. We must, of course, ensure that they continue to receive the best possible education – that we continue to drive up standards of literacy and numeracy, and improve outcomes for those in receipt of free school meals. Professor Donaldson recommends that “The revised curriculum and assessment arrangements should be introduced through an agile change strategy that establishes understanding and support, sets a measured pace, builds capacity and manages dependencies” – and I can assure you of my commitment to this approach if changes are to be made.

I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to Professor Donaldson for the dedication and care that he has taken in conducting this review and for offering us the opportunity to build in Wales, for our young people, a world leading curriculum.