



GwE

GCSE 2015 / PISA Bulletin

Introduction

In preparation for the introduction of new GCSE's in Welsh First Language, English and Maths in September 2015 (and Science in 2016) Welsh Government invited the four regional Consortia to apply for funding to:

"Make a lasting impact on the achievement levels of pupils across Wales in the new GCSE's, in the PISA tests and in the GCSE element of the new Welsh Baccalaureate."

GwE's vision, encompassed in its proposal, was to select a small number of lead expert schools within the region to develop materials and pedagogic approaches on PISA tasks in response to the new GCSE specifications and for these to be disseminated to all schools. The application was successful and funding was confirmed for the financial years 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Background to the Initiative

In response to the opportunity offered to Consortia by Welsh Government to develop a programme of support to schools on the PISA agenda, GwE adopted a model of approach which would deliver a clear statement of intent in relation to building capacity at school level and delivering a self-improving system. Rather than taking the traditional approach of seconding existing practitioners to advise schools or buying in outside expertise, the model allowed establishments to apply to become lead expert schools and access funding which would allow them to undertake action research based curriculum resource development. This proposal starts and ends with the classroom and the pupils therein, ensuring that classroom teachers fully understand the rationale and relevance of curriculum changes. The approach also ensures that materials and methodologies for the wider community of pupils are fully developed within a school setting.

Developments to date

Following acceptance of GwE's proposal by Welsh Government, all secondary schools throughout the region were invited to apply for 'Lead School' status in each of the four core subjects. Following a robust selection process, the following schools were designated as 'Lead Schools' for the region in the four core subjects :

- **English : Ysgol Bryn Eliau** (Lead Practitioner: **Louise Wallace**)
- **Mathematics : Ysgol Eirias** (Lead Practitioner: **Zoe Evans**)
- **Welsh : Gwynedd Cluster (Ysgol Botwnnog/Ysgol Tryfan/Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen)** (Lead Practitioners: **Tegwen Llwyd / Esyllt Maelor / Cheryl Roberts / Jeni Lyn Morris / Dafydd Roberts**)
- **Science : Ysgol yr Alun** (Lead Practitioner: **Andy Rees**)

To ensure Maths and Science materials are fully bilingual and have a Welsh dimension, Ysgol Glan Clwyd was identified to work with Ysgol Eirias with regard Maths, whilst Anglesey schools were identified to work with Ysgol Alun with regard the Science.

All four 'Lead Schools' have submitted outline plans and costings. A Meeting has been held with each individual school and all 'Lead Schools' have attended two meetings to discuss the project time-line and to agree common principles for the developmental work. A Quality Assurance process has also been put in place.

Ysgol Bryn Eliau, the Lead School for English has been awarded "Thinking Schools" status as approved by Exeter University, one of only three schools throughout Wales to achieve this status – Congratulations!

Future Developments

All 'Lead Schools' are now in the development stages of producing draft exemplar resources – these to include both learner resources and teacher resources. These are expected to be completed towards the end of this term. The intention is to make these resources available on an appropriate 'platform' early in the new year so that they may be trialled by schools before finalising the resources.

During February, the first 'wave' workshops will be held in each subject and take place in each of the three hubs (Môn/Gwynedd, Conwy/Denbigh and Flint/Wrexham).

GwE is also organising a Regional Conference in March to highlight good practice in response to the PISA agenda. The 'keynote' speaker for the Conference is Dr David Hyerle from America, who is a specialist in the field of 'mind maps'. GwE is also in the process of organising another speaker, yet to be confirmed. An integral part of the Conference will be 'workshops' highlighting good practice linked to Teaching and Learning in relation to the PISA agenda.

Half-termly bulletins will be circulated to schools informing them of the latest developments regarding the 'GCSE 2015/PISA project'

Other Developments

1) The Welsh Baccalaureate:

As you are aware the revised Welsh BAC is being introduced for teaching from September 2015. For post 16 learners there will be a phased introduction with the intention that by September 2018 the Welsh BAC will be included in the programme of learning for all post 16 full-time learners. In KS4, from 2017 the number of learners gaining the Welsh BAC will be a 'Key Performance Indicator'.

GwE will be supporting schools in preparation for the introduction of the revised Welsh BAC in September 2015. Four sub-regional working groups are in the process of being organised, each group will be tasked with developing resources / materials / support packages for one of the four skills (*Critical Thinking and Problem Solving / Creativity and Innovation / Planning and Organisation / Personal Effectiveness*). Dissemination of the materials will then take place to all schools during the latter part of the Spring term.

2) NFER PISA testing:

Qualifications in Wales, such as GCSEs and the Welsh Baccalaureate, are changing to assess learners on the same types of skills that the international PISA assessments test. As part of the overall approach to prepare pupils, teacher and schools for these changes to qualifications the Welsh Government and the regional education consortia have agreed that a PISA Based Tests for Schools will be made available to schools during the Spring term 2015. Every secondary school will be given the opportunity to take part in these PISA style assessments which will provide a rich source of school improvement information and data.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) will be administering the PISA Based Tests for Schools and will work with you to prepare for the test and gather information about your school to contribute to the final analysis.

The testing window is between 19th January and 13th February 2015 and you will be able to choose a date within this window that suits your school. The tests themselves will involve approximately 84 pupils who are 15 years old at the time of testing. The tests will last approximately three and half hours and will assess reading, science and mathematics (the same as the main PISA study), as well as a student questionnaire. It is important to stress that the tests will not be making a judgement about individual pupil performance but will be an opportunity to gather school improvement information about the school as a whole.

Note: these are **NOT** the official PISA study tests which will also take place during 2015.

GwE strongly recommends that all schools within the region take part in the NFER PISA tests as they will provide the schools with important diagnostic data which can then be used to inform school improvement.

Schools wishing to take advantage of this opportunity should inform GwE by Monday 20th October 2014.

Dates for the diary

- **NFER PISA based tests: 19th January - 13th February 2015**
- **Welsh BAC: meeting for SMT members – Thursday, 6th November**
- **‘GCSE 2015 /PISA project’ workshops:**
It is requested that the Heads of Department for the four core subjects put the date of the appropriate workshop in their diaries

Date:	Subject:	Lead School:	am/pm	Hub:
9.2.15	Welsh	Ysgolion Botwnnog / Dyffryn Ogwen / Tryfan	am	Gwynedd / Môn
			pm	Conwy/Denbigh/Wreccsam/Flint
10.2.15	English	Ysgol Bryn Elian	am	Conwy / Denbigh
			pm	Wreccsam / Flint
11.2.15	Maths	Ysgol Eirias (+ Ysgol Glan Clwyd)	am	Wreccsam / Flint
			pm	Gwynedd / Môn
12.2.15	Science	Ysgol Alun (+Ysgolion Môn)	am	Conwy / Denbigh
			pm	Gwynedd / Môn
23.2.15	Science	Ysgol Alun (+Ysgolion Môn)	am	Wreccsam / Flint
24.2.15	English	Ysgol Bryn Elian	am	Gwynedd / Môn
25.2.15	Maths	Ysgol Eirias (+ Ysgol Glan Clwyd)	am	Conwy / Denbigh

Regional Conference:
Thursday March 26th, 2015, ‘Venue Cymru’, Llandudno

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