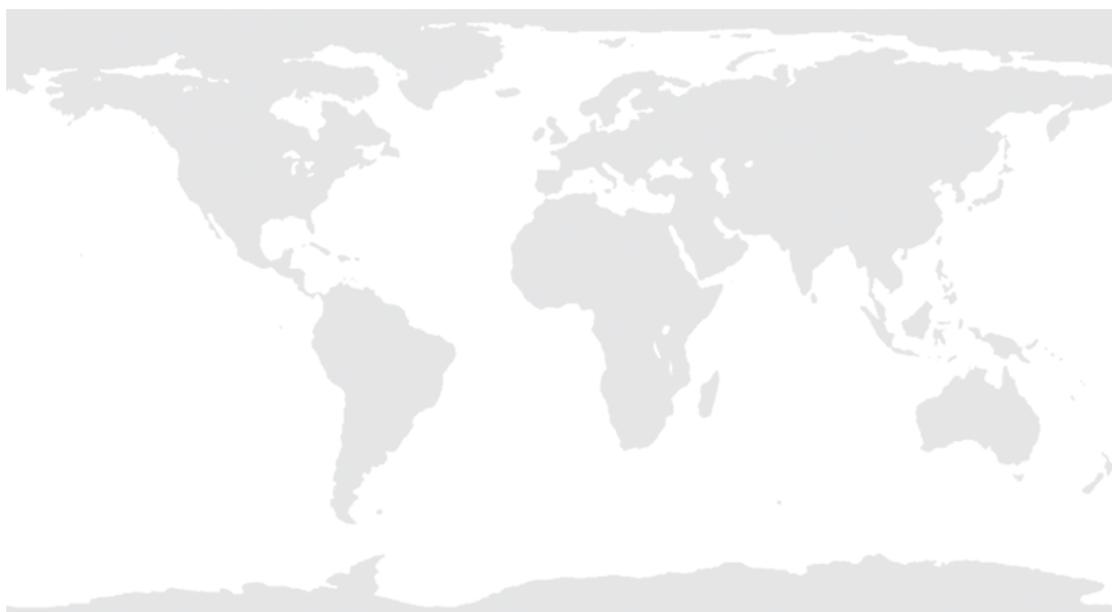




# World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

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### Principles and general objectives of education

Wales is a constituent part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It consists of 13 counties and shares a border with England. Wales was granted devolved powers in 1998 and in 1999 elected its own National Assembly. The National Assembly for Wales assumed responsibility for the policies and public services formerly exercised by the Welsh Office. These include economic development, agriculture, industry and training, education, local government, health, social services, housing, environment, transport and the Welsh language.

The education and training systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are broadly similar. Differences across the United Kingdom are particularly marked in the school systems. At the higher education and training levels, this is less so.

Under the Education Act 2002, which covers both England and Wales, the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. The Act defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

In 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government consulted on progress at the mid-way point for the strategy prior to publishing *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*, the strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010. This document represents the second stage in the *Learning Country* programme. The vision is for Wales to be a learning country, where high quality, lifelong learning provides the skills people need to prosper in the new economy, liberates talent, extends opportunities and empowers communities. In the document, the Welsh Assembly Government states its seven core aims for children and young people, developed from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government aims to ensure that all children and young people in Wales: have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development; have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills; enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimization and exploitation; have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; are listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognized; have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional well-being; and are not disadvantaged by any type of poverty. (DELLS, 2007; DCELLS, 2008a).

The *Business Plan 2011-2015* of the Department for Education and Skills sets out the actions to be taken to raise standards and performance in education and skills, and to secure the future of the Welsh Language. It comprises five objectives,

underpinned by specific deliverables and performance measures to enable the Welsh Government to deliver its Programme for Government. The Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains focused on key outcomes, and takes account of new developments and progress made. The objectives are: to raise the standards of education and training provision, attainment and infrastructure across Wales so that everyone can reach their potential; to deliver a skilled workforce with high quality opportunities for all learners; to support individuals, families, communities and businesses in improving economic and social wellbeing and reducing inequality through education and training; to see the Welsh language thrive in Wales; and to be a high performing department and employer of choice. The overall aim of the Programme for Government is to help everyone reach their potential, reduce inequality, and improve economic and social wellbeing. (DES, March 2012).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Wales was granted devolved powers in 1998 and in 1999 elected its own National Assembly, which assumed responsibility for the policies and public services formerly exercised by the Welsh Office. These include amongst others training, education and social services.

The Government of Wales Act was passed in 2006 with the aim of making it easier for further powers to be granted to the National Assembly for Wales. In 2007, the Act separated the power of the Welsh Assembly Government between a legislative body (e.g. the National Assembly) and an executive body, the Welsh Assembly Government. The role of the executive body is to make decisions; develop and implement policy; exercise executive functions; and make statutory instruments. The members in the National Assembly scrutinize the Assembly Government's decisions and policies; hold Ministers to account; approve budgets for the Welsh Assembly Government's programmes; and have the power to enact Assembly Measures on certain matters. Until the Government of Wales Act 2006 came into effect, most primary legislation-making powers lay with the UK Parliament in London. The Act created a new power for the National Assembly for Wales to make laws in devolved areas. Such laws (known as 'Assembly Measures'), are classed as primary legislation, although they are in a category lower than an Act of Parliament.

The framework for the education system in Wales is set out in a number of Acts of Parliament which also apply to England. For the school system, the framework Acts are the **Education Act 1996** which defines primary, secondary and further education and outlines the principles underlying compulsory education and the **School Standards and Framework Act 1998** (as amended and supplemented by the Education Acts of 2002 and 2005) which established a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools.

The **Education Act 2002** (covering both England and Wales) created a legislative distinction between key stages 1 to 3 and key stage 4. This allows for increased flexibility in education for students in key stage 4 and provides more opportunities to tailor education to their individual needs. The Act also enabled schools to directly provide a range of community services and activities often out of traditional school hours. Under this Act, the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is



suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. Part 7, sections 97 to 118 of the Education Act 2002 make provision for a local curriculum for pupils in Wales. The powers to review the local curriculum in accordance with the options outlined is contained in section 10 of the Education Act 1996 which imposes a duty on the Welsh Ministers to promote the education of the people of Wales. In addition, the Government of Wales Act 2006 provides that the Welsh Ministers may do anything which they consider appropriate to support the Welsh language.

The **Education Act 2005**, which also applies to Wales, was enacted in order to simplify the process of school improvement, strengthening the accountability framework for schools. It makes provision, amongst other, about the inspection of schools, child minding, day care, nursery education and careers services; about school education; and about the training of persons who work in schools and other persons who teach.

Under the **School Government (Terms of Reference) (Wales) Regulations 2000**, as amended in 2002, the governing body shall establish a strategic framework for the school by: setting aims and objectives for the school; setting policies for the school for achieving the aims and objectives; and setting targets for achieving the aims and objectives. The head teacher shall formulate a policy for the secular curriculum of the school ('the curriculum policy') for adoption by the governing body (with or without modifications). The head teacher shall review the curriculum policy every school year and shall formulate changes to the curriculum policy for adoption by the governing body (with or without modifications). The head teacher shall implement the curriculum policy as adopted by the governing body. The governing body shall: consider and, if they see fit, adopt the curriculum policy (with or without modifications), or remit it to the head teacher for reformulation; monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the curriculum policy; and consider and, if they see fit, adopt any changes to the curriculum policy proposed by the head teacher (with or without modifications).

The **Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009**, passed by the National Assembly for Wales in March 2009, aims to ensure that learners aged between 14 and 19 can choose from a wide range of courses supported by impartial advice and guidance. The Measure creates a statutory framework for learning pathways for 14- to 19-year-olds consisting of six key elements: individual Learning Pathways to meet the needs of each learner; wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning; a learning core which runs from age 14 through to 19 wherever young people are learning; study support provided by learning coaches; access to personal support; and impartial careers advice and guidance.

The **Education (Wales) Measure 2011**, passed by the National Assembly for Wales in March 2011, will put in place powers and duties to make collaboration commonplace in the education system, to improve school governance and to simplify the planning of school places. The Measure makes provision to: drive collaboration between local authorities, governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions; give local authorities a power to establish a federation of schools; train school governors and to improve clerking of governing bodies; and



prevent schools in the future from changing category so as to become foundation schools.

The **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**, passed by the National Assembly for Wales in December 2010, includes provisions about the official status of the Welsh language and establishes the office of Welsh Language Commissioner, which will replace the Welsh Language Board. The Commissioner will have wide ranging functions and powers to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and to promote equality between Welsh and English. The Measure also allows for the development of ‘standards’ covering the integration of the Welsh language in the development and delivery of services to the public by a range of organizations and which will, over time, replace Welsh language schemes.

The **School Teachers’ Qualifications (Wales) Regulations 2012** specify the requirements to be met by persons before they can become qualified teachers; requires that persons meeting those requirements must be notified that they are qualified teachers; enables the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to accredit institutions provide courses of initial teacher training that satisfy criteria specified by the Welsh Ministers; and allows the Welsh Ministers to establish an employment-based teacher training scheme whereby persons who are or who have been employed in a school or other educational institution may become qualified teachers. The **Further Education Teachers’ Qualifications (Wales) Regulations 2002** requires teachers in institutions in the further education sector to have relevant qualifications of a standard specified by the Welsh Government. From September 2008 the standard required is specified by the professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector in Wales developed by Lifelong Learning UK.

The current statutory framework relating to the education of children and young people of school age with special educational needs (SEN) is set out in the Education Act 1996. This in turn is based upon legislation originally enacted in 1981, implementing many of the recommendations of the Warnock Report (1978). The **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales 2002** provides guidance on the application of this legislation. The Welsh Government is committed to developing an inclusive system and to tackling inequality and barriers to inclusion, participation and achievement. A consultation was launched in June 2012 on the proposals to reform the legislation surrounding the SEN framework. The new legislation will: give a statutory footing to the concept of additional needs (AN); replace SEN statements with new integrated Individual Development Plans (IDP) for children and young people; set out how integrated plans will cover those aged 0–25 years who fall within different categories of need; set out the duties to be imposed on relevant bodies (such as local authorities and the National Health Service); impose a duty on the Welsh Ministers to issue a code of practice in relation to the new statutory framework for AN; and impose a duty on relevant bodies to collaborate in respect of AN provision.

The **Children Act 2004**, which also broadly applies to Wales, introduced a duty on local authorities and their partners to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children. The **Childcare Act 2006** expands and clarifies in legislation the vital role local authorities play as strategic leaders in the provision of childcare locally. The Act reinforces the framework within which local authorities already work – in partnership with the private, voluntary, independent, community and maintained sector – to shape

and secure children's services, and focuses in particular on the provision of: sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs; and information, advice and assistance to parents, prospective parents and those with parental responsibility or care of a child, relating to childcare.

The **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010**, passed by the National Assembly for Wales in November 2009, provides greater support to families where children may be at risk and strengthens regulatory enforcement in childcare settings. The Measure covers three main subject areas: child poverty, play and participation; child minding and day care for children; integrated family support teams.

The **Equality Act 2006** introduced a number of measures to promote equality across a broad range of areas in England, Wales and Scotland. It established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights which aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status, and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act. The **Equality Act 2010** brings together and replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws, such as the Disability Discrimination, Race Relations, and Equal Pay Acts with a single Act. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act includes a new public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'), replacing previous separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The general duty is supplemented by specific duties brought in by the Welsh Government, which set out certain steps that schools and other public authorities in Wales must take to help in their better performance of the general duty.

