THEMATIC PROBE. Primary Education: an International Perspective

Country Description: Wales

Note: This country description was compiled from the *INCA* Archive (www.inca.org.uk).

1. Organisation of school phases:

How are the early years and primary phases organised? (3-5yrs? 5-11yrs?)

In Wales education is compulsory from the age of five to the age of 16. Children must start compulsory primary education the term after they reach the age of five years. Until this time, children may be educated in early years settings, such as nursery schools or nursery classes in primary schools. Nursery education is not compulsory and lasts from the age of three until the time compulsory primary education begins. All parents of four-year-old children who would like their child to be in some form of early years/nursery provision must be provided with a free (that is, government-funded) place, which is at least part-time.

Although compulsory primary education does not begin until the term after a child reaches the age of five, many primary schools admit children at the age of four. These children enter what are known as *reception classes*.

Children in nursery schools or classes, or in the *reception classes* of primary schools follow a specific early years curriculum with identified 'desirable learning outcomes'. The desirable learning outcomes are goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education. All children in some form of state-funded early years education are expected to be able to follow a curriculum which enables them to make maximum progress towards these desirable learning outcomes, which are, however, non-statutory.

Compulsory primary education comprises two cycles or stages which are known as *key stages. Key stage* 1 includes children in Years 1 and 2 of compulsory education, aged five to seven years, and *key stage* 2 those in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 (aged seven to 11 years). These *key stages* are the same whatever the local school organisation and irrespective of local school transfer ages.

Primary education can be provided in primary schools catering for both *key stages* together, or in separate schools for each age group or *key stage*, known as *infant schools* for *key stage* 1 and *junior schools* for *key stage* 2.

Some primary schools in Wales are Welsh-speaking, teaching all subjects (apart from English) through the medium of Welsh. Other schools may be bilingual; others teach all subjects through the medium of English with Welsh being taught as a foreign language.

Publicly-funded primary schools (known as *maintained schools*) are generally co-educational.

In sum, compulsory primary education may be provided in:

Primary schools	*Infant schools*	*Junior schools*
Key stages 1 and 2	*Key stage* 1	*Key stage* 2
Ages 5*-11 years	Aged 5*-7 years	Ages 7-11 years

* Many primary schools admit children at the age of four - see above.

The Learning Country, a strategy document for education in Wales for the period 2002 to 2010, outlines the development of a new *foundation phase* of education for three- to seven-year-olds (the end of *key stage* 1). Proposals for the development of the *foundation phase* are expected to be finalised by the end of 2002.

What are the points of transfer between phases?

Early years education	Compulsory primary phase	Compulsory secondary phase
Aged 3-5* years	Age range 5*-11 years	Aged 11-16 years

* Many primary schools admit children at the age of four.

Primary school children usually transfer to secondary education at the age of 11 years.

2. Locus of control

What degree of control over curriculum content and other aspects of primary schools exists at the national, regional, local and/or school level?

General

Education in Wales is characterised by its decentralised nature. Responsibility for different aspects of the service is shared between central government, local government, churches and other voluntary bodies, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession. Central authorities have the power to intervene if individual local education authorities (LEAs) or the governing bodies of educational institutions do not discharge their duties satisfactorily.

The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW), through the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning for Wales, has responsibility for administering the education system in Wales, for implementing legislation, and for formulating secondary legislation. Primary legislation-making powers rest with the UK Parliament based in London and with the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. See below for further information on devolution.

Finance

The provision of publicly-financed education in what are known as *maintained schools* in Wales has traditionally been the responsibility of local councils which have designated responsibility as local education authorities (LEAs). Most publicly-funded schools are maintained by LEAs, or LEAs and a founding body, such as a religious organisation.

Local education authorities meet their expenditure partly from locally raised revenue and partly from general grants received from central government (via the Department for Education and Skills, DfES, and the National Assembly for Wales, NAfW).

Most LEA-maintained schools receive 100 per cent funding for both current and capital expenditure. Schools which are maintained by the LEA and the founding body (known as *voluntary-aided schools*) usually receive 100 per cent funding for recurrent costs and 85 per cent funding for capital expenditure through the LEA; the remainder is the responsibility of the founding body.

For LEA-maintained schools, the responsibility for financial and related administration, maintenance of schools, and the appointment, management, appraisal and dismissal of teachers has been delegated from LEAs to the school governing bodies of the individual schools.

