

The six steps of curriculum design™

Designing a curriculum is not easy. It is a complicated process that needs to be carefully thought through and involves much strategic decision making. With the new Curriculum for Wales on the horizon, we have identified six crucial steps of effective curriculum design for primary schools. These tried and tested steps can be used to build or refresh your curriculum in line with the new national requirements.

Review and evaluate

Decide what works well and where there is room for improvement

After establishing your curriculum, you will need to regularly review its impact on teaching and learning, and make any adaptations or changes. It will help to consider the original curriculum principles and purposes when reviewing and focus on areas for development in school. For example, 'How well is the curriculum helping children to progress in writing?'

Tip: Ensure that monitoring of coverage and assessment for learning is a live and integral part of your curriculum. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Assessment analysis)

Resources

Source high quality resources to deliver your curriculum

You now need to identify the resources that you will need to bring your curriculum to life and enhance its coherence. A good curriculum needs good quality resources. These will include human resources, practical equipment, community partners, environments and teaching resources.

Tip: Ensure that resources are created to support the lessons, rather than lessons created to match a resource. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Adaptable projects with resources)

Teaching narrative

Plan the delivery of your curriculum

After organising your long term plans, teachers need to plot the narrative of each project. A teaching narrative should be vibrant and cohesive, detailing the starting point for each project, showing how it will develop and outlining any significant outcomes. This process creates a medium term plan that can be used as a starting point for shorter term plans.

Tip: Use a system that helps you to select and order the learning within the half term. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Lesson sequence)

Step 1 Principles and purpose

Set out the intent of your curriculum

Begin the design process by establishing your curriculum principles. The curriculum principles should reflect your school's values, context, pedagogy and needs. You should be able to articulate the purpose or intent of your curriculum principles. For example, 'We believe in a broad and balanced curriculum, where all subjects are valued. A broad and balanced curriculum will equip our children with a breadth of knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum.'

Tip: Add your school's context to the four purposes to refine your curriculum principles. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Cwricwlwm statement)

Step 2 Entitlement and enrichment

Develop your pupil entitlement

After clarifying your principles and purpose, you should set out your pupil entitlement. Your pupil entitlement should set out how your school intends to enrich its curriculum with educational visits, extracurricular activities and specific experiences. For example, 'All children in our school are entitled to two educational visits a year.'

Tip: Use an entitlement and enrichment overview to plan any additional experiences that your children will receive throughout their time in school. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Experiences editor)

Step 3 Breadth and balance

Develop the content of your curriculum

You should arrange your curriculum content into a range of exciting themes and projects. These will enable your school to deliver on its curriculum principles and entitlement, whilst also ensuring coverage of the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. You will need to make strategic decisions about what it covers and in how much depth each aspect is covered to achieve both breadth and balance. These choices and decisions create a school's curriculum structure or long term plan.

Tip: Use a system to check coverage of the statements of what matters and provide a clear framework for progression through your curriculum. (Cwricwlwm Maestro: Detailed coverage analysis and linked progression framework)

Do you want help to design your curriculum?

Since 2010, we have helped over 2000 schools in Wales and England to design, deliver and manage their curriculum. Contact us on

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to book a free online meeting with a curriculum adviser