The **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011** makes provision for and in connection with giving further effect in Wales to the rights and obligations set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and for connected purposes. The Measure places a duty on the Welsh Ministers (including the First Minister) to have regard to the CRC. Between May 2012 and April 2014 this duty will apply when they are making decisions about new policy or changing existing policies. However, from the beginning of May 2014 this will apply when they are exercising any of their functions. Welsh Ministers will have to produce a Children's Scheme setting out the arrangements they have made or will be making in order to carry out the duty of having regard to the CRC. This scheme might require Welsh Ministers to publish reports about how well it is operating.

Higher education is defined by the **Education Reform Act 1988**, but higher education institutions are diverse and there is no single legal framework setting out the legal basis on which they run their affairs. The principal pieces of legislation governing further and higher education in both England and Wales are the **Further and Higher Education Act 1992**, which took further education institutions out of local authorities' control, and the **Learning and Skills Act 2000** which set out the framework for further education. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales was established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The **Higher Education Act 2004** gave the National Assembly for Wales powers to decide what levels of tuition fee and student support will apply in Wales.

In Wales compulsory schooling takes place between the ages of 5 and 16.

## Administration and management of the education system

The education system is characterized by its decentralized nature. Responsibility for different aspects of the system is shared between central government, local government, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession.

The **Department for Education and Skills** (formerly the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), under the overall responsibility of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides leadership for education, skills and the Welsh language. The Minister for Education and Skills also has overall responsibility for those areas listed under the responsibilities allocated to the Deputy Minister for Skills. However, the Deputy Minister has for all practical purposes, day-to-day responsibility for these functions. The Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services is responsible, amongst others, for: policy on care in the community; policy on the provision of social services for children and its oversight; oversight of all other social services activities of local authorities in Wales including the issuing of statutory guidance; and oversight of the Care Council for Wales. As of February 2011, the Department operates through three areas which are responsible for policy, planning, funding and monitoring services. The areas are: Schools and Young People (including curriculum, learning improvement and professional development; infrastructure unit; schools management and effectiveness; school standards unit; support for learners); Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Group (including qualifications and learning; further education; higher education; transformation programme management; business and skills); and Welsh Language Unit (strategy, Welsh Government scheme, sponsorship of the Welsh Language Board, implementation of the Welsh Language Measure). The Department works in partnership with local authorities, schools, colleges, universities, training and skills providers and other public, private and voluntary sector organizations. All central government funding for education is provided through the Welsh Assembly Government, which decides the sums to be spent on its various areas of activity, including education, and distributes resources to local authorities, and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Prior to April 2006, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC, which was an Assembly-sponsored public body accountable to the National Assembly for Wales), was responsible for matters pertaining to the curriculum, assessment and qualifications. In April 2006, ACCAC's responsibilities became those of the Qualifications and Curriculum Group of the then Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (now the Department for Education and Skills). The main functions of the Group included: advising the Welsh Assembly Government on matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in schools; ensuring quality and standards in external general and vocational qualifications; keeping under review all aspects of the school curriculum and statutory assessment arrangements for maintained schools. The Group was also responsible for the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, the modernization of examinations, and the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification.



The **Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales** (Estyn) is responsible for the inspection and regulation of schools, colleges, further education, adult education, youth services, local authorities, initial teacher training, and work-based learning. All inspections are conducted in accordance with Estyn's *Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales*. The framework places an emphasis on self-evaluation as the starting point for inspection. It focuses on the achievements of learners; the quality of education and training provided; and the effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management. All providers are inspected at least once every six years.

The **General Teaching Council for Wales** (GTCW) is an independent professional body for teaching. All teachers wishing to teach in maintained schools (schools funded through their local authority) are required to register with the Council. The GTCW maintains a register of teachers and a Code of Practice for the profession.

The **Care Council for Wales**, set up under the Care Standards Act 2000, is a Welsh Government sponsored body in charge of regulating the social care profession.

**Children in Wales** is the national umbrella children's organization in Wales, bringing organizations and individuals together to: make the Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality in Wales; fight for sustainable quality services and fair shares for all children and young people; ensure special attention and treatment for children in need; and give children and young people a voice. Children in Wales works to meet the following objectives: to support and develop strong networks; to produce and disseminate information; to represent and consult with members; to develop policy, practice and research; to raise public, political and professional awareness; and to support new and existing initiatives.

In Wales, both English and Welsh are treated on a basis of equality for official purposes. Welsh is a statutory part of the National Curriculum at key stages 1 to 4 (ages 5 to 16) as either a first or second language. The **Welsh Language Board** is a statutory body whose main function is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language. The Board is responsible for Welsh language schemes prepared by local authorities, school and college governing bodies and other public bodies involved in education in Wales. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10). The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 establishes the office of **Welsh Language Commissioner**, which will replace the Welsh Language Board.

Wales shares a common system of external qualifications with England and Northern Ireland. These qualifications are normally taken between the ages of 16 and 18 and are provided by independent organizations known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations. These organizations are funded by examination fees. Awarding organizations are subject to statutory regulation and their role involves: developing qualifications; assessing and quality assuring qualifications; awarding qualifications; and providing customer service to centres (including schools, further education colleges, and adult education centres) offering courses leading to their qualifications. The five principal awarding bodies for general qualifications taken in schools are: the WJEC, the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA); Edexcel; OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations); and the Northern Ireland Council



for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). These main awarding bodies offer both general and vocational qualifications. They offer the same type of qualifications, which must be centrally approved, but schools are free to choose examination specifications from any one of the five providers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland (although the WJEC offers qualifications which are tailored to the Welsh context).

AQA came into existence in April 2000 following the merger of the Associated Examining Board (AEB) and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board. AQA is the largest of the three English exam boards, awarding 49% of full course GCSEs and 42% of A-levels nationally. The principal area of its work is in specification development and the preparation, production, delivery and marking of question papers leading to timely and accurate delivery of results to schools and candidates. Edexcel was formed in 1996 by the merger of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the country's leading provider of vocational qualifications, and the University of London Examination and Assessment Council (ULEAC), one of the major exam boards for GCSE and A-levels. Edexcel offers academic and vocational qualifications and testing to schools, colleges, employers and other places of learning in the UK and internationally. Academic qualifications include GCSE, GCE (A level) and International GCSE (Edexcel Certificate for UK state schools). Vocational qualifications include NVQ and BTEC from entry level to Higher National Diplomas. BTECs are recognized in more than 80 countries worldwide. OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group which is a department of the University of Cambridge and Europe's largest agency. Cambridge Assessment plays a leading role in developing and delivering assessment across the world, operating in over 150 countries. OCR was formed in 1998 by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), now known as Cambridge Assessment, when it was joined by the leading vocational RSA Examinations Board. OCR offers a wide range of general and vocational qualifications including A-Levels, GCSEs and vocational qualifications including OCR Nationals, NVQs and Basic Skills. The **Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)** is a membership organization comprising the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK (AQA, OCR, Edexcel, CCEA, WJEC, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and City & Guilds). Established in 2004 to replace the Joint Council for General Qualifications (1998-2003), the JCQ provides a single voice for its members on issues of examination administration and, when appropriate, qualification and wider education policy.

The **WJEC**, previously the Welsh Joint Education Committee, was established in 1948 as a consortium of local education authorities in Wales. It is now a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee, owned by the 22 local authorities in Wales. WJEC provides examinations, assessment, professional development, educational resources, support for adults who wish to learn Welsh, and access to youth arts activities. It also provides examinations throughout England as well as Wales.

The **Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)** was established by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. It is responsible for funding higher education and distributes funds for education, research and related activities at 11 higher education institutions in Wales. HEFCW also funds certain higher education courses at further education (FE) colleges. As a Welsh Government



sponsored body, HEFCW receives funds from, and is accountable to, the Welsh Government. Its responsibilities for initial teacher training are covered under the Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (Wales) Regulations 2004 and the Education Act 2005. The direct costs of specific research projects are funded by the UK Research Councils, which are under the statutory control of the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and have a remit across the United Kingdom.

**Higher Education Wales (HEW)** represents the interests of higher education institutions in Wales and is a National Council of Universities UK. HEW's membership encompasses all the heads of the universities in Wales. HEW provides an expert resource on higher education to the many interested stakeholders, including Assembly Members, the Welsh and UK media, students, staff, business leaders and industrial entrepreneurs. HEW promotes and supports higher education in Wales, representing the interests of its members to the National Assembly, to Parliament, political parties and European institutions and bodies. It also negotiates on behalf of Welsh higher education.

**Colleges Wales** is the national organization representing all 17 further education (FE) colleges and two FE institutions in Wales. Through Colleges Wales, colleges are represented on various committees, working parties and other groups that influence and shape policy in post-16 education and life-long learning. In the main, Colleges Wales' senior staff serve as the representatives on these groups. Individual board members, principals, and senior staff from member colleges may also be nominated by the Colleges Wales board, chief executive, or by a Colleges Wales network to represent colleges on particular areas of policy or committees.

FE colleges are public corporations and are therefore subject to company law. They each have a governing body or corporation which fulfils a role similar to the board of directors of a company. They are responsible, within the limits imposed by their statutory obligations, for all decisions affecting the institution. Their main tasks are to set the strategic direction, mission and educational character of the institution; ensure accountability; and monitor and evaluate performance. Day-to-day management, organization and direction are the responsibility of the **principal** and the management team, working within the broad framework of policies and priorities determined by the governing body. The principal is directly accountable to the governing body/corporation for the performance of the institution, in terms of both academic and financial matters. In FE institutions other than sixth-form colleges, an **academic board** must be created to advise the principal on the standards, planning, coordination, development and oversight of the academic work of the institution. Most colleges are organized into departments according to area of study. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

For higher education, the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)**, which was set up in 1997, provides an integrated quality assurance service for all the United Kingdom higher education institutions. The Agency is an independent body, funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies. The **Higher Education Statistics Agency** collects and publishes financial information from universities and colleges in the United Kingdom. The **Higher Education Academy (HEA)** is a UK-wide organization committed to enhancing the student learning experience, and



championing excellent learning and teaching in higher education. It is an independent organization funded by grants from the four UK higher education funding bodies, subscriptions from higher education institutions, and grant and contract income for specific initiatives. The HEA Wales has been developed to recognize and support the Welsh distinctive higher education system. It supports the professional development of individual staff, institutions, communities of practice through its Subject Centres, and contributes to national policy.

At local level, responsibility for the management and administration of education lies with 22 **Local Authorities** (LAs). LAs have a statutory duty to secure the provision of primary and compulsory secondary education (age group 5 to 16). Other key responsibilities regarding schools include: school admissions; financial administration; promoting high standards and the fulfilment of potential; staffing and staff development; ensuring regular school attendance; support for inclusion, special educational needs and behaviour support; dealing with complaints; school meals; grants and allowances and transport to school. At school level, **governing bodies** are responsible and accountable for all major decisions about the school and its future. Governors have a legal responsibility to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. The school governing body decides the general direction of the school and its curriculum, subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum. It must ensure that the National Curriculum is implemented and that religious education is taught. It also decides how the budget will be spent, determines the number and composition of the staff, and is responsible for selecting the head teacher. The head teacher and staff report to the governing body on the school's overall performance, and in its turn the governing body should ensure accountability to parents and the wider local community. It is a legal requirement for the governing body to produce an annual report.

