

Thursday 05 February 2015

Teaching profession invited to work with Minister in developing new Curriculum for Wales

In a major speech aimed at the teaching profession in Wales, Education Minister, Huw Lewis today invited professionals to work with him in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

During his speech at the Nantgarw campus of Coleg y Cymoedd, the Minister said the profession would be 'critical' to delivering the new Curriculum for Wales when Graham Donaldson issues his report at the end of the month.

He said 'standards can't run ahead of the quality of those at the chalkface' and talked about his plans for a 'New Deal' for the workforce to overhaul professional development as a way of helping them deliver the new curriculum and higher standards in the classroom.

Speaking from the Nant Garw campus of Coleg y Cymoedd, which has benefitted from £34m of Welsh Government and European funding, the Minister said the challenge was to ensure what 'went on inside the classroom matched the world class buildings around it'.

He said Wales was beginning the work toward the new curriculum from strong foundations and highlighted the most recent GCSE results, the attainment levels of pupils eligible for free meals and last week's Estyn annual report which talked about a 'new momentum' in Welsh education.'

The Minister said:

"The National Curriculum of 1988 has served an important purpose but the message from Graham Donaldson's review will be that it has had its day.

"We know our new made in Wales curriculum will take time to evolve and roll out, but both Professor Donaldson and I are clear that the teaching profession must play a central role in developing, and of course delivering what is to come.

"Of course we have already had the debate about school standards in Wales. Ambitious reforms are underway and change is happening.

"Now it is time for another 'great debate' in Welsh education - on the vital subject of curriculum change. On what, and how, our young people will learn over the decades to come.

“I want the teaching profession in Wales to play a critical role in engaging with and debating the proposals in Graham Donaldson’s report once it is published.”

The Education Minister last year appointed Professor John Furlong to advise on developing initial teacher training in Wales and ensuring the best teachers enter the Welsh system. Professor Furlong’s final report on this will be published in mid March.

The Welsh Government is also working on a New Deal for the Education Workforce to develop new professional standards for teachers that will result in higher standards of teaching and learning.

This will include a new Masters qualification, clear career pathways, exemplar professional learning materials and a Professional Learning Passport that allows teachers to develop their careers and professional learning choices.

On professional development, the Minister said:

“I want the New Deal to be a supportive arm around the teaching profession that helps them to remain engaged, passionate and constantly striving for excellence and improvement.

“The reform agenda ahead is demanding and dependant on the capacity of the professionals out there to deliver it. We are asking a lot of the profession but we are determined to work in partnership with them.”

As part of his speech the Minister also announced the Welsh Government could now support new priority building projects for FE colleges in Wales as a result of greater flexibility within the 21st Century Schools Programme.

The Aberdare Campus of Coleg Y Cymoedd was identified as one such priority and the Minister said the Welsh Government would now work with the College to develop a business case that could allow it to access up to £11m towards the total £22m project costs.

However the Minister stressed the education reform programme was not about additional funding or buildings.

He said:

“The international evidence on this is absolutely clear. We cannot spend our way to higher standards. The coming changes to the curriculum have to be built on the a higher skilled profession and about consistent application of the very best practice. It has to be about using the latest research evidence and continuously building on the best – professional to professional, school to school.

“This is our chance, to work with the profession to turn Welsh education into something world class and something that other countries will want to emulate.”

The Welsh Government will publish Graham Donaldson’s report on his review of the curriculum at the end of this month