Curriculum

The statutory requirements of the compulsory National Curriculum are laid down by central government (see below for details of these statutory requirements for primary level education). Generally, all publicly-funded primary schools must provide the National Curriculum to their students. The National Curriculum does not, however, constitute the whole curriculum for schools, even though it is an important element of the school curriculum. Schools are expected to develop a whole school curriculum, which incorporates the full requirements of the National Curriculum, whilst also offering additional learning and other experiences to students which reflect their particular needs and circumstances.

The statutory body responsible for overseeing the National Curriculum and its assessment is the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (known by its Welsh acronym, ACCAC). The local education authorities (LEAs), school governing bodies and headteachers responsible for schools have a general duty to secure the implementation of the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements in schools, to monitor the consistency of assessments and to give professional support to teachers in making assessments.

Generally, in private primary schools in Wales, the curriculum and its assessment are the responsibility of the governors of the school and are not subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

The Welsh Language Board

Special provision is made for teaching through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh Language Board has a statutory responsibility to advise the National Assembly for Wales on matters regarding the Welsh language. The Board is responsible for Welsh

language schemes prepared by LEAs, school and college governing bodies, and other public bodies involved in education in Wales.

Are there any shifts in the distribution of control between these different levels? (Is it possible to assign percentages to each level, to reflect circumstances in each country?)

Devolution

The Government of Wales Act 1998 established the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW). On 1 July 1999, devolved powers transferred from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Assembly. The Secretary of State for Wales, as a Cabinet member of the UK Parliament, continues to ensure that the interests and needs of Wales are fully considered in policy formulation within the UK Government, and is responsible for taking through Parliament provisions in primary legislation which relate particularly to Wales.

Generally, education legislation contained in Acts of Parliament applies to both England and Wales. Although the National Assembly for Wales does not have powers to enact primary legislation, it does have powers to enact secondary legislation. This includes the implementation of policy in a range of areas including education and training. In practice this means, for example, that the Assembly is responsible for setting the content of the National Curriculum for Wales.

At what intervals is the curriculum reviewed? (eg are there established review cycles?)

There is no established cycle for curriculum review. The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) is the National Assembly for Wales' principal advisory body on all matters affecting the school curriculum, examinations, assessment and vocational qualifications, and is charged with keeping all developments in these matters under review. This is a continuous process. Reviews to date have taken place as follows:

1988:	the statutory National Curriculum began to be introduced in Wales.
1993/94:	a curriculum review was undertaken.
1995:	a revised curriculum was introduced.
1995/96:	the National Curriculum assessment arrangements were reviewed.
1997:	a further review of the curriculum began which considered basic and key skills; breadth and balance; manageability; continuity and progression; work-related education (WRE); and personal and social education (PSE).
2000:	a revised curriculum for *key stages* 1 and 2 was introduced to primary schools in Wales.
2001:	National Curriculum assessment arrangements at the end of *key stage* 1 were reviewed, and national tests and tasks at this stage were discontinued.

3. Curriculum content

What does the statutory curriculum consist of?

NOTE: Children who enter primary school before they reach compulsory school age, that is those, aged four to five, in *reception classes*, generally follow a curriculum guided by the requirements of the desirable learning outcomes (see above). This probe provides information regarding the curriculum for children from the beginning of compulsory primary education only; that is it does not make explicit reference to the requirements of the desirable learning outcomes.

School curriculum

The basic curriculum in primary education in Wales consists of the National Curriculum and religious education (see below).

It should be noted, however, that the statutory National Curriculum does not constitute the whole curriculum for schools; rather it is an important element of the school curriculum. The school curriculum comprises all the learning and other experiences that each school plans for its students and schools have discretion to develop the whole curriculum to reflect their particular needs and circumstances. The primary curriculum should, however, place particular emphasis on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and information technology, to ensure that all children make good progress in the basics of English, Welsh, mathematics, and science and technology.

National Curriculum

The National Curriculum at *key stage* 1 (children aged five to seven years) and *key stage* 2 (aged seven to 11) comprises:

- the core subjects
  English;
  Welsh (where Welsh is studied as a first language in Welsh-speaking schools);
  mathematics; and
  science;

and

- the foundation subjects
  Welsh (where Welsh is studied as a second language, that is, in schools which are not Welsh-speaking);
  technology - design and technology *and* information technology (IT);
  history;
  geography;
  art;
  music; and
  physical education (PE).

