



PRIME MINISTER

Kevin Davies
ca B...
Blup.
B/F Wednesday

DRS
17/11

EDUCATION REFORM BILL PUBLICITY

E(EP) Committee agreed on 28 October the National Curriculum arrangements for Wales and these have been included in the print of the Bill which is to be considered at L Committee on 18 November. I have announced the broad outlines of what we propose for Wales, but we shall need to give more details of how this will work if there is not to be opposition based on misunderstandings. The Welsh language issue, in particular, is complex and emotive. Peter Walker and I have agreed that we should publish an explanatory statement on the implementation of the National Curriculum in Wales and I attach for colleagues a draft text.

We consider it important that this text should not give the Welsh language points an unbalanced emphasis. We therefore propose to put them in the wider context and to use the opportunity to address some of the points and misunderstandings that arose out of the consultation exercise. We feel, however, that it would be too defensive to attempt a formal response to the consultation exercise as such. In explaining how the national curriculum proposals will work in Wales we address particularly the issue of assessment and testing; by addressing this in a Welsh context I think we can offer a valuable correction to some of the less balanced criticisms while restating our commitment to assessment and testing against clear attainment targets as being at the heart of the national curriculum proposals.

I believe our document will complement in Wales the explanatory question and answer text which Kenneth Baker circulated on 12 November and which we plan to issue here too with the necessary adjustments. We need to publish our own document as soon as possible after the Bill if we are to have the right impact. I would therefore ask for agreement by the close of play on Thursday 19 November in order to achieve this.

I am copying this minute to the Lord President and to members of E(EP) Committee and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

W. R.

17 November 1987

W R



THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN WALES - A POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

In July 1987 the Secretary of State for Wales together with the Secretary of State for Education and Science published a consultation document setting out proposals to introduce legislation to provide for a national curriculum in maintained schools in England and Wales. An intensive consultation exercise was carried out. In Wales, written responses were received from more than 100 organisations, including the Welsh Joint Education Committee, all local education authorities and teacher unions, and from many individuals. Meetings were held at the Welsh Office with the WJEC, the Welsh Consultative Committee for Local Government Finance, Directors of Education, all the teacher unions in Wales, the Parent/Teacher Associations of Wales, Parents for Welsh Medium Education, and the Welsh Language Education Development Committee.

Legislation to set the framework for the national curriculum in England and Wales is being laid before Parliament as this paper is published. The purpose of this paper is to set out the Secretary of State for Wales' policy on the implementation of the national curriculum in Wales. In doing so it incorporates many of the comments made in the course of the consultation exercise. It is intended to inform debate on the Education Reform Bill and to provide greater detail for teachers, parents and others about the Government's proposals as they affect Wales.

The Framework

The Education Reform Bill prescribes the framework for the national curriculum. The relevant provisions are, for the most part, common to England and Wales; but there are specific provisions to cover the Welsh language and to prescribe separate consultation machinery for Wales.



The legislation will not itself prescribe any of the content of the National Curriculum, beyond setting out what the core and other foundation subjects shall be. The details of content are to be prescribed by order, and separate orders may be made for England and Wales.

The National Curriculum will consist of

- core and other foundation subjects
- attainment targets
- programmes of study
- arrangements for assessment including testing.

The core and other foundation subjects are to be listed in the legislation, and the legislation will also provide a procedure for amending this list by Order. In Wales, the foundation subjects for all ages from 5 to 16 will be mathematics, science, English, Welsh, technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. A modern foreign language will be a foundation subject from ages 11 to 16. Of these foundation subjects the core subjects will be mathematics, science and English. *the boundary is not* For those children who receive at least part of their tuition through the medium of Welsh, whether or not they are in designated bilingual schools, Welsh will also be a core subject. The Secretaries of State will have a duty to establish a complete national curriculum as soon as practicable, taking first the core subjects and then the other foundation subjects. The legislation will allow considerable flexibility about the degree of detail with which attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment and testing arrangements are prescribed.

