

## Education: Overview

### Introduction

In Wales, in 2006, there were:

- 33 nursery schools, with 1,840 pupils and 79 full-time equivalent (fte) teachers
- 1,555 primary schools, with 265,724 pupils and 12,862 fte teachers
- 224 secondary schools, with 213,045 pupils and 12,806 fte teachers
- 43 special schools, with 3,937 pupils and 616 fte teachers
- 56 independent schools, with 9,635 pupils and 1,071 fte teachers
- 25 Further Education Institutions employing 14,695 staff (in 2004/05)
- 12 Higher Education Institutions employing 8,150 staff (in 2005/06)

A summary of the latest statistics for education, including data on schools, examinations, finance, further and higher education in Wales was published by the Assembly Government's Statistical Directorate in April 2007<sup>1</sup>.

The following lists some of the major issues and Assembly Government initiatives in education in Wales.

**Flying Start** - the aim of Flying Start is to provide high quality services for children aged between 0 and 3 in the most disadvantaged communities, including extra health visiting, free, high quality childcare for two-year-olds, basic skills programmes and parenting courses.

**The Foundation Phase** - the Foundation Phase proposes a continuum of learning for children from the ages of 3 to 7. It advocates children learning through first hand experiential activities and play and aims to place a child's personal and social development and well-being at the heart of the curriculum. Introduced through a rolling programme, the Pilot, which began in September 2004 in 41 schools and settings, will continue until September 2008 when the statutory rollout begins. The intention is that from the start of the 2010/11 school year all 3 to 7-year-olds will have access to the Foundation Phase. For further information on the Foundation Phase and Flying Start, see the topic brief on *Early Years Learning and Development*.

**The National Curriculum** - the National Curriculum is divided into four Key Stages, Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7), Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11), Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) and Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16). Local education authority maintained schools must teach the basic and the National Curriculum. For more information, see the topic brief on *Curriculum and Assessment*.

**School Breakfast initiative** - introduced in late 2004, the free school breakfast initiative is optional for both schools and pupils attending participating schools. Based on the most recent information, there were a total of 353 schools (out of a total of around 1,600) confirmed as having started serving breakfast by the end of the summer term 2006.

**Integrated Centres** - Integrated Children's Centres provide childcare, early years education, community training and open access play. There are currently 41 Welsh Assembly Government funded Integrated Children's Centres or satellite networks operating in Wales. The Assembly Government has set a target of having at least one Integrated Children's Centre in every local authority.

**Community-focused schools** - in December 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government issued guidance to schools to help them and their key partners to develop a community focus or extend the services and activities they currently provide.

**Raising Achievement and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE)** - a new (2006) programme aimed at raising attainment and individual standards of education in schools in Wales. The grant is specific funding for schools to improve educational outcomes for pupils who are underachieving and is targeted at disadvantaged pupils.

**'Iaith Pawb'** - the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, Iaith Pawb was launched in 2002. Its aim is to promote and sustain the use of the Welsh language and provide the people of Wales with as much opportunity as possible to ensure they can use and learn the language.

**Welsh Baccalaureate** - the Welsh Bac is a new qualification, introduced in pilot centres in September 2003. It is an over-arching qualification formed of approved qualifications, such as those currently taken in school or college and the compulsory Core which includes four components, Key Skills; Wales, Europe and the World; Work-related Education and Personal and Social Education. The Welsh Baccalaureate is currently offered at two levels - Intermediate and Advanced. From September 2007, it will be available at 76 centres across Wales with a staged roll-out to make it widely available across Wales.

**Learning Pathways 14-19** - a flagship policy of the Welsh Assembly Government and aims to have '95 per cent of young people ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015'. The *Learning Pathways* initiative is closely linked to the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

**Top up fees** - variable fees have not been introduced in Wales during the Second Assembly. 'Student Finance Wales' provides grants and loans to students in partnership with the Student Loans Company and local authorities. For further information, see the topic brief on *Student Support*.