All schools have a **head teacher**, who is responsible for the internal organization, management and control of the school. Head teachers have a wide range of professional duties, including formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school; appointment and management of staff; evaluating the standards of teaching and learning at the school; determining and implementing an appropriate curriculum for the school; reviewing staff performance; ensuring that the performance of pupils is monitored and recorded; ensuring an acceptable standard of pupil behaviour; and promoting good relations between the school and parents. A school's staffing structure typically includes the **Senior Leadership Team** (SLT). Depending on the size of the school, the SLT might include one or more deputy head teachers and one or more assistant head teacher. A small primary school might have just one deputy head who would combine management duties with classroom teaching, while a large secondary school might have up to half a dozen deputies and assistant heads who would spend only a small proportion of their time in the classroom. Sometimes, the SLT may also include staff who are not teachers, for example a bursar or school business manager. The staffing structure usually also includes a middle leadership layer. Middle managers might include heads of department or curriculum areas (in a secondary school), responsible for managing subject teaching in their areas, and also heads of year or key stage (2) managers, responsible for students' pastoral care.

Parents have a responsibility to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and



to any special educational needs (SEN) they may have. In addition, parents may put themselves forward to serve as school governors and vote in elections for parent governors. Under the School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005, all maintained schools (schools funded through the Local Authority) are required to have a **school council**. The purpose of school councils is to allow pupils to discuss matters relating to their school and education and to give their views on these to the school governing body and head teacher. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Pre-school education

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002, defines pre-primary education as full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (the term after a child's fifth birthday), whether provided at schools (normally nursery schools, nursery classes or in primary schools) or elsewhere. Participation in preschool education is voluntary. For children aged from three months to 3, provision is largely in the private and voluntary sectors and parents pay fees. For 3- and 4-year-olds there is free provision for all whose parents want it. This may be in maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in maintained primary schools or in voluntary and private settings. This entitlement is for 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. The great majority of 3- and 4-year-olds participate. Free part-time places are also available for some 2-year-olds in deprived areas. LAs have a statutory duty to offer these places. The foundation phase is a statutory framework for 3- to 7-year-olds, which combines and replaces early years education (ages 3 to 5) and key stage 1 (ages 5 to 7). It began to be introduced in September 2008, and the final phase of implementation began in September 2011.

### Primary education

Children must start primary school once they have reached compulsory school age, that is, at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Many children start in the reception class of primary school at age 4. Primary education covers key stage 1 (years 1 and 2, ages 5 to 7, now replaced by the foundation stage) and key stage 2 (years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11). During primary education, children are usually taught by generalist teachers. At the end of the foundation phase, teachers are required to assess and report outcomes attained by each child through teacher assessment in the following areas of learning: personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity; language, literacy and communication skills in English or Welsh; and mathematical development. Until 2005, it was a statutory requirement for pupils to take National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. However, the tests became non-statutory from 2004/05 and teacher assessment became the sole means of statutory assessment. In order to improve literacy across the curriculum a National Literacy and Numeracy Framework will become a statutory curriculum requirement from September 2013. Furthermore, English and Welsh national reading tests and national numeracy tests for all learners in years 2 to 9 are being developed by the National Foundation for Educational Research and will be available for the first time in May 2013. Pupils in years 2 and 3 who are learning through the medium of Welsh will only be required to take the



reading test in Welsh. From year 4 Welsh language learners will sit both Welsh and English tests. There will not be a test for Welsh second language. These tests will generate summative, highly reliable, comparable data which will enable schools and local authorities to measure learner progress and focus attention on improving performance. They will also include formative elements, generating data from which teachers can gain an accurate picture of where a learner is in terms of their skills and ability. The usual age for transfer to secondary schools is 11 years. There is no certificate awarded at the end of primary education.

## Secondary education

Secondary education and further education are defined in the Education Act 1996. Secondary education is defined as covering education designed for young people from age 11 to 19 at school. Further education is defined as covering the education of people over compulsory school age (16) other than at school. It specifically excludes higher education programmes but includes access programmes and the continuing education of adults. Education is provided free of charge for students up to the age of 19. Secondary education covers key stage 3 (years 7 to 9, or lower secondary education, ages 11 to 14), and key stage 4 (years 10 and 11, or upper secondary education, ages 14 to 16). Post-compulsory advanced programmes are offered by secondary schools (many of which cater for students aged 16 to 19) or further education colleges (which cater for students aged 16 to 19 and for older learners). Advanced programmes typically last two years when followed full-time by school leavers (age 16), but may be of varied duration when aimed at older learners. Many secondary schools also have a sixth-form providing full-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19). At key stages 3 and 4, secondary schools offer general/academic education as set out in the National Curriculum; and at key stage 4 and post-16, they provide external qualifications in general subjects along with some courses in vocational/applied subjects. Until 2005/06, statutory assessment at the end of key stage 3 comprised externally set and marked tests in mathematics, science, Welsh and English and teacher assessment in all National Curriculum subjects. However, the external tests have now been abolished and teacher assessment in all National Curriculum remains the sole means of statutory assessment at the end of the key stage. National reading tests and national numeracy tests for all learners in years 2 to 9 will become a statutory curriculum requirement from September 2013 (see above). At the end of key stage 4, the majority of students are assessed by means of external qualifications. These qualifications are developed by independent organizations, known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations. The most common qualification taken is the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), a single subject qualification available in more than 40 academic subject areas. Achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics is usually a basic requirement for progression to further study or training and for many jobs. GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas. Entry level qualifications are aimed at students who are not ready for GCSEs at the end of key stage 4 and are intended to offer progression to higher awards. The most common qualifications taken at the end of post-compulsory education (around age 18) are A-levels. These are single subject examinations which may be studied in any combination, within the limit of the range of subjects offered by the school or further education institution. Courses usually last two years. During the first year students typically take four or five subjects leading to AS-level qualifications. These are



standalone qualifications and typically consist of three units. The second half of the full A-level qualification (A2) is taken in the second year, and consists of a further three units. The A2 covers more demanding material than at AS level. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2. GCEs or A-levels in applied subjects are also available to students in post-compulsory education. These qualifications are intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment as well as a route to higher-level qualifications. The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification is being introduced gradually at three different levels – at intermediate and advanced level for students in post-16 education and at foundation level for 14- to 19-year-olds. Key skills (KS, replaced by ‘essential skills’ in 2010) qualifications in communication, application of number and ICT are intended to be taken in tandem with other courses, such as GCSEs, A-levels, the Welsh Baccalaureate or work-based training programmes. Essential skills also replaced KS within all BTEC (Business and Technical Education Council) Apprenticeships. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enable students as well as employees who have left full-time education to gain recognized qualifications for specific occupations. They are available in 11 occupational areas at five levels, from foundation skills to chartered and professional, and they offer progression routes to further education and training or employment. BTECs and OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Nationals are also designed for study in occupational areas. They are available at three levels (BTEC Firsts are available for students aged 14 to 16 in compulsory education) and enable progression to employment or higher level vocational courses. Foundation Modern Apprenticeships are a work-based training option for young people and employers, and are based on NVQs. Modern Apprenticeships are a partnership initiative between government and industry to provide a high-quality, work-based route to NVQ level 3. They are intended largely for school leavers aged 16+, but are also open to more mature trainees. Introductory certificates and diplomas are vocational qualifications, available alongside GCSEs in applied subjects. They are designed to enable young people and adults to take part in full- or part-time programmes of study. Access courses (typically lasting one year full-time) are provided by further education colleges and are aimed at mature students (aged 19+) who have few, if any, formal qualifications and wish to gain entry to higher education. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 will create a right for 14- to 19-year-olds to follow a course of study from a local area curriculum or ‘options menu’, which will contain a wide range of academic and vocational study options. The Measure will also create a statutory framework for learning pathways for 14- to 19-year-olds consisting of six key elements: individual Learning Pathways to meet the needs of each learner; wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning; a learning core which runs from age 14 through to 19 wherever young people are learning; study support provided by learning coaches; access to personal support; and impartial careers advice and guidance.

## Higher education

The higher education in Wales consists of 11 higher education institutions (including the Open University of Wales) and a number of further education colleges (20 further education institutions in 2011). The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has five levels numbered 4 to 8, with bachelor’s degrees located within level 6, master’s degrees in level 7 and doctorates in level 8. The level numbers correspond with levels 4 to 8 in the National Qualifications



Framework (NQF)/Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for the vocational qualifications system and can assist with transfer and progression between different levels and types of study. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 4 (certificates of higher education, higher national certificates) are usually offered in a vocational subject and normally take one year of full-time study or the part-time equivalent. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 5 (higher national diplomas, diplomas of higher education, foundation degrees) are intended to take two years of full-time study to complete or the part-time equivalent. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 6 include bachelor's degrees with honours (honours degrees) which form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Honours degree programmes typically last three years if taken full-time, although they may be longer or shorter than three years. Shorter courses include accelerated two-year degrees which require students to study during the normal vacation periods. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 7 include master's courses which typically last at least one year (on a full-time basis), and are taken by persons holding an honours degrees (the Bachelor of Medicine, of Surgery and of Dental Surgery, are five-year programmes). Longer, research-based programmes often lead to the degree of MPhil. Some master's degrees – for instance in chemistry, engineering, mathematics, pharmacy and physics– are integrated into first-cycle programmes lasting a year longer than bachelor's programmes. Also at this level are advanced short courses, often forming parts of continuing professional development programmes, leading to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas. Courses leading to qualifications at FHEQ level 8 (doctoral degrees) normally require the equivalent of three years' full-time study.

Schools must be open for 380 half-day sessions a year (or 190 days a year). Term and holiday dates are determined by the local authority or the school governing body, depending on the legal category of school. The school year generally runs from early September (between 1 and 5 September in the school year 2011/12) to the latter part of July (19 or 20 July). Schools normally operate five days a week (Monday to Friday). The school day generally runs from around 9:00 to between 15:00 and 16:00. The organization of time within the school day is determined by the school. The minimum recommended weekly lesson times are: 21 hours for 5- to 7-year-olds; 23.5 hours for 7- to 11-year-olds; and 25 hours for 11- to 14-year-olds and 14- to 16-year-olds. Many schools provide more hours than the minimum. (Eurydice, 2011). Increasingly higher education institutions organize their teaching according to a two-semester system.

## **The educational process**

The key features of curriculum 2008 are reduced subject matter, increased emphasis on skills, flexibility in organizing learning and new content. In terms of reduced subject matter, although there are more topics, teachers are encouraged to choose a few topics and look at them in more depth than previously. It is less about the details and more about asking how and why things happened. There is a much greater emphasis on skills now, both through Curriculum Cymreig (e.g. the Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum) and through the Skills Framework (3-19). The (revised) National Curriculum 2008 is divided into four key stages, namely: the foundation stage which combines and replaces early years education (ages 3 to 5) and key stage 1

(years 1 and 2); key stage 2 (years 3–6); key stage 3 (years 7–9); and key stage 4 (years 10 and 11).

The curriculum aims to: focus on the learner; ensure that appropriate skills development is woven throughout the curriculum; focus on continuity and progression 3–19; offer reduced subject content with an increased focus on skills; be flexible; be relevant to the twenty-first century; support Government policy including bilingualism, Curriculum Cymreig/Wales, Europe and the World (WEW), equal opportunities, food and fitness, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and the world of work and entrepreneurship. The document *The Learning Country: Vision into action*, highlights the need for a learner-centred curriculum if standards are to be raised and all learners' experiences of education improved. For all learners, schools should choose material that will: provide a meaningful, relevant and motivating curriculum; meet the specific needs of learners and further their all-round development. So that the revised national curriculum subject orders and frameworks are truly learner-centred, they have assessment for learning principles and vocabulary embedded within them. A non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* has been developed to help schools plan the development of transferable generic skills – developing thinking, communication, ICT and number – for learners from 3–19 and has underpinned the whole curriculum revision. The same skills can be a requirement for learning in more than one subject. (DCELLS, 2008a).