Implementation in Wales

The legislation will set out comprehensive arrangements for the consultation that is to be required before orders are made prescribing attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment and testing provisions. These arrangements are somewhat different in Wales from those



which will apply in England. They reflect established organisational arrangements and consultation mechanisms which include:

- the existence of the statutory Welsh Joint Education Committee (which has no equivalent in England), acting as a committee of local education authorities with representative and co-ordinating functions and as an examination board.
- close contact and good working relationships between local education authorities and the Welsh Office.
- the possibility of close and informal consultation made possible by the relatively small scale of Wales.
- established contacts between the Welsh Office, MSC and WJEC which have contributed to successful progress in implementing the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. The Secretary of State for Wales has responsibilities both for education and for the activities of MSC in Wales. TVEI will now need to be taken forward in the context of the national curriculum.

It was therefore considered appropriate that responsibility for consultations about the national curriculum in Wales should rest with the Secretary of State.

The first stage in specifying the national curriculum in Wales is a non-statutory one and has already been put in hand. Subject working groups for the core subjects of mathematics and science, soon to be followed by English, have already been set up with a remit to make recommendations for the content of the national curriculum in these subjects. These groups have been set up on a joint England and Wales basis. The Secretary of State for Wales will be setting up a subject working group on Welsh in the near future. In parallel with these groups, a Task Group on Assessment and Testing has been set up, also on an England and Wales basis, to consider and make recommendations about a national system of assessment. The



considerations which this group is addressing include the various concerns and reservations about testing which were expressed in response to the consultation exercise in Wales.

After conducting each consultation, the Secretary of State will publish a draft order together with a statement giving an account of the consultations which he has carried out and with an explanation of the order's provisions. All those previously consulted will have a further chance to comment on the draft order before it is made. Orders made in this way, for each individual core and foundation subject, will specify the attainment targets and programmes of study which, together with assessment and testing arrangements will make up the national curriculum.

The Secretary of State for Wales will look to the Curriculum Council for Wales to carry a major responsibility for curriculum development in Wales. CCW will be funded by the Welsh Office and the Secretary of State will wish to agree an annual programme of work with it. The operation of CCW will have much in common with the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum in Scotland.

In setting up the CCW as an additional body - for which there was strong support in responses to the consultation exercise - the Secretary of State is aware that there is a clear danger of overlap and duplication with existing bodies, and in particular the WJEC and the Welsh Language Education Development Committee. To avoid this the Secretary of State will want to agree with each body clear lines of demarcation and arrangements for co-operation to ensure that the best use is made of resources. The CCW will also need to keep in close touch with the new National Curriculum Council in England.

The CCW will take over the present functions of the School Curriculum Development Committee's Committee for Wales. SCDC is to be wound up and its functions in England will pass to the National Curriculum Council. The SCDC is at present responsible for curriculum development projects some of which involve Welsh LEAs. The possibility of Welsh involvement in NCC projects will be safeguarded.



General Principles of the National Curriculum

The development of the national curriculum takes place against a background of many years of previous development. Although the consultation machinery will operate by taking individual subjects in turn, it must do so against the background of a general philosophy about the whole school curriculum.

The school curriculum as a whole needs to be a balanced and broadly-based one which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society. It needs to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. It is intended that the legislation should lay a specific duty on the Secretary of State, LEAs, governing bodies and headteachers to exercise their functions, as far as the national curriculum is concerned, to serve these requirements.

