



**What might we learn
from Scotland as we
embark on a new
curriculum in Wales?**

PROJECT REPORT

December 2015

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SECTION 1: Introduction and Context

This report is based on a visit to Scotland undertaken by four head teachers from the South East Wales EAS consortium which took place over four days in October 2015. It involved visits to the School of Education at the University of Stirling, three primary schools and three secondary schools. Findings and suggestions are based on the seminar at the University and meetings with students, teachers and head teachers at the schools.

The visit, which was financed by the EAS, was led by John Kendall, head teacher at Risca Community Comprehensive School. Any queries or comments, as well as notice of any factual inaccuracies, should be addressed to him in the first instance at kendaj@caerphilly.gov.uk

***“Every headteacher we met in every school made it a priority that we met and talked to the pupils/students. Says it all!
[#easScotland15](#)”***



@RiscaCCS_Head

“The key challenge lies in how we differently engage [Scotland’s] highly professional teaching workforce in an educational initiative that should be a major opportunity for all - teachers, young people and the population in general.”

Professor Mark Priestley

“Curriculum for Excellence; taking stock and moving forward.”

Blog. February 2014

SECTION 2: Findings and learning

PART 1

Whilst the education systems in Scotland and Wales have much in common there are clearly also a number of important differences. This report does not set out to analyse this, but we thought it would be useful to list just a few of the dissimilarities we noticed during our visit which we felt might be of interest to Welsh colleagues, and which may help set a context. We list them here in no particular order.

- secondary teachers may only teach in their specialist subjects (with a very small amount of flexibility)
- teachers are still used to cover classes at times and in some schools consequently have a lower weekly allocation of lessons than we might expect in Wales. There is a fully consulted Working Time Agreement in place across schools
- some secondary schools employ an asymmetric timetable, with days of varying length and an early finish for pupils on Fridays which allows time for staff training
- the primary school phase ends a year later (Welsh Y7 = Scottish P7; Welsh Y8 = Scottish S1)
- a MFL, it tends to be French, is begun in Primary schools
- there is no requirement to set national or local academic targets, nor attendance targets nor exclusion targets, although school reviews analyse targets against benchmarked data through the recently developed Insight toolkit
- schools do not have a Governing Body but a Parent Council
- staffing responsibilities which attract extra pay are mainly limited to Heads, Deputies and PTs (principal teachers). The rate for promoted staff is based on a national job-sizing tool which includes roll size but also many other aspects such as budget line management, teaching commitments etc.
- whilst staffing structures are usually agreed at Headteacher level, new structures are best reviewed by discussions between groups of schools
- there is no distinct grant funding for FSM pupils across the country, Scotland uses SIMD and other data to inform school budget allocation which is agreed at LEA level
- there is a fluidity as to when examinations are taken in terms of years and ages which consequently leads to some vertical delivery of the curriculum
- many students secure their university places in their penultimate year at school

- the majority of students remain in the Scottish system when they transition to HE
- Education Scotland covers all aspects of education from policy through to practice including inspections
- There is no categorisation of schools in Scotland nor are there government published league tables
- School inspections in Scotland are carried out by HMI; while the curriculum was being developed they refrained from commenting on this aspect of a school's work

PART 2

Our observations on the management and implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in Scotland:-

- the principles of CfE are widely accepted and well-thought of by the profession
- implementation has been challenging for some and caused some frustrations which are only now being overcome
- limited time was provided for extra planning in the early stages
- many would like to see more time given over to teacher training/collaborative activities
- there has been some uncertainty with regard to how the curriculum is assessed
- teacher autonomy has been welcomed, as was the opportunity to meet local need at local level
- however, there was little national structure to allow the curriculum to be planned by the profession as a whole
- schools have been careful to manage the potential stress caused by change
- whilst pastoral transition is excellent many feel there remains a divide between the primary and secondary sectors in terms of curricular and skills transition

SECTION 3: Suggested points and issues for consideration

We would suggest the following issues are worth considering before and during the implementation of the new curriculum

AT SYSTEM LEVEL-

- make provision across the country for extra INSET days, including cluster days, and welcome innovative approaches to planning for training
- encourage schools, within reason, to evolve as their communities prefer rather than have restrictions for the sake of consistency
- monitor and address any intensification of workload issues
- review and clarify the purpose of assessment through professional dialogue
- ensure that performance measures are aligned with the core purposes of the curriculum
- enhance the timeline for change with clear short, medium and long term goals for all phases
- focus on breaking down the false barrier which can exist between primary and secondary education
- create a mechanism, with appropriate funding, to allow schools and clusters in Wales and Scotland to work in partnership

AT CONSORTIA and LEA LEVEL:-

- co-ordinate training using either a cross-phase approach or a single-phase approach as appropriate
- encourage schools to develop a curriculum which is suitable for them; do not impose restrictions for the sake of consistency
- encourage all teachers to engage with professional academic learning and research
- provide opportunities for focused collaboration
- engage with curriculum experts from outside Wales when developing new models and processes
- focus on breaking down the false barrier which can exist between primary and secondary education
- create opportunities for more school leaders to engage in professional action research using a project-report-disseminate model
- consider building partnerships with similar organisations in Scotland

AT SCHOOL LEVEL:-

- take the opportunity to refocus your principles, values, and vision, and involve all stakeholders in the process
- consult widely with your community, with teachers, Governors, and above all with the pupils/students, to ensure your curriculum meets local need
- do not be restricted by traditional timetabling; consider innovations such as the asymmetric model
- ensure pupils and students and their families are made aware of any curriculum developments and changes
- develop an understanding of the concept of teacher agency; use the talent and ability within your school but work in partnerships, across phases whenever appropriate, to develop a stronger curriculum
- encourage academic research and investigation to build evidence for your curriculum strategy
- consider joining with a partner school in Scotland

APPENDIX: Staff, establishments and acknowledgements

EAS Team

John Kendall, Risca Community Comprehensive School

Sue Witchell, Fleur de Lis and Pengam Primary Schools

Rebecca Collins, St Cenydd Community School

Andrew Brasington, Coed y Garn Primary School

Establishments visited

School of Education, the University of Stirling

Ormiston Primary School, East Lothian

North Berwick High School, East Lothian

Dunbar Grammar School, East Lothian

Alva Academy, Clackmannanshire

Cambusbarron Primary School, Stirlingshire

Bridge of Allan Primary School, Stirlingshire

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