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The Education (National Curriculum) (Foundation Stage) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2008, Great Britain, Stationery Office, 2008, 0110918592, 9780110918594, . Enabling power: Education Act 2002, ss. 102, 108 (2), 210. Issued: 24.10.2008. Made: 03.10.2008. Laid before the National Assembly for Wales: 07.10.2008. Coming into force: 28.10.2008. Effect: S.I. 2008/1732 (W.169) amended. Territorial extent & classification: W. General.

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The Welsh Ministers in exercise of the powers conferred on the National Assembly for Wales by section 102, section 108(2) and section 210 of the Education Act 2002(1) and now vested in them(2), and having made such arrangements for consultation as it appears appropriate in accordance with section 117 of the said Act make the following Order:

The National Curriculum was introduced into England, Wales and Northern Ireland as a nationwide curriculum for primary and secondary state schools following the Education Reform Act 1988. Notwithstanding its name, it does not apply to independent schools, which may set their own curricula, but it ensures that state schools of all Local Education Authorities have a common curriculum. Academies, while publicly funded, have a significant degree of autonomy in deviating from the National Curriculum.

The purpose of the National Curriculum was to standardise the content taught across schools to enable assessment, which in turn enabled the compilation of league tables detailing the assessment statistics for each school. These league tables, together with the provision to parents of some

degree of choice in assignment of the school for their child (also legislated in the same act) were intended to encourage a 'free market' by allowing parents to choose schools based on their measured ability to teach the National Curriculum.

It should prepare pupils for the next steps in their education, training and employment and equip them to make informed choices at school and throughout their lives, enabling them to appreciate the relevance of their achievements to life and society outside school, including leisure, community engagement and employment.

In all maintained schools, provision is made for the requirement to offer a course in Religious Education under the Education Act 1996. Parents have the right to withdraw pupils from this if they wish.[5] In addition, at all Key Stages, the Department for Children, Schools and Families suggests that pupils are offered provision in Personal, Social and Health Education, although this is not statutory.[2]

The Education Act 1996 requires that all pupils in secondary education are provided with a programme of Sex education, including education about AIDS, HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. While a statutory provision, this does not form part of the National Curriculum, and parents have a right to remove their children from this provision.[5]

Assessments are carried out at three ages: seven (school year 2, at the end of Key Stage 1), eleven (Year 6, the end of Key Stage 2) and fourteen (Year 9, the end of Key Stage 3). Some aspects of subjects are teacher-assessed, whilst others involve sitting an examination paper. The results are considered when school and LEA performance league tables are being compiled, but they do not lead to any formal qualification for the candidates taking them.

The study of most subjects under the National Curriculum would usually culminate in the sitting of a GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4. Although the GCSE examinations replaced the earlier, separate GCE O-level and CSE examinations, the syllabuses were still initially devised entirely by the examination boards, whereas since the implementation of the National Curriculum the syllabus outline is determined by law. Thus much of the attention surrounding the claimed dumbing down of GCSEs[8] is, indirectly, a criticism of the National Curriculum.

Public schools are free to choose their own curriculum and examinations and many have opted for the more demanding[9][10] IGCSEs which are not tied to the National Curriculum. It is claimed that this is creating a two-tier system with state school pupils losing out. From time to time ministers have suggested that state schools may be given funding to enter pupils for IGCSE examinations[11] but a study was undertaken by QCA,[12] which concluded that IGCSEs do not follow the programmes of study required by the Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum and therefore could not be offered as a state-funded alternative.

A Call for Evidence has been launched, inviting all interested parties to contribute to the review and the development of the new National Curriculum. A further Call for Evidence will be issued in early 2012 for phase 2 of the review. The DfE will organise a series of consultation events for key stakeholders and work to ensure headteachers, classroom teachers, parents and others are able to contribute to the work of developing the new National Curriculum. Regular updates on the progress of the review will be provided via the Department's website.

With effect from 1 September 2013 the current national curriculum programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory assessment arrangements have been disapplied for English, mathematics and science for pupils in years 3 and 4; all foundation subjects for pupils at key stages 1 and 2; and all subjects for pupils at key stages 3 and 4. Further details are available on the GOV.UK website.

Religious education is compulsory for all pupils registered in maintained schools up to the age of 18. Maintained schools must follow their locally agreed syllabus. Maintained schools must also provide a daily act of collective worship that should be broadly Christian, unless the school has been granted a determination to conduct collective worship of another faith.

Academies do not have to teach the National Curriculum. However, they must teach a broad and balanced curriculum including English, mathematics, science and religious education. They do not have to follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education but can devise their own. They must also provide a daily act of collective worship that should be broadly Christian, unless the school has been granted a determination to conduct collective worship of another faith.

The Education (National Curriculum) (Foundation Stage) (Wales) Order 2008 (“the 2008 Order”) specifies the dates on which the foundation stage will be phased in. The 2008 Order also specifies the period of the foundation stage and gives legal effect to the areas of learning, which set out the desirable outcomes and educational programmes. This Order amends the 2008 Order so as to correct a mistake in the Welsh language text.

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