Many respondents to the consultation exercise referred to the HMI publication "The Curriculum from 5-16", and often expressed concern that the national curriculum would be incompatible with it. It is not, however, the Government's intention that the specification of the national curriculum - in terms of foundation subjects - should cut across the wider needs of the curriculum. These include:

- the principles of breadth, balance, relevance and differentiation
- the elements of learning: knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes
- the full range of areas of learning and experience:
 - aesthetic
 - human and social
 - linguistic and literary
 - mathematical
 - moral



- physical
- scientific
- spiritual
- technological

"The Curriculum from 5-16" itself pointed out that these areas of learning and experience were two complementary perspectives which were "not in conflict with the ways in which schools commonly organised teaching and learning; topics, themes or subjects need to support some or all of the facets of the 'whole education' which the two perspectives describe in helping to achieve the school's aims and objectives". They were intended as analytical tools and were not meant to dictate how the curriculum should be timetabled.

Handwritten: Signed
Handwritten: [Signature]
The foundation subjects of the national curriculum will be expressed as appropriate in terms of the attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment and testing. *[The attainment targets are not expected to consist merely of knowledge but also of attainments in the widest sense. Nor do the attainment targets and programmes of study prescribe how the curriculum must be delivered in schools: topic work, themes, integrated or modular courses would be compatible with the national curriculum. It is not intended that primary schools should abandon an integrated approach.]* However HMI in Wales as elsewhere find many examples where project based approaches lack clarity about the objectives they are intended to achieve, and the national curriculum framework will help to reinforce good practice in this area. The existence of a national curriculum framework should be a help to the development of the curriculum at the school level.

It is not intended to prescribe the proportion of time which schools should spend on foundation subjects. It will be for schools themselves to determine what is necessary to achieve the attainment targets. It is the Secretaries of State's firm intentions that the specified national curriculum should leave a good deal of room for choice and variation. This clearly implies that pupils should not be required to study all of the foundation subjects at the full level currently required for GCSE or



equivalent qualifications. It will be necessary to set attainment targets in these subjects to preserve the necessary breadth in the curriculum for all pupils.

In prescribing appropriate attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment and testing arrangements for Wales, the Secretary of State would want to be sure that these were appropriate to meet the needs of Wales. Relevant factors would include:

- the role of the Welsh language, both as a subject and as a medium of instruction
- a generally earlier starting age than in England: most children in Wales begin school at age 3 or 4 in either nursery or primary schools
- an improving but still relatively poor position in the number of school-leavers who have no qualifications. The WJEC's Certificate of Education, aimed at improving this position, has no direct equivalent in England. It will need to be reviewed in the context of the national curriculum
- the curricular policies of LEAs. As in England, individual LEAs have been developing their own curricular policies. Those in Wales were summarised in "Local Authority Reviews of the School Curriculum in Wales" (Welsh Office, June 1986) but there have been further developments since.

The Secretary of State would also expect the national curriculum in Wales to be responsive to the world outside school. Key factors, some particular to Wales, others common with England, to which he would expect the curriculum to respond include:

- **The changing economy.** Wales' longstanding dependence on the basic industries, of coal and steel, has reached an end. The development of the Welsh economy on a new and much more diverse basis is now



moving very quickly. A wide variety of manufacturing and service industries, including tourism, are changing the economic character of the country. The pace and nature of this change puts a heavy burden on the education system, which needs to equip children, to the best of their ability, to sustain and benefit from a changing economy. Children need an education which is relevant and which makes available the best and most up-to-date information on career prospects. Narrowly relevant training will not do. The new economy depends on educated, adaptable citizens, with an awareness of the society around them and the ability to make the most of their talents.

- **History and culture.** There are distinctive elements in Welsh history and culture to which the school curriculum needs to respond. An understanding of the elements of Welsh history together with some knowledge of its language and culture are an essential element in understanding the present day experience of living in Wales. Education in Wales has traditionally been seen as having a role in perpetuating and giving vitality to a cultural tradition. For the individual child, the identification of "roots", of a personal and local heritage, provides a valuable counter-balance to uncertainty and insecurity. An understanding of the community in which the child grows up can contribute to a better awareness of its value and a greater sense of involvement in it.

Effective learning proceeds from the familiar to the unfamiliar. A curriculum which draws on what is familiar and local can help to provide a sound basis for a wider perspective and more abstract knowledge.