**Initial Teacher Training (ITT)** - the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Professor John Furlong to undertake a review of ITT provision in Wales in 2005. The review focused primarily on how course intake targets, courses and course availability might better deliver newly qualified teachers in suitable numbers appropriate to meet the needs of maintained schools in Wales. The review report was published in January 2006.

**Skills and Employment Action Plan** - sets out the Assembly Government's strategy for improving the skills of those who could enter or are already in the workforce

**Work-based Learning** - there are currently five Work-based Learning programmes in Wales falling under the marketing banner 'Learning Works'. They aim to cater for all eligible learners over 16 years of age and consist of the following:- Preparatory Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build; Skills Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build +; Foundation Modern Apprenticeship; Modern Apprenticeship and Modern Skills Diploma. For further information, see the topic brief on *work-based learning*.

**National Planning and Funding System (NPFS)** - aims to ensure that the needs of each locality are met in terms of post-16 education and training. In terms of funding mainstream activity, the NPFS is part way through a five year transition period (ending in 2010) that aims to fund learning activities consistently, irrespective of the provider.

**Young People** - the Education Minister launched the Youth Strategy for Wales in March 2007. The Assembly Government initiative *Extending Entitlement* (2002) sets out a framework for support and services for young people aged 11-25 to enable them to participate in education and training, maximise opportunities for employment and participate in the lives of their communities.

**Higher Education - Reaching Higher** is the Assembly's strategy for higher education. The Minister for Education has confirmed the Assembly Government's continued commitment to pursuing reconfiguration and collaboration in the sector. Further information is contained in the topic brief on *Higher Education reconfiguration*.

**Further Education** - *The Independent Review of The Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the context of The Learning Country: Vision into Action in Wales* was launched in November 2006. The report will be published in Autumn 2007. Further information is contained in the topic brief on *Further Education*.

**Literacy and Numeracy** - 'Words Talk - Numbers Count' is the National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales. The strategy aims are:

- All young children should be prepared for learning when they begin school;
- The number of children leaving primary school struggling over reading, writing and the use of number should be further reduced;
- Fewer young people should leave compulsory education still struggling with basic skills; and
- The number of adults with poor basic skills should be diminished significantly

The Assembly Government's priorities for education are set out in the policy documents 'The Learning Country: a Paving Document' (2001)<sup>i</sup> and 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action' (2006)<sup>iii</sup>.

The Second Assembly's Education committees<sup>iv</sup> have conducted reviews into special educational needs and school transport. For further information see the topic briefs on *Education and Training: inclusion* and *school buildings and transport*.

*Education and training* is Field 5 of Schedule 5 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over education matters through Legislative Competence Orders. Further information is contained in the topic brief on *Education and Training: inclusion*.

## Useful Links

- Welsh Assembly Government
  - [Education home page](#)
  - [News](#)
  - [Statistics: schools and teachers](#)
  - [Estyn: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training](#)
- Department for Education and Skills (England)
  - [Home page](#)
  - [Consultations](#)
- [Consultations](#)
- [Statistics: post16 education and training](#)
- [GTCW: The General Teaching Council for Wales](#)
- [HEFCW: The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#)
- [News](#)
- [Statistics](#)

## Further information

For further information on any aspect of Education in Wales, please contact Anne Thomas, Members' Research Service ([Anne.Thomas@wales.qsi.Gov.UK](mailto:Anne.Thomas@wales.qsi.Gov.UK)), 029 2089 8966

<sup>i</sup> Key Education Statistics, Welsh Assembly Government, April 2007

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/40382313/statistics/schools/1152752/key-edu-2006-e.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>ii</sup> The Learning Country: a Paving Document, Welsh Assembly Government, August 2001

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/4038211/40382121/learningcountry-e.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>iii</sup> The Learning Country: Vision into Action, Welsh Assembly Government, October 2006

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403829/News/2006/learning-country-via-e.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>iv</sup> Committee home pages <http://assembly/committees/>