One of the overall aims of the revised curriculum is to reduce prescription and to give control and responsibility back to schools and to learners themselves. Schools are free to organize and deliver the curriculum in the way that best suits their circumstances and needs. There are no constraints relating to time allocation or organization of subjects. Schools, for instance, can choose to develop more imaginative and innovative ways of delivering the statutory curriculum. Such changes in approach might include moving away from a rigid hourly timetable, combining the teaching of one or more subjects in a thematic way or using a series of whole days – in or out of school – to focus on a particular topic. The starting point for planning can be a focus on skills or a thematic or topic approach. The word 'topic' might cover a continuum of subject matter ranging from an extract from a single subject order to a cross-curricular study theme. At key transition points, it is particularly important for teachers to build on the teaching and learning that has gone before when planning the curriculum. For example, the teaching and learning in year 3 might be structured to reflect the approach taken in partner foundation phase settings, so that the themes of the foundation phase continue to link similar subject areas and skills. Similarly, the timetabling of subjects in year 7 might reflect the approach being taken in partner primary schools. In all phases, a whole-school approach is crucial so that there is a shared and coherent vision across the school. In planning the curriculum, schools, colleges and learning providers should remember how the Welsh dimension of the curriculum makes it distinctive from that of any other country. The Curriculum Cymreig should underpin the whole curriculum for learners 3–14. The revised curriculum also retains and enhances opportunities for the development of other Government policies and cross-cutting themes. These include: equal opportunities; food and fitness; education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

The new curriculum aims to be up-to-date and motivating for all learners. Subject and framework content has been revised to produce an enriched curriculum

that will motivate and meet the needs of individual learners and prepare them for life in the twenty-first century. Among others, these revisions include: a focus on the study of media and moving image texts in the national curriculum orders for English and Welsh; the opportunity to focus on current events in the news in geography; an expectation that learners develop financial literacy; a requirement to consider entrepreneurship as part of the range of study in ‘careers and the world of work’; a requirement to realize music using technology and to consider examples of music that are evolving during the 21st century in the music order; a requirement to work with authentic materials and to interact with native speakers and other learners of the language in a variety of ways in modern foreign languages; a focus on active citizenship as one of the themes of personal and social education (PSE); a focus on sustainable development and global citizenship in PSE, geography and science. (*Ibid.*).

Teaching approaches that recent research has shown to be successful and motivating for teachers and learners alike include: a focus on developing learning rather than merely transferring facts; collaborative learning where learners learn from each other in pairs and small groups; active and interactive learning; developing thinking, especially questioning, planning, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking skills; determining success criteria so that learners are aware of what they can do, what they need to do to improve and how to do it; reflection on what has been learned and how the learning has occurred. For ongoing, formative assessment – assessment for learning – it is necessary to focus on the learner’s achievement and on details of ways in which they can move forward rather than on the national curriculum outcomes and level descriptions. Questioning technique, providing feedback to learners, and self-assessment and peer assessment, are fundamental principles and should underpin all teaching if formative assessment is to be effective. At key points in a learner’s continuum of learning, it is essential that information about the previous curriculum and the learner’s achievement is shared amongst all those concerned. This will be particularly important at the transition between foundation phase and key stage 2 and the transition between key stages 2 and 3. National curriculum outcomes and level descriptions have been developed for summative assessment of learning at the end of a key stage, i.e. assessment of learning. They are not related to a particular phase or key stage but describe the types and range of performance that learners working at a particular outcome or level should characteristically demonstrate. They refer to a learner’s achievement over time and over a range of work providing a holistic view of a number of different characteristics. Young people’s achievements at key stage 4 are largely recognized and reported through qualifications. Qualifications are continually revised to ensure that they remain relevant for young people’s needs, are manageable for centres and candidates, and match overall 14–19 policy. Greater choice is being provided through: increasing the range of subjects; offering alternative pathways within subjects; an increasing range of vocational qualifications. These developments enhance the scope for individualized learning pathways.

The statutory areas of learning in the foundation phase are: (i) personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity; (ii) language, literacy and communication skills; (iii) mathematical development; (iv) Welsh language development; (v) knowledge and understanding of the world; (vi) physical development; and (vii) creative development. For each area of learning the educational programme sets out what children should be taught and the outcomes set

out the expected standards of children's performance. Under the requirements of equal opportunities legislation, settings/schools in Wales have a duty towards present and prospective children to provide an inclusive curriculum that will offer opportunities for all children to achieve their full potential in preparation for further learning and life. For children with disabilities in particular, they should make reasonable adjustments. The foundation phase encompasses the developmental needs of children. At the centre of the statutory curriculum framework lies the holistic development of children and their skills across the curriculum, building on their previous learning experiences, knowledge and skills. The foundation phase curriculum promotes equality of opportunity and values, and celebrates diversity. Positive partnerships with the home are fostered and an appreciation of parents/carers as the children's first educators is acknowledged. The seven areas of learning must complement each other and work together to provide a cross-curricular approach to form a practical relevant curriculum. They should not be approached in isolation. Emphasis is placed on developing children's skills across the areas of learning, to provide a suitable and integrated approach for young children's learning. 'Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity' is at the heart of the foundation phase and should be developed across the curriculum. (DCELLS, 2008c).

The statutory areas of learning in key stages 2 and 3 are: English; Welsh (including Welsh as a second language); modern foreign languages (there is a key stage 2 non-statutory framework for modern foreign languages); mathematics; science; design and technology; ICT; history; geography; art and design; music; and physical education. Other statutory requirements include: religious education, personal and social education, sex education (primary schools are required to have a policy on sex education), and careers and the world of work (the latter from key stage 3 onwards). The statutory areas of learning in key stage 4 are: English; Welsh (including Welsh as a second language); mathematics; science; and physical education. Other statutory requirements include: religious education, personal and social education, sex education, and careers and the world of work. Full-time learners in key stage 4 and post-16 have an entitlement to the Learning Core 14–19 which includes personal and social education and careers and the world of work. (DCELLS, 2008a).

The non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* is not intended to be a curriculum framework. It underpins the foundation phase framework, all the subjects of the national curriculum, plus the frameworks for 'personal and social education', 'careers and the world of work' and religious education, and aims to ensure a coherent approach to learning and to progression. Its greatest value will therefore be to support planning. The skills framework applies to all children and young people from their earliest contact with the education system through to the time they leave school or college as young adults. There is no expectation, however, that all subjects will cover all the skills defined. The skills outlined particularly in 'developing thinking' and 'developing communication' can be successfully developed in English and Welsh and, indeed, in other languages. The communication, (application of) number and ICT frameworks are broadly similar in title to current 'key skills' (now 'essential skills'). While the framework does not explicitly cover the three wider key skills of 'working with others', 'improving own learning and performance' and 'problem solving', these are integrated throughout. Improving own learning and performance and problem solving, while seeded across the whole



framework, are most fully covered by ‘developing thinking’. ‘Developing thinking’ is underpinned by the principles involved in creative and critical thinking. ‘Working with others’ is a key element in thinking and communication, where the value of collaborative working in learning is especially recognized.

Metacognition (thinking about thinking) is the central and crucial process in developing thinking. Metacognition is therefore at the heart of the framework for developing thinking although not explicitly stated. Developing communication (oracy, reading, writing and wider communication skills) should take place across the whole curriculum and communication is taken to mean all forms of communication. Developing ICT across the curriculum has two strands: finding and developing information and ideas; and creating and presenting information and ideas. Numeracy involves more than just calculating correctly, it also involves the ability to use number correctly and appropriately across a wide range of situations and contexts. The title was chosen to be ‘number’ rather than ‘numeracy’ in order to be equally valid for the youngest and oldest learners, as well as those with additional learning needs. Number skills can be applied at all ages in different situations across the curriculum, as appropriate to learners’ abilities, achievements and stages of development, contributing to a deeper understanding of subject contexts. Developing number has three main elements (each with several strands): use mathematical information; calculate; and interpret and present findings. (DCELLS, 2008b).

## Pre-primary education

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by the Education Act 2002, defines pre-primary education as full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (the term after a child’s fifth birthday), whether provided at schools (normally nursery schools, nursery classes or in primary schools) or elsewhere. For children aged from three months to 3, provision is largely in the private and voluntary sectors and parents pay fees. For 3- and 4-year-olds there is free provision for all whose parents want it. This may be in maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in maintained primary schools or in voluntary and private settings. This entitlement is for 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. The great majority of 3- and 4-year-olds participate. Free part-time places are also available for some 2-year-olds in deprived areas. LAs have a statutory duty to offer these places.

Maintained schools, both primary schools and nursery schools, are major providers of preschool education places. These places can either be provided in standalone nursery schools, or in nursery classes (children aged 3 to 4) and reception classes (children aged 4 to 5) within primary schools. They are also provided in integrated children’s centres, which offer early years education, childcare, open access play and community education and training.

There are all kinds of day nurseries in Wales. Some are run by voluntary or community groups, some by employers and local authorities, while others are privately run. They tend to provide full daycare, education and play for children up to 5 years old, from 8:00 until 18:00. Playgroups and Cylchoedd Meithrin (Welsh-medium early years care and education) sessions cater for children aged 2–5, generally for 2–3 hours a day. Cylchoedd Meithrin provide children with the chance



to learn and develop from quality play experiences through the medium of Welsh. Both playgroups and Cylchoedd Meithrin can be run privately or by a committee of local parents/carers and they often meet in local communities, schools or purpose built nurseries. After school clubs, breakfast clubs and holiday clubs offer play care for children aged from 3–14 years. Many take place in local schools, while others are based in village halls, community centres or day nurseries. Many clubs have children with a wide range of ages.

The Welsh childcare and early years survey, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government was conducted in 2009. With regard to the use of childcare and early years education, 80% of families in Wales used childcare in the term-time reference week. Thirty per cent just used formal childcare, 31% used both formal and informal childcare, and 16% only used informal carers (3% of families used types of childcare that could not be classified as either formal or informal). The use of various forms of childcare varied according to the age of their child and their circumstances. Three- and 4-year-olds were most likely to be in childcare which is largely due to the entitlement to free hours of early years education. Indeed, 95% of 3-4 year olds who were eligible to receive the free entitlement were in early years education. Twelve- to 14-year-olds were the least likely to receive childcare (56%). Children from working and higher-income families were more likely to be in formal childcare than those from non-working and lower-income families. Children living in the most deprived areas were less likely to receive formal childcare (40%) than those living in the least deprived areas (46%). Among preschool children, the three most common packages of childcare they received were centre-based only (e.g. a nursery class, day nursery, playgroup, 27%); a combination of centre-based and informal care (23%); and informal care only (13%). Among school-age children, the three most common packages were informal care only (17%); formal out-of-school care only (i.e. a breakfast or after school club, 15%); and a combination of the two (13%). (National Centre for Social Research, 2010).

The free entitlement to early years education, introduced as part of the strategy to improve child outcomes, has been largely successful, and the survey showed how important early years education is to parents regarding their children's educational and social development. However, many parents of 3- and 4-year-olds seem to reconcile their childcare needs by using different providers, and a high proportion of parents seem to need more hours of early years education and childcare than is available through the free entitlement. The increase in take-up of out-of-school services between 2004 and 2009 is encouraging, as is the wide availability of out-of-school care. However, many parents who did not have out-of-school services available say that they would use them if they could which suggests some level of unmet demand. Ensuring equality of access to affordable childcare is important with regard to supporting the outcomes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and with regard to facilitating maternal employment. The survey illustrated that children experiencing disadvantage are notably less likely to receive childcare than their more affluent counterparts. To some extent this reflects those families' need for childcare; however, it is also clear that unemployment and a lower use of childcare are not a positive choice for many families but instead reflect barriers to childcare use and to entering the labour market. (*Ibid.*).