- **Openness to the wider world.** The curriculum in Wales needs to balance the value of what is distinctively Welsh with the need for a positive awareness and response to the wider world. Wales is a part of the United Kingdom and the European Community. World influences play a strong role in its contemporary life.



- inward investment plays a major role in the changing Welsh economy
- tourism is increasingly important both as a source of employment and as an influence on the character of Wales
- the culture of other ethnic groups living in Britain gives rise to a need to understand cultural diversity
- the communications media in Wales reflect a mixture of Welsh, British and international influences, of world and local events
- there is inward and outward migration to and from Wales: education in Wales needs to meet the needs of those coming in from outside and Welsh people need to be equipped with an education which will stand them in good stead wherever they may go.

The Secretary of State believes that there is a need for a curriculum which responds to the nature of education in Wales and the wider needs of Wales. Within a national curriculum framework that is common to England and Wales this needs to build on our particular strengths and address our particular weaknesses. As far as the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are concerned, there is no justification for differing standards between England and Wales and it is to be expected that pupils will work towards the same attainment targets at age 16. Testing arrangements will provide for English and Welsh medium teaching. In the early years of school, there may need to be different attainment levels in English for children receiving a Welsh medium education: but by the age of 16, the same standards must apply.



Welsh in the Curriculum

The Government's policy about the provision of Welsh in the curriculum was set out in "Welsh in Schools" (July 1981) - that some experience of the language is an important component of a broadly balanced curriculum for pupils in Wales; that in English-speaking areas all pupils should be given the opportunity of acquiring a sufficient command of Welsh to allow for communication in Welsh, while bilingual education should be available to pupils whose parents desire it for them. The consultation document on the national curriculum set out this policy again as background to the present proposals. There was strong support in the responses for the inclusion of Welsh in the national curriculum: though there was also a widespread recognition that the varied linguistic pattern in Wales and in Welsh education did not permit a simple uniform solution.

→ It is therefore proposed that Welsh should be a core subject for those children who are receiving a bilingual education. In order to achieve this the legislation will distinguish a new broad category of "Welsh-speaking schools", defined as those schools or part of schools where subjects other than Welsh are taught (wholly or partly) in Welsh.

No - a second language which could be used with Welsh

For other children Welsh would be a foundation subject. This means that the Secretary of State could prescribe attainment targets, programmes of study and appropriate assessment and testing arrangements. For Welsh, it would be necessary to prescribe more than one set of attainment targets in order to cover the various forms in which the subject is taught. These will need to encompass Welsh as a first language and Welsh as a second language, both of which are commonly studied to GCSE or equivalent level. There will also be a need to provide appropriately for a basic level of attainment in Welsh appropriate for pupils in all parts of Wales who would not necessarily expect to study the subject to GCSE standard. The legislation will also provide a specific power for the Secretary of State to make orders exempting some schools or parts of schools from the national



curriculum provisions on Welsh. The Secretary of State proposes to exercise this power in the context of his general policy on Welsh and in consultation with the LEAs. In doing so he would want to build on LEAs' existing Welsh language policies.

In order to implement this policy, it will be necessary to appoint a subject working group for Welsh as stated earlier. The group will be asked to make recommendations about appropriate levels of attainment target for first language, second language and other pupils. In doing so it will need to consider what levels are appropriate to all parts of Wales and what is achievable in terms of preserving and raising standards with the existing teaching force.

Once the Welsh subject working group has made its recommendations, the Secretary of State will want to consult widely about them as he will be required to do. As part of the consultation he will invite LEAs to make proposals about the particular attainment targets which should apply to each of their schools, taking account of the linguistic character, present practice and parental wishes.