As mentioned, the foundation phase is a statutory framework for 3- to 7-year-olds, which combines and replaces early years education (ages 3 to 5) and key stage 1 (ages 5 to 7). It began to be introduced in September 2008, and the final phase of implementation began in September 2011. (See the section below).

Statistics for Wales reports that in 2011/12 there were 22 maintained nursery schools with 1,129 under-5s attending part-time and 401 attending full-time; there were 46 part-time nursery assistants and 66 full-time assistants. In the same year, in maintained primary schools there were 27,097 under-5s attending part-time and 31,274 attending full-time; the figures were 64 and 108, respectively, in maintained special schools, and 201 and 446 in independent schools. There were 986 nursery classes in maintained primary schools. It was estimated that 85.9% of 3- and 4-year-olds were in education (80.2% in 2000/01), of whom 40.3% part-time and 45.6% full-time.

## Primary education

Children must start primary school once they have reached compulsory school age, that is, at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Many children start in the reception class of primary school at age 4. Primary education covers key stage 1 (years 1 and 2, ages 5 to 7, now replaced by the foundation stage) and key stage 2 (years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11).

All primary schools accept pupils without regard to ability and most publicly-funded primary schools are mixed gender. Although many primary schools are for pupils aged 5 to 11, in some areas there are separate 'infant' schools for children in key stage 1 and 'junior' schools for pupils in key stage 2. During primary education, children are usually taught by generalist teachers. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 defined a new legal framework for maintained primary and secondary schools, which divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools. The majority of schools are community schools which are established and fully funded by local authorities (LAs). Foundation schools are also funded by LAs, but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches, which retain some control over their management. They are now largely funded by LAs. All categories of maintained schools enjoy a high level of autonomy. There are also independent schools, commonly known as private schools. Independent schools receive no public funding and are largely financed by fees paid by parents.

No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding midday breaks) for pupils in maintained primary schools. Education which takes place wholly or mainly outside school hours, which is part of the national curriculum, must also be provided free of charge. In addition, charges may not be made for the cost of materials, books, instruments or any other equipment. Primary schools may however, charge for activities that fall outside the above categories. All schools provide morning and afternoon sessions (schools are generally open between 9:00 and 15:30/16:00) with a lunch break between them. Children whose parents receive certain social security benefits must be provided with free school meals. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).



Until 2005, it was a statutory requirement for pupils to take National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. However, the tests became non-statutory from 2004/05 and teacher assessment became the sole means of statutory assessment. New skills-based assessments to support teacher assessment in years 5 and 6 (children aged 9 to 11, the final two years of primary school) were approved in March 2007. The focus is on skills relating to 'developing communication', 'developing number' and 'developing thinking'. Teachers are also required to make their statutory teacher assessments, at the end of key stage 2 (year 6), for each eligible pupil in the following subjects: English, Welsh first language (if the learner has followed the Welsh programme of study) or Welsh second language, mathematics, and science.

In order to improve literacy across the curriculum a National Literacy and Numeracy Framework will become a statutory curriculum requirement from September 2013. Furthermore, English and Welsh national reading tests and national numeracy tests for all learners in years 2 to 9 are being developed by the National Foundation for Educational Research and will be available for the first time in May 2013. Pupils in years 2 and 3 who are learning through the medium of Welsh will only be required to take the reading test in Welsh. From year 4 Welsh language learners will sit both Welsh and English tests. There will not be a test for Welsh second language. These tests will generate summative, highly reliable, comparable data which will enable schools and local authorities to measure learner progress and focus attention on improving performance. They will also include formative elements, generating data from which teachers can gain an accurate picture of where a learner is in terms of their skills and ability. The usual age for transfer to secondary schools is 11 years. There is no certificate awarded at the end of primary education.

As mentioned, under the Education Act 2002, the basic principle underlying school education is that it should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum which is suitable to a child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that he/she may have. The Act defines a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The foundation phase is based on the principle that early years' provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It brings more consistency and continuity to children's education at such an all-important period in their development. The statutory areas of learning in the foundation phase are: (i) personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity; (ii) language, literacy and communication skills; (iii) mathematical development; (iv) Welsh language development; (v) knowledge and understanding of the world; (vi) physical development; and (vii) creative development.

The foundation phase curriculum is planned as a progressive framework that spans four years (ages 3 to 7) to meet the diverse needs of all children, including those who are at an earlier stage of development and those who are more able. Throughout their formative years, children's learning develops more rapidly than at any other time. However, progress is not even and children go through periods of rapid

development and times when they seem to regress. A curriculum for young children should be appropriate to their stage of learning rather than focusing solely on age-related outcomes to be achieved. Children should move on to the next stages of their learning when they are developmentally ready and at their own pace. The foundation phase environment should promote discovery and independence and a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning. Practitioners must plan an appropriate curriculum that takes account of children's developmental needs and the skills that they need to grow to become confident learners. Account also needs to be taken of barriers to play, to learning and participation caused by physical, sensory, communication or learning difficulties. The importance of emotional development and well-being must also be recognized. In all aspects of their development, children's own work should be respected, valued and encouraged for its originality and honesty. (DCELLS, 2008c).

Educational provision for young children should be holistic with the child at the heart of any planned curriculum. There must be a balance between structured learning through child-initiated activities and those directed by practitioners. Children need a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum. Through appropriate planning and structured experiences in the Areas of Learning children should grow, develop and progress in their development. For children with disabilities in particular, settings/schools should: improve access to the curriculum; make physical improvements to increase participation in education; and provide information in appropriate formats. Settings/schools should teach all programmes of study and frameworks in ways appropriate to children's developing maturities and abilities and ensure that children are able to fully use their preferred means of communication to access the curriculum. In order to extend their learning, children should experience a variety of learning and teaching styles.

The non-statutory *Skills framework for 3- to 19-year-olds in Wales* provides guidance about continuity and progression in developing thinking, communication, ICT and number skills. Children should acquire, develop, practise, apply and refine their skills through group and individual tasks in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. Children develop their thinking across the curriculum through the processes of planning, developing and reflecting, which helps them acquire deeper understanding and enables them to explore and make sense of their world. These processes enable children to think creatively and critically, to plan their work, carry out tasks, analyze and evaluate their findings and to reflect on their learning, making links within and outside the setting/school. Children develop their communication skills across the curriculum through the skills of oracy, reading, writing and wider communication. Communication is taken to mean all forms of communication, not only that which depends on developed, unimpaired speech and hearing. Wider communication skills includes non-verbal communication of all kinds – including gesture, mime, signing and the expression of ideas and emotions through other mediums such as music and art. ICT should be holistic and integral across the curriculum. Children's ICT skills, knowledge and understanding should be developed through a range of experiences that involve them (i) finding and developing information and ideas, (ii) creating and presenting information and ideas. Children develop their number skills across the curriculum by using mathematical information, calculating, and interpreting and presenting findings. (*Ibid.*).

The foundation phase contributes to the Curriculum Cymreig (e.g. the Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum) by developing children's understanding of the cultural identity unique to Wales across all areas of learning through an integrated approach. Children should appreciate the different languages, images, objects, sounds and tastes that are integral in Wales today and gain a sense of belonging to Wales, and understand the Welsh heritage, literature and arts as well as the language. All settings/schools will implement a Welsh language educational programme in the foundation phase for children 3 to 7 years. In settings and schools where English is the main medium of communication, children's Welsh language skills should be progressively developed throughout the foundation phase by implementing the Welsh language development area of learning. The religious education framework provides guidance for the implementation of non-statutory entitlement for children in nursery settings and the basis for planning statutory religious education for children in the rest of the foundation phase. The skills highlighted in the religious education framework largely match those in the knowledge and understanding of the world, personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, and creative development areas of learning and adhere to the experiential learning that children should have access to in the foundation phase.

The foundation phase outcomes incorporate the baseline assessment scales and descriptions and the national curriculum level descriptions. They have been developed to support the end of phase statutory teacher assessment. There are six outcomes per area of learning. Teacher assessment covers the full range and scope of the foundation phase learning continuum. It should take account of evidence of achievement in a range of contexts, including that gained through discussion and observation throughout the foundation phase. At the end of the foundation phase, teachers are required to assess and report outcomes attained by each child by means of teacher assessment in: personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity; language, literacy and communication skills in English or Welsh; and mathematical development. The outcomes describe the type and range of achievements characteristic of children within the foundation phase. In deciding a child's outcome at the end of the foundation phase, teachers should judge which description best fits the child's performance. Each description should be considered in conjunction with the description for adjacent outcomes. The aim is for rounded judgement that: is based on knowledge of how the child performs across a range of contexts; takes into account the different strengths and weaknesses of that child's performance; and is checked against adjacent outcomes to ensure that the outcome awarded is the closest match to the child's performance. (*Ibid.*).

New assessment and reporting arrangements for the foundation phase are statutory for maintained schools from the start of 2011/12 and for funded non-maintained settings from the start of 2012/13. On-entry assessment arrangements are introduced and the existing baseline assessment arrangements are removed. The on-entry assessment will be done within 30 working days of a child first entering the foundation phase, in the six developmental areas which make up the foundation phase child development assessment profile (the Profile). The main purpose of the Profile is to provide a 'baseline' of where the child is and the next steps for his/her development. The assessment will be a description of the whole child using the six developmental Areas that make up the Profile. The descriptions of behaviour are grouped into six developmental areas which describe the journey between 'child

development' and 'learning outcomes', namely: personal, social and emotional; speaking and listening; reading and writing; sort, order and number; approach to learning, thinking and reasoning; physical. The Profile of the child at the point of entry to the foundation phase will, for the majority of children, be made at around the age of 3. Whilst the child's on-entry statutory assessment should be undertaken in the language of the setting, where resources permit, settings/schools may also wish to undertake an assessment in the child's home (first) language. (DES, June 2011).

The descriptions of behaviour cover the developmental age equivalents of 18 to 84 months. This is to ensure that all children between the ages of 36 and 60 months are appropriately catered for. Leaders of funded non-maintained settings and head teachers of maintained schools must arrange for parents/carers to receive a written report of their child's on-entry assessment. There is no statutory assessment at the end of nursery, reception or year 1, however leaders/head teachers, where appropriate, should ensure that all practitioners gather evidence to inform each child's progress in all areas of learning. An end-of-year written report to parents/carers should include, as a minimum: brief particulars on the child's progress in all areas of learning; activities followed as part of the foundation phase curriculum; a summary of the child's attendance; and details of the arrangements for parents/carers to discuss the report. At the end of the foundation phase, teacher assessment foundation phase outcomes are to be finalized and recorded for: personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity; language, literacy and communication skills; and mathematical development (this information will also be used for national comparative purposes). The written report to parents/carers must include: brief particulars of a child's progress in all relevant areas of learning; activities followed as part of the curriculum and religious education; a summary of the child's attendance; details of the arrangements for parents/carers to discuss the report; a brief commentary on what the results show about a child's progress, including strengths and areas for development; a statement that the outcomes have been arrived at through statutory teacher assessment. (*Ibid.*).

The statutory areas of learning in key stage 2 are: English; Welsh (including Welsh as a second language); modern foreign languages (not compulsory although there is a key stage 2 non-statutory framework for modern foreign languages); mathematics; science; design and technology; ICT; history; geography; art and design; music; and physical education. Other statutory requirements include: religious education (parents have the right to withdraw their children from this subject if they wish), personal and social education, and sex education (not compulsory, although primary schools are required to have a policy on sex education).

Under the Education Act 1996, the amount of time to be devoted to each curriculum subject cannot be prescribed. The allocation of time per subject is a matter for individual schools. For children at primary level the minimum weekly lesson times are 21 hours for 5- to 7-year-olds and 23.5 hours for children aged 8 to 11. Most schools provide more hours of lessons than the recommended minimum. Teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the head teacher and subject leaders (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school. As schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, there is a



need for differentiated teaching methods and learning materials to cater for pupils' individual needs. Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers and do not require government approval. All schools have computers available for use by pupils.

For National Curriculum subjects at key stages 2 (and also at key stage 3), there are attainment targets, which set out the expected standards of pupil performance in terms of level descriptions or end of key stage descriptions. They provide the basis for judging students' attainment in particular aspects of a subject at the end of each key stage. There are eight level descriptions per attainment target. Level descriptions indicate the types and range of performance that a student working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate over a period of time. They have been designed so that a typical student will move up one level approximately every two years. By the end of key stage 2 (age 11), the performance of the great majority of pupils should be within the range of levels 2–5. Progression to the next year or key stage is automatic and does not depend on the results of assessment. There is an expectation that low attainment of individual pupils should be addressed through differentiated teaching and the provision of additional support, rather than by repetition of a year.

Statistics for Wales reports that in 2011/12 there were 1,412 maintained primary schools with 192,374 children enrolled (age 5 and over) and an additional 42,657 children under 5 years of age. The number of (full-time equivalent) teachers was 12,026. In the same year, there were 13,591 pupils with a special educational needs statement, of whom 680 under 5 years of age, 11,331 aged 5-15, and 1,580 aged 16 and over. A total of 6,082 pupils were in mainstream classes in ordinary maintained schools (including 364 under-5s, 5,309 pupils aged 5-15, and 409 aged 16 and over); and 2,960 were in special classes/units in ordinary schools (159 under-5s, 2,653 pupils aged 5-15, and 148 aged 16 and over). There were an additional 3,874 pupils in maintained special schools (143 under-5s, 2,862 pupils aged 5-15, and 869 aged 6 and over), and 352 pupils in independent and non-maintained special schools. In 2011/12 there were 43 maintained special schools, including two boarding schools.

## Secondary education

Secondary education and further education are defined in the Education Act 1996. Secondary education is defined as covering education designed for young people from age 11 to 19 at school. Further education is defined as covering the education of people over compulsory school age (16) other than at school. It specifically excludes higher education programmes but includes access programmes and the continuing education of adults. Education is provided free of charge for students up to the age of 19.

Secondary education covers key stage 3 (years 7 to 9, or lower secondary education, ages 11 to 14), and key stage 4 (years 10 and 11, or upper secondary education, ages 14 to 16). No charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly within school hours (excluding mid-day breaks) for students in maintained secondary schools. Post-compulsory advanced programmes are offered by secondary schools (many of which cater for students aged 16 to 19) or further education colleges (which cater for students aged 16 to 19 and for older learners). Advanced programmes typically last two years when followed full-time by school leavers (age 16), but may



be of varied duration when aimed at older learners. Some secondary schools only cater for students in compulsory secondary education (aged 11 to 16). However, many secondary schools also have a sixth-form providing full-time post-compulsory education (students aged 16 to 19). Further education (FE) colleges vary in their size, mission, subject mix and history. They include both general FE colleges, which place a greater emphasis on vocational courses, but also offer general courses; and specialist colleges, which provide courses in a specific area of the curriculum such as art, or in a vocational area such as agriculture.

At key stages 3 and 4, secondary schools offer general/academic education as set out in the National Curriculum; and at key stage 4 and post-16, they provide external qualifications in general subjects along with some courses in vocational/applied subjects. The vast majority of maintained secondary schools are mixed sex and all maintained secondary schools are non-selective (that is, they do not admit pupils on the basis of ability) and are commonly known as comprehensive schools.

At key stage 3, students are assessed against the attainment targets, which set out the expected standards of student performance in each National Curriculum subject in terms of level descriptions. Until 2005/06, statutory assessment at the end of key stage 3 comprised externally set and marked tests in mathematics, science, Welsh and English and teacher assessment in all National Curriculum subjects. However, the external tests have now been abolished and teacher assessment in all National Curriculum remains the sole means of statutory assessment at the end of the key stage. National reading tests and national numeracy tests for all learners in years 2 to 9 will become a statutory curriculum requirement from September 2013 (see above).

The statutory areas of learning in key stage 3 are: English; Welsh (including Welsh as a second language); modern foreign languages; mathematics; science; design and technology; ICT; history; geography; art and design; music; and physical education. Other statutory requirements include: religious education, personal and social education, sex education, and careers and the world of work. The statutory areas of learning in key stage 4 are: English; Welsh (including Welsh as a second language); mathematics; science; and physical education. Other statutory requirements include: religious education, personal and social education, sex education, and careers and the world of work. Full-time learners in key stage 4 and post-16 have an entitlement to the Learning Core 14–19 which includes personal and social education and careers and the world of work. (DCELLS, 2008a). Sex and relationship education (SRE) is compulsory at key stages 3 and 4. It is mainly delivered through personal and social education. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from SRE, although they do not have the right to withdraw their children from the National Curriculum science programme of study dealing with aspects of human biology and reproduction. As mentioned, the non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* underpins all the subjects of the national curriculum, plus the frameworks for ‘personal and social education’, ‘careers and the world of work’ and religious education. The framework aims to provide guidance about continuity and progression in thinking, communication, information and communication technology (ICT), and number. These skills are considered essential



to enable learners of any age to become successful, whether in school, the workplace, at home or elsewhere.

As at primary level, teaching methods and learning materials are usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the head teacher and subject leader (or subject coordinators), who are classroom teachers with additional responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school. The recommended minimum weekly lesson times are 25 hours for students at both key stages 3 and 4. Many schools provide more hours than the minimum. Students may be grouped by general ability (a practice known as 'streaming'), taught in mixed-ability groups or, more commonly, grouped according to ability in a particular subject (a practice known as 'setting'). Most schools use setting for some subjects only, such as mathematics and languages, and teach other subjects in mixed-ability groups. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

At the end of compulsory education (age 16), after two years of study in key stage 4, the majority of students are assessed by means of external qualifications. These qualifications are developed by independent organizations, known as awarding bodies or awarding organizations, which are regulated by the Department for Education and Skills. The most common qualification taken is the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), a single subject qualification available in more than 40 academic subject areas. The results are reported on an eight-point scale ranging from A\* (highest) to G (lowest). Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade G are recorded as 'U' for 'unclassified' and do not receive a certificate. GCSEs at grades A\* to C are considered 'good GCSEs'. Achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics is usually a basic requirement for progression to further study or training and for many jobs. GCSEs in applied subjects are also available in nine work-related subject areas. Results are reported on the same scale as other GCSEs (from A\* to G), but with two grades (e.g. 'BB' or 'DD') to reflect the fact that they are equivalent to two standard GCSE qualifications. Entry level qualifications are aimed at pupils who are not ready for GCSEs at the end of key stage 4. They are available in a range of general/academic subjects as well as in vocational areas and are intended to offer progression to higher awards. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10). The GCSE is administered by the autonomous GCSE examining groups, which are all constituent members of the Joint Council for Qualifications.

The most common qualifications taken at the end of post-compulsory education (around age 18) are A-levels. These are single subject examinations which may be studied in any combination, within the limit of the range of subjects offered by the school or further education institution. Courses usually last two years. During the first year students typically take four or five subjects leading to AS-level qualifications. These are standalone qualifications and typically consist of three units. The second half of the full A-level qualification (A2) is taken in the second year, and consists of a further three units. The A2 covers more demanding material than at AS level. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2. GCEs or A-levels in applied subjects are also available to students in post-compulsory education. These qualifications are intended to offer a comprehensive preparation for employment as well as a route to higher-level qualifications. Like A-levels, they follow the AS/A2 structure. Double awards are also available.



The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (WBQ) is being introduced gradually at three different levels – at intermediate and advanced level for students in post-16 education and at foundation level for 14- to 19-year-olds. The WBQ is approved for delivery in Wales and recognized throughout the UK. It is currently offered by secondary schools, colleges and training providers with two elements – the options and the core. Both must be successfully completed for the award of the WBQ. It gives parity to academic and vocational routes and aligns with Learning Pathways 14-19. It can be studied in English or Welsh, or a combination of the two languages, sits alongside and incorporates existing qualifications and is designed to prepare students for higher education and employment. (CEDEFOP, 2011). The common core comprises: key skills; Wales, Europe and the world; work-related education; and personal and social education. Students also choose options which vary according to which level Baccalaureate qualification they are taking. For example, the Advanced level qualification includes options of a minimum of two A-levels or equivalent, whereas the Intermediate level qualification includes options of four GCSEs (grades A\* to C) or equivalent. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10). Key skills (KS, replaced by ‘essential skills’ in 2010) qualifications in communication, application of number, and ICT are intended to be taken in tandem with other courses, such as GCSEs, A-levels, the Welsh Baccalaureate or work-based training programmes. Essential skills replaced KS within all BTEC Apprenticeships.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enable students as well as employees who have left full-time education to gain recognized qualifications for specific occupations. They are available in 11 occupational areas at five levels, from foundation skills to chartered and professional. They are assessed on practical assignments and a portfolio of evidence and they offer progression routes to further education and training or employment. BTECs (Business and Technical Education Council) and OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts) Nationals are also designed for study in occupational areas. They involve a mixture of theoretical and practical work and are available at three levels (BTEC Firsts are available for students aged 14 to 16 in compulsory education). They enable progression to employment or higher level vocational courses. Foundation Modern Apprenticeships are a work-based training option for young people and employers, and are based on NVQs; training frameworks have been developed in over 80 sectors of employment. Modern Apprenticeships are a partnership initiative between government and industry to provide a high-quality, work-based route to NVQ level 3. They are intended largely for school leavers aged 16+, but are also open to more mature trainees. Introductory certificates and diplomas are vocational qualifications, available alongside GCSEs in applied subjects. They are designed to enable young people and adults to take part in full- or part-time programmes of study. Access courses (typically lasting one year full-time) are provided by further education colleges and are aimed at mature students (aged 19+) who have few, if any, formal qualifications and wish to gain entry to higher education. They are designed and taught to meet the needs of adult learners.