He will also invite them to let him know whether they consider he should use his power to exempt any schools or parts of schools altogether from the national curriculum provisions on Welsh. The Secretary of State will wish to discuss LEAs' proposals with them in the light of his general policy on the national curriculum and on the Welsh language. In making orders setting the attainment targets for Welsh, he will therefore be able to include appropriate prescriptions of the application of the standards to individual schools. This will enable him to prescribe Welsh as a firm part of the national curriculum while allowing a varied geographical pattern, responsive to needs and reflecting LEAs' own policies.

The Education Reform Bill also includes proposals for grant maintained schools. The provisions of the national curriculum - including the provisions on Welsh - will apply to grant maintained schools. If, in due course, the governing body of a grant maintained school wishes to change



the way in which the national curriculum order on Welsh applies to the school its application will be considered by the Secretary of State ~~Against the background of his general policy on the language and taking account of the views of the governing body and parents.~~

The Welsh language policies applied in LEA maintained and grant maintained schools will therefore take account of parental views.

Assessment Arrangements

Much concern was expressed in responses to the consultative document about the Government's proposals for assessment and testing at about 7 and at the ages of 11, 14 and 16. Particular concerns were expressed about testing at the age of 7 and about publication of test results and possible misinterpretation of them.

Nevertheless arrangements for assessment and testing remain a key part of the proposals in the legislation because of their essential role in checking the progress of pupils against clear objectives set by the national curriculum, which is needed to raise standards. The Government recognises that there are dangers in the use of tests and these must be avoided. The Task Group on Assessment and Testing is addressing the issues and bringing to bear some of the best professional expertise in this area. It is not envisaged that testing can consist merely of national written tests: a more sophisticated system is called for which reflects the variety of purposes which assessment needs to serve.

It is envisaged that there will be a range of assessment approaches, including written, practical and oral tests. Pupils taught through the medium of Welsh will be assessed in Welsh. Most assessment will be done in schools, by teachers, but arrangements will be made for external moderation.



There are a number of purposes which assessment, including testing, may fulfil. These include diagnostic or formative purposes to identify what stage a pupil has reached and plan the appropriate next step and summative purposes to record overall achievement, particularly compared with appropriate attainment targets. In addition assessment and testing can be used to publicise and evaluate the work of individual schools or local education authorities. The particular needs in Wales are illustrated by an examination of present practice.

The monitoring and assessment of pupils' work are processes which occur continuously in most schools - and this was widely acknowledged by respondents to the consultation exercise as being an essential part of effective teaching. Assessment may take the form of questioning of a class, group or individual pupil or of the marking of written tasks done at home or in school. More formal testing may occur periodically, for example at the end of a unit of work or at the end of the term or school year. Questions devised by teachers are usually the main elements in these assessment procedures. However, many parents may not be aware that standardised tests are also widely employed, especially around the ages of 7 and 11, to provide objective measures of the ability and attainment of whole year groups and individual pupils. They are important elements in the identification of pupils whose learning difficulties may warrant additional help, and in the process whereby pupils with more profound and persistent learning difficulties may be formally "statemented" in accordance with the requirements of the 1981 Education Act. All LEAs in Wales test children at the age of 7 for this purpose.

In secondary schools, in recent years, there has been a reduction in the incidence of formal examinations, usually to once (at most) per year; this has been accompanied by the development of various forms of periodic or continued assessment, for example termly grades or tests at prescribed intervals. Increasing attention is being paid to record keeping in all kinds of school, though there is a tendency to record pupils' progress and achievement more in terms of how far they have progressed through schemes



of work than in terms of skills mastered or specific difficulties encountered. The development of Records of Achievement in many secondary schools seeks to monitor pupils' development of a range of skills and attributes and to provide a framework for regular diagnosis of pupils' progress and learning needs.

Despite these developments it is the view of HMI that not enough of the assessment or testing even in the better planned systems is used for truly diagnostic purposes. Assessment should be designed to identify strengths and weaknesses and should be used to remedy the weaknesses and build on the strengths that are revealed. Such a process is fundamental to the effective use of assessments. It needs to be built into pupils' programmes of work through the provision, at regular and frequent intervals, of appropriately demanding tasks and assignments which probe what pupils can and cannot do. The results need to be systematically followed up with pupils. Assessment of this kind needs to be an inherent part of the national curriculum.