Once external qualifications have been accredited by the regulators (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland), they are placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which is currently being implemented. The NQF includes both general academic and vocational qualifications at nine levels as follows: Level 8 (e.g. specialist awards); Level 7 (e.g. BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards); Level 6



(e.g. BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards); Level 5 (e.g. NVQ level 5); Level 4 (e.g. NVQ level 4); Level 3 (e.g. GCE A-levels, A-levels in applied subjects and NVQ level 3); Level 2 (e.g. GCSE grades A\*–C and NVQ level 2); Level 1 (e.g. GCSE grades D–G and NVQ level 1); and Entry level (e.g. entry level qualifications). The QCF is a new framework which aims to enable learners to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes by awarding credit for qualifications and units. All vocational qualifications are being placed on the QCF and it is expected that academic qualifications will also in the future be placed on the QCF. The aims of the QCF are to simplify the current complicated system by presenting qualifications in a way which is easier to understand, to recognize more learning through the award of qualifications and to instil more flexibility into the system through the use of units (components of qualifications) and credit awarded for achieving those units. Like the NQF, every unit and qualification in the 9-level QCF has a level between Entry level and level 8 which indicates the degree of difficulty. Level 2 is equivalent to GCSEs (grade A\* to C), level 3 is equivalent to A levels, and level 8 is equivalent to a doctorate. Every unit and qualification also has a credit value (with one credit representing 10 hours of study). There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF: Awards (1 to 12 credits); Certificates (13 to 36 credits); Diplomas (37 credits or more). In the framework, it is possible to have an award at level 1 or an award at level 8, because the qualification type ('award, certificate, diploma') represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) incorporates the QCF/NQF and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ, covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and is composed of three “pillars”, two (the QCF and the FHEQ) are shared with England and Northern Ireland and the third (Quality Assured Lifelong Learning–QALL) is distinctive to CQFW. QALL is designed to bring all learning in Wales, which is not already included in the other two pillars, into the Framework. The CQFW has Levels 1-8 and an Entry Level (1-3). (CEDEFOP, 2011). The CQFW has three common principles: expression of achievement as learning outcomes; the demands made on the learner to achieve the learning outcomes (level); and the volume of learning achievements (credit). The CQFW is for all learners aged 14 and above, and supports all recognized, credit-based learning within: higher education; regulated general and vocational qualifications; and quality assured lifelong learning.

The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 will create a right for 14- to 19-year-olds to follow a course of study from a local area curriculum or ‘options menu’, which will contain a wide range of academic and vocational study options. The Measure will also create a statutory framework for learning pathways for 14- to 19-year-olds consisting of six key elements: individual Learning Pathways to meet the needs of each learner; wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning; a learning core which runs from age 14 through to 19 wherever young people are learning; study support provided by learning coaches; access to personal support; and impartial careers advice and guidance. The policy aims to transform provision and support for learners, raise achievement and attainment, prepare young people for high skilled employment or higher education and enable young people in Wales to compete in Europe and beyond in the 21st century. The key objective of the Measure is to improve educational outcomes and attainment for learners aged 14-19.



Learner support services include learning coaching, personal support and careers information and guidance. The provision of these services should reflect individual need. The services should be designed to enable young people to make informed and realistic choices, overcome barriers to their learning and realize their potential. This should include supporting young people to: set realistic goals; develop a learning pathway that meets their needs; develop progression routes which will lead to fulfilling careers; overcome barriers to their learning; develop solutions to personal, social, emotional and physical problems, including those which relate to behavioural, personal and social issues; and take advantage of opportunities to play an active role in their communities and contribute positively to community life. Learning support may be provided by a range of staff within the school or institution, for example form teachers, lecturers or personal tutors and by external staff, for example careers advisers, personal support workers, specialist support workers and youth workers. Learning coaching is a function which can be provided by an individual or by a team and can be delivered to individuals or groups – depending on the needs of the young person/people. Learning coaching should be available to support young people to: develop their learning skills, motivation and engagement; make best use of and develop their learning styles; cope with transition at key points of change during the 14-19 phase, including managing the transition from directed to self-directed learning; and plan an individual learning pathway which takes account of their skills, attributes and experience in all aspects of their lives. Governing bodies should ensure that careers information, advice and guidance is available to all young people as part of their Learning Pathway. This should comprise a combination of careers education and information provided as part of the basic curriculum and impartial careers advice and guidance provided in schools and institutions by Careers Wales advisers. (DES, February 2011).

Statistics for Wales reports that in 2011/12 there were 221 maintained secondary schools with 198,015 students enrolled (of whom 98,301 were girls). The number of (full-time equivalent) teachers was 11,868.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

The education service operates within a strong framework of accountability to parents, to the community and to the government and its agencies. External inspection plays an important role, as does the publication of performance data and other information on individual institutions and on wider aspects of the education system. Institutional self-evaluation is both an increasingly important part of the quality improvement process and a key input to external evaluation. Another important element in the accountability framework is the role of governing bodies. Publicly-funded schools, colleges and universities are accountable for their own performance through a governing body which includes representatives of key stakeholders, such as, in the case of schools, parents, staff and representatives of the local community.

The Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) is the non-ministerial government department responsible for the inspection and regulation of schools, colleges, further education, adult education, youth services, local authorities, initial teacher training, and work-based learning. All inspections are conducted in accordance with Estyn's *Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales*. The framework places an emphasis on self-evaluation as the



starting point for inspection. It focuses on the achievements of learners, the quality of education and training provided, and the effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management. Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for quality assurance in the schools which they maintain and for taking initial action in failing schools. They are expected to monitor schools' performance through the analysis of information about standards and other aspects of school performance already available to them, and through the examination of school development plans and post-inspection action plans. LAs also collect information through judgments made by schools' own self-evaluation and through direct observation of schools' activity through visits by their own inspection and advisory services. These services provide advice and consultancy to help schools analyze their current standards, identify effective ways of improving, set targets and keep in touch with good practice.

There is no single process for the overall evaluation of the education systems in Wales. Performance information on individual schools is no longer presented in the form of comparative tables. Information on individual schools is, however, still available to parents in school prospectuses and governors' annual reports. In addition, National Curriculum assessment and public examination results are published online, by local authority, and for the whole of Wales. Estyn inspects local authority education services at least once every six years. It also conducts area inspections, which examine education and training provided for learners over the age of 14 in a specified area of the country. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

With regard to an evaluation of the implementation of the foundation phase for 5- to 6-year-olds in primary schools, with special reference to literacy, Estyn found that the impact of the foundation phase on the wellbeing of children has been positive and, in a majority of schools, 5- to 6-year-olds achieve well. In a minority of schools, this is not the case, often because leaders and practitioners do not understand the principles and practice of the foundation phase. In the majority of schools where leaders and practitioners have implemented the foundation phase well, there is a focus on raising standards particularly in literacy. However, in a significant minority of schools, there is not enough direct teaching of reading and appropriate opportunities for children to practise and use their reading skills are not always provided. The wellbeing of many children benefits from the implementation of the foundation phase. Generally, the benefits are in children's increased motivation and enjoyment of learning. Active learning approaches and the use of the outdoor learning environment are helping boys to be more engaged in their learning. The development of the outdoor learning environment is progressing well in the majority of schools. However, there is often not enough support from practitioners to maximize children's learning, particularly in reading and writing. In a minority of schools, there is limited or no outdoor provision. (Estyn, September 2011).

Concerning an evaluation of the non-statutory Skills framework and its use at key stage 2, Estyn found that, in general, schools do not see skills as the starting point for designing the curriculum, but rather as a bolt-on to existing schemes of work. Only in a few schools, or departments within schools, have teachers re-constructed their schemes of work to focus on how pupils acquire skills. Schools use the National Curriculum Subject Orders to plan schemes of work first and then identify opportunities for developing pupils' skills afterwards. This is because teachers lack a clear understanding of the non-statutory Skills framework as a basis for planning a



curriculum that meets all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum Subject Orders. As a result, few schools are planning a 'skills-based' curriculum that consists of activities that become progressively more complex and are designed to develop pupils' thinking, communication, ICT and number skills. Although the Skills framework has increased teachers' awareness of the importance of improving pupils' skills, too often teachers continue to plan the curriculum as separate subjects without giving enough attention to how subjects, such as history or geography, can support and provide a context for the development of literacy, numeracy and other skills. Assessing or tracking pupils' progress in skills is one of the weakest aspects in the schools visited. There is usually no whole-school system to track individual pupils' skill development. Teachers are not aware of pupils' prior achievement in skills and so do not plan appropriately challenging activities to extend their learning. As a result, many pupils are not making enough progress in using and applying their thinking, communication, ICT and number skills. Many schools work in isolation when trying to improve systems to develop an effective skills-based curriculum and to assess pupils' skills acquisition. Local authorities do not do enough to co-ordinate arrangements between clusters of schools to share practice and maximize their collective expertise. (Estyn, July 2011a).

At key stage 3, Estyn found that the Skills framework's main effect has been to raise awareness of the need to develop pupils' skills, particularly literacy and numeracy. It does not significantly influence planning in most secondary schools in Wales. Most schools do not use the Skills framework when planning the development of skills because: they place a higher priority on making sure that schemes of work match National Curriculum Orders; the descriptions of progress in skills given in the framework are not precise enough, are not exemplified, and are too broad to be helpful; and using the framework is not a statutory requirement. Many schools use the Essential Skills Wales programmes of study. Schools use it because it is precise and provides the basis for the progressive development of skills within and beyond key stage 3. The opportunity to gain Essential Skills qualifications also improves pupils' motivation. Schools place the highest priority on schemes of work matching the revised National Curriculum Subject Orders, all of which require teachers to consider pupils' acquisition of both subject and certain generic skills. Teachers develop schemes of work from the subject Orders and then identify opportunities within these to use generic skills. A majority of schools use a common approach to teaching aspects of communication skills, but most of these approaches are at an early stage of development. Very few schools have a coherent and well-planned approach to delivering the whole range of generic skills across the curriculum. Very few base their approach on the Skills framework. Very few schools use the Skills framework for their monitoring processes. Even so, a majority of schools monitor provision for generic skills in schemes of work and evaluate pupils' standards in generic skills during lesson observations. A minority of schools do not monitor how teachers are developing generic skills in their quality assurance procedures. Only a few schools work closely with their feeder primaries to plan a curriculum that suitably builds on pupils' skills when they move from key stage 2 to key stage 3. Most schools track pupils' progress in generic skills through outcomes in English or Welsh, mathematics and information and communication technology. A few schools use outcomes from Essential Skills Wales qualifications. Elaborate and complex tracking systems create too great a burden for teachers and do not produce useful targets for improvement in generic skills. Simple tracking systems have a greater success in generating



meaningful targets for improvements in standards of generic skills. (Estyn, May 2012).

In its report *Improving numeracy in key stage 2 and key stage 3*, Estyn observed that since 2005 there has been very little improvement in the standards of attainment in mathematics in key stage 2 and key stage 3. In 2009, a higher proportion of pupils in key stage 2 continue to gain the expected level in mathematics than in key stage 3. The gap in performance between the two key stages has increased since 2007. More pupils achieve above the expected level in mathematics in key stage 3 than in key stage 2. However, the percentages of pupils gaining these higher levels have declined since 2005 in both key stages. Overall, girls continue to outperform boys although the gap in performance is relatively small and more-able boys perform well. Only a few secondary schools have well co-ordinated strategies to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum. Many schools do not make enough use of opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills during the study of other subjects. In a minority of lessons, teachers of subjects across the curriculum have too low expectations of pupils' numeracy skills and they allow pupils to use calculators for basic calculations that the pupils should do mentally. A few schools have adapted their schemes of work to make sure pupils are prepared for the numeracy demands of different subject areas. However, in general, schools have not yet developed this initiative sufficiently to have enough impact on improving the standards of pupils' numeracy skills. Many primary schools send specific information on pupils' prior attainment in mathematics, but only a very few transfer the same quality of information on numeracy. Many teachers in key stage 3 do not place enough emphasis on teaching effective strategies for mental and written calculation to make sure that pupils' numeracy skills continue to improve. The majority of clusters of secondary schools and their partner primary schools organize joint activities designed to improve progression in mathematics from key stage 2 to key stage 3. However, in general, these activities do not focus enough on numeracy. Many secondary schools do not evaluate rigorously enough the impact of transition initiatives in raising standards of numeracy in Year 7. (Estyn, April 2010).