It is the Government's firm view that parents should be kept informed about the progress of their children in school. Arrangements for assessment and testing have a clear role in this and there is a strong case for making available information about the performance of schools as a whole. This needs to take account of the wider factors affecting the performance of pupils in schools and the Secretary of State will wish to discuss with LEAs appropriate formats for the provision of information. He will want to take account of the advice of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing. The proper interpretation of information about the results of tests will depend on the quality of information provided: it will put a particular premium on good communications between schools and parents.

For the implementation of assessment and testing on the national curriculum in Wales, the Secretary of State will want to discuss arrangements with the WJEC and other interested parties.



The legislation also provides for the appointment of a School Examinations and Assessment Council, which will be an England and Wales body replacing the existing non-statutory Secondary Examinations Council and having wide-ranging functions for the maintenance of standards of assessment, including testing. The SEAC will be responsible for arrangements for quality control at an England and Wales level.

The Way Ahead

The consultation exercise on the national curriculum proposals led to an intensive series of meetings and discussions in Wales. These were of great value in informing the development of the specific Welsh provisions in the legislation. But the legislation sets only the framework. The content of the national curriculum remains to be determined. It is the Secretary of State's view that the discussions should continue. They should build upon the relationships already established. The implementation of the national curriculum ultimately rests with the individual teacher in the classroom, supported by the constructive involvement of parents. The activities of headteachers, LEAs and governing bodies will all be vital to success. The existing channels of communication as well as the new ones to be established - the subject working groups and the CCW in particular - all have a role to play in the exchange of information that will be essential to developing a national curriculum which meets the needs of education in Wales. This paper is intended as a contribution to that process.



CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Morgan

*You will wish to be aware that
Welsh is to be a core subject,
not just a foundation subject, for children
taught in Welsh. But I agree with para 6.*

BT 18/11

Reference No E 0444

MR WILSON

cc Dr Walker

Education Reform Bill Publicity

Dr Walker and I have looked quickly at the draft policy document circulated by Mr Wyn Roberts.

2. My first thought is to wonder if it should be issued at all. As far as I know, nothing similar is proposed for England. The question and answer text which Mr Baker proposes for England will be issued in Wales too, so that issuing this policy statement as well will mean giving the Welsh something the English will not have. There could be pressure for a similar document to be published for England.

I agree. W. 3. I imagine, however, that the Prime Minister would not want to make an issue of this with Welsh Office Ministers if they are keen to publish the statement. It could even be helpful in any continuing argument with Mr Baker since it promises flexibility in the arrangements for the National Curriculum.

4. Most of the text is unexceptionable and indeed the emphasis on flexibility is welcome. I find some of the language woolly - see for example the paragraph on 'history and culture' on page 8 - and I doubt if the document will really seem to the public to be carrying things much further. But from a policy point of view it is not in general objectionable.

5. The treatment of the Welsh language does however require some thought. As Mr Baker's document says, Welsh is to be a core subject in Welsh-speaking schools (contrary to the decision of E(EP)). If this is acceptable, so probably is the rest of the document. There is a reference (bottom of page 10) to the need



CONFIDENTIAL

for 'a basic level of attainment in Welsh appropriate for pupils in all parts of Wales', but this is probably balanced by the next sentence referring to the power, which E(EP) agreed, to exempt schools from the National Curriculum provision on Welsh.

6. My feeling on the proposal that Welsh should be a core subject in Welsh-speaking schools is that it is not worth challenging unless Mr Norgrove thinks the Prime Minister is likely to feel strongly about it. But it might be worth putting the point to Mr Norgrove to see what he thinks of it.

G W MONGER

Economic Secretariat
18 November 1987