In its report *Numeracy for 14 to 19-year-olds*, Estyn observed that GCSE results and international comparisons show that performance in numeracy is lower in Wales than that in the other home nations and below the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Standards of numeracy as judged in school inspections are also lower than for communication in English and information and communication technology. The number of learners in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers who gain application of number qualifications has increased substantially over the last five years. However, too many of these learners gain qualifications at too low a level relative to their ability. These learners do not improve their numeracy skills by taking qualifications at too low a level. Only a minority of schools plan to develop numeracy systematically across the curriculum. Only a few schools track the progress of pupils in numeracy well enough, including the pupils who previously received support for numeracy in key stage 3. Around a half of the schools surveyed do not provide specific support for learners with poor numeracy skills in key stage 4. Although schools assess pupils' numeracy skills, they do not share this information well enough when their learners attend courses at college or other providers. Further education colleges and work-based learning providers assess the level of learners' numeracy skills at the start of courses.



They generally use this information well to identify whether learners need basic support. As a result, many learners have individual learning plans and benefit from a range of support strategies. However, providers often enter learners for key skills qualifications only at the level needed to complete their framework qualification aim and do not challenge learners to achieve beyond this level. (Estyn, July 2011b).

Wales has participated in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in the last two assessment rounds (2006 and 2009) and is committed to future participation. It has not participated in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), nor in the IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

Wales participated fully in the survey for the first time in PISA 2006. A total of 124 schools and 3,044 students participated. The mean score for science in Wales was not significantly different from the OECD average. Wales had a wide spread of attainment compared with many other countries. While there were some at the highest level of achievement, there was a substantial 'tail' of low-scoring students. Only four countries had a wider spread than Wales. Boys scored significantly higher than girls. This was mainly due to a difference on one scale (explaining phenomena scientifically). This scale covers knowledge of scientific content and theories. On the other two scales there was no statistically significant difference between males and females. The mean score for mathematics in Wales was below the OECD average and this difference was statistically significant. In contrast to science, Wales had a low spread of attainment in mathematics compared with other countries. This was mainly due to a relatively low number of high achievers. While the proportion at the lowest levels was similar to the OECD average, the proportion at the highest levels was below the OECD average. Boys scored significantly higher than girls in mathematics. This was the case in 35 of the 57 participating countries. The mean score for reading in Wales was below the OECD average and this difference was statistically significant. The spread of attainment in reading was similar to the OECD average, although as with mathematics there were fewer students at the highest levels of attainment than the average for OECD countries. Girls scored significantly higher than boys in reading. This was the case in every participating country. (NFER, 2007).

The 2009 PISA results for Wales were poor in terms of comparison to prior performance, to other UK nations, as well as internationally. In reading, the mean score was significantly lower than UK counterparts and the OECD average, and the international 'ranking' was lower than in 2006. The 2009 PISA results for mathematical literacy were disappointing. Wales did not perform as well as the other UK nations, and its mathematics scores (472) were below the OECD average (496). A 38 point gap from the OECD average is taken to be the equivalent of one school year in education. The difference of 24 points between Wales's score and the OECD average would indicate that Welsh children are the equivalent of over half an academic year behind that average, and around half a year behind their nearest neighbours in England. Indeed, Wales went backwards in 2009 PISA compared to 2006 PISA (score 484). Sixty-five countries took part in the 2009 PISA round. In mathematics, 35 countries performed better than Wales. In reading, Wales ranked 38th compared to other participant countries. The national ambition is that by 2015, Wales will be among the top 20 nations in PISA. (DES, 2012 and September 2012a).

## Teaching staff

All teachers employed in maintained schools, including nursery schools must have qualified teacher status (QTS) in order to be authorized to teach. The Welsh Assembly Government stipulates the criteria which trainee teachers must meet in order to achieve QTS. Providers of initial teacher training must also meet approved criteria to be able to offer programmes leading to QTS, although they are responsible for course planning, content and management. Most providers are higher education institutions.

Routes into teaching can be concurrent or consecutive. Trainee teachers choosing the concurrent route follow a three or four-year programme in which general education is combined with professional training, leading to a bachelor's degree with QTS. Prospective teachers who wish to take the consecutive route must first take a bachelor's degree, which can be in any subject, and then apply to take a one-year programme of professional training, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS. The bachelor's degree with QTS and the PGCE both combine academic study with periods of teaching practice in a school. Qualified nursery assistants usually need to hold a relevant child care qualification such as: CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education; a BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development; or an NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development.

Programmes for primary teachers train teachers to teach across the curriculum as a generalist teacher. However, there are options for studying the teaching of one or more curriculum subjects in greater depth, which would provide preparation for the role of subject leader/coordinator of these subjects. Secondary teachers are generally trained as subject specialists to work with students aged 11 to 16 or 11 to 18. Although there are some concurrent programmes available, most intending secondary teachers follow the consecutive route, in which a bachelor's degree is followed by a one-year programme of professional training, the PGCE with QTS or eligibility to teach. PGCE programmes for secondary teachers are subject-specific. They focus mainly on developing teaching skills in that particular subject, rather than on knowledge of the subject itself, which will have been acquired during the preceding bachelor's degree.

There are no initial teacher training programmes specifically for those wishing to teach in the sixth form of secondary schools. Secondary school teachers who teach sixth form classes have normally been trained to teach students across the entire secondary age range. The most common qualifications for teachers in the further education (FE) sector are the PGCE and the Certificate in Education for further education/post-compulsory education. In June 2008, new professional standards developed by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Sector Skills Council responsible for workforce development in FE, were approved as the specified standards for FE teaching qualifications gained for courses commencing from September 2008. The standards describe consistent performance for all teachers, in terms of knowledge, understanding and professional practice. They have been designed to meet the needs of Wales and allow articulation with the professional standards for FE teachers in England. Standards Verification UK, part of LLUK, endorses qualifications against the standards. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).



Statutory induction for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Wales was introduced in September 2003 and applies to all teachers who gain their QTS after 1 April 2003. The purpose of statutory induction is to: build on the experiences gained in initial teacher training; provide all NQTs with the opportunity to develop their practice by focusing on the requirements set out in the Practising Teacher Standards (PTS); ensure that all NQTs in Wales are assessed against the prescribed national standards (the PTS); prepare all NQTs for their career as a teacher by establishing the skills and behaviours that they need to build on throughout their career; ensure that all NQTs focus on the priorities of literacy, numeracy, reducing the link between poverty and attainment, behaviour management, additional learning needs and reflective practice during their induction period. It is a legal requirement that NQTs must hold QTS and must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) in order to be employed as a teacher. It is essential that this is done before the NQT is employed. An induction period cannot start unless the NQT is registered with the GTCW and holds QTS. All NQTs must complete an induction period of three school terms or the equivalent. NQTs who are not employed on a full-time basis must complete 380 school sessions (one school session is defined as one morning or one afternoon of employment in a school). NQTs without regular employment can accrue sessions until 380 school sessions have been completed. (DES, September 2012b).

Induction can only take place in maintained schools (including maintained nursery schools where the school has a head teacher and the school can satisfactorily provide an induction period that will allow the NQT the opportunity to meet the PTS), non-maintained special schools, and further education institutions in Wales. It can also take place in independent schools in Wales where: the curriculum for any primary learners at the school meets national curriculum requirements (other than assessment arrangements); the curriculum for any learners at key stages 3 or 4 includes all core and foundation subjects; and an agreement has been reached between the school and the local authority that they will act as the school's appropriate body. A teacher serving an induction period under the Regulations must not teach for more than 90% of the time that a teacher at the school would be expected to teach. For full-time NQT, at the start of the induction period the head teacher must assign a school-based mentor to support the NQT on a day-to-day basis throughout the induction period. At the end of the third term the external mentor must undertake the initial assessment of evidence contained in the Induction Profile. This must include assessment of the evidence provided to the external mentor from the NQT's school(s) which will also form part of the Induction Profile. National moderation of Induction Profiles must be completed by external mentors. Evidence must be provided to the appropriate body (for maintained schools and non-maintained special schools, the school's local authority) by the external mentor, including evidence provided by the school, to support the final decision. The appropriate body must make the final decision as to whether the NQT has passed, failed or requires an extension to the induction period. The Induction Profile should signpost towards evidence which demonstrates how the NQT has met each of the PTS, including evidence of direct observation of the NQT's teaching. (*Ibid.*).

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is part of the contractual professional duties of a teacher. There is no legal minimum requirement stated for the length of time to be spent on CPD. Participation depends on the professional needs of the teacher concerned and the availability of the resources in the



school to meet them. The statutory conditions of service do, however, require teachers to be available for work under the direction of the head teacher for 195 days per year (or a total of 1,265 hours), of which 190 are teaching days (as of 2012). The five days when school sessions are not required were introduced to support a number of non-teaching activities, including in-service training. Responsibility and funding for CPD is devolved to schools. Each school determines its own CPD needs depending on the requirements of the school development plan. CPD covers a wide range of staff development activities both formal and informal designed to improve teachers' practice. These activities might include: (i) within-school activities such as coaching, mentoring, support for individual members of staff arising from performance management interviews, team teaching, sharing good practice, lesson observation and feedback, and whole school development activities; (ii) school networks such as cross school or virtual networks, for example to share good practice; (iii) external activities such as training courses, postgraduate study, conferences, industrial placements or work shadowing, international study visits and exchanges and sabbaticals for certain experienced teachers.

Most institutions offer courses and programmes to develop the professional skills of staff. The timing, duration and content of such courses and conferences varies. Members of staff are also normally encouraged to attend meetings and other activities to help them fulfil the requirements of their job including, for example, team meetings and course development activities. CPD courses may be provided within an FE college, at a higher education institution or at an independent training or conference centre in Wales, other parts of the UK or overseas. Senior staff in further education colleges may also provide induction and ongoing professional guidance and development for less experienced colleagues. (Eurydice, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10).

In 2007, the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) began the Chartered Teacher Pilot Programme. It aims to offer quality assured, professional development to classroom teachers, middle leaders (for example, heads of year) or those who perform both roles and to allow the profession, and the wider community to recognize those teachers who are performing at high standards. Teachers must have a minimum of five years' teaching experience to be eligible. An underlying principle of the scheme is that 'Chartered Teacher' status has no connection to pay.

Following the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload in 2003, which aimed to tackle teacher workload and enhance the role of support staff, the number of such staff working in schools has expanded significantly. For example, many schools employ teaching assistants, who work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping pupils with their learning on an individual or group basis. Some specialize in areas such as literacy, numeracy, special educational needs, music or English as an additional language. The workload agreement also created the new role of higher level teaching assistant (HLTAs). HLTAs are experienced teaching assistants who plan and deliver learning activities under the direction of a teacher and assess, record and report on pupils' progress. They may also manage other classroom-based staff or may supervise a class in a teacher's absence. (*Ibid.*).



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## Web resources

Care Council for Wales: <http://www.ccwales.org.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Children in Wales: <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Colleges Wales: <http://www.colegacymru.ac.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Department for Education and Skills, Welsh Government:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

General Teaching Council for Wales: <http://www.gtcw.org.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]



Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales:  
<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Higher Education Academy (Wales): <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/wales> [Last checked: October 2012.]

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales: <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Higher Education Statistics Agency (UK): <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2012.]

Higher Education Wales: <http://www.hew.ac.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Joint Council for Qualifications (UK): <http://www.jcq.org.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2012.]

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Wales): <http://www.niacedc.org.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK): <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/> [In English. Last checked: October 2012.]

Welsh Joint Education Committee: <http://www.wjec.co.uk/> [In English and Welsh. Last checked: October 2012.]

*For more detailed and updated information consult EURYDICE, the information network on national education systems and policies in Europe:*  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO:* <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>