The National Curriculum applies to all children in compulsory primary education in publicly-funded schools in Wales. Students with special educational needs (SEN), whether in mainstream schools or special schools, are expected to have the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced education and consequently have an entitlement to an education that includes part or all of the National Curriculum. The

National Curriculum, or sections of it, may, however, be completely disapplied for such students.

What other aspects of the curriculum/teaching in schools are statutory? Are time allocations for subjects statutory?

Religious education and collective worship

All publicly-funded (*maintained schools*), except nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools, are required to provide religious education and a daily act of collective worship. At the request of a parent, any child in a publicly-funded primary school may, however, be excused from these activities.

All local education authorities (LEAs) are required to adopt a locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Denominational schools - that is, schools run by a particular religious denomination - are exempt from this agreed syllabus framework. LEAs must review their religious education syllabuses every five years.

All local religious education syllabuses must "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain". The majority of acts of collective worship are similarly required to be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".

In addition, all LEAs are required to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The SACRE may require the LEA to review its locally agreed syllabus for religious education and has a role in supporting the effective provision of religious education and collective worship in schools. Each SACRE must comprise representatives from several groups including local religious groups, teachers' associations and school governing bodies.

Headteachers may apply for the requirement for broadly Christian worship to be lifted for some or all students, if this requirement appears to be inappropriate for the whole school or for a particular category of students. Applications are made to the local SACRE. At the request of parents, religious education and worship may be provided according to a particular faith or denomination, provided that denominational worship does not replace statutory non-denominational collective worship and the school does not incur additional costs.

Common requirements

In addition to the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, there are *common requirements* that apply across all subjects in the National Curriculum in Wales. The *common requirements* include:

- Communication skills: children should be given opportunities to develop and apply their skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and expressing ideas through a variety of media.

- Mathematical skills: children should be given opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge and skills of number, shape, space, measure and handling data.
- Information technology skills: children should be given opportunities to develop and apply their information technology (IT) skills to obtain, prepare, process and present information and to communicate ideas with increasing independence.
- Problem-solving skills: children should be given opportunities to develop and apply their skills of asking appropriate questions, making predictions and coming to informed decisions.
- Creative skills: students should be given opportunities to develop and apply their creative skills, in particular the development and expression of ideas and imagination.
- Personal and social education (PSE): children should be given opportunities to develop and apply the attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and understanding relating to personal and social education.
- *Curriculum Cymreig* (Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum): children should be given opportunities to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales.

It is left to teachers to provide such opportunities and to determine the appropriate number and range of such opportunities for individual students.

Time allocation

The prescription of the amount of time to be devoted to each compulsory National Curriculum subject is formally prohibited by law, and there is no fixed number of lessons per week. There are, however, government recommendations for minimum weekly class hours (excluding breaks and collective worship) for children in *key stage* 1 (aged five to seven years) and in *key stage* 2 (aged seven to 11 years). These are 21 hours and 23.5 hours respectively. Within these guidelines, schools are free to organise their own timetables.

Are there statutory timings for the length of the school day/week?

The school year consists of 380 (half-day) sessions. The actual dates of terms and holidays are determined annually by the local education authority (LEA) Education Committee in consultation with the school governing bodies of LEA-maintained schools. In general, the school year runs from about the first week of September to the third week of July. It is divided into three terms, with a long summer break of about six weeks in July and August, shorter breaks of two to three weeks at Christmas and Easter, and one week in the middle of each term.

The school week normally runs from Monday to Friday.

The school day is divided into two sessions, one in the morning (usually between 9 am and 12 noon) and one in the afternoon (usually between around 1 pm and 3.30 pm). As mentioned above, there is no fixed number of lessons per week, although a recommended weekly minimum number of class hours is in existence.

What changes have there been to the statutory/non-statutory elements of the curriculum?

The most recent curriculum review, implemented from August 2000:

- maintained a continued concentration on children's skills in literacy and numeracy, whilst ensuring that the overall curriculum achieves a suitable degree of breadth, depth and balance;
- increased flexibility for teachers to use their professional discretion in applying the curriculum; and
- introduced a new, non-statutory framework of personal and social education (PSE).

Personal and social education (PSE)

The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) "recognises the role of personal and social education (PSE) in empowering students to be active, informed and responsible citizens aware of their rights and committed to the practices of participative democracy and the challenges of being a citizen in Wales and the world". In particular, the teaching of PSE aims to help schools to promote:

- positive relationships and participation in communities and the democratic process;
- lifelong learning and an effective contribution to adult and working life;
- better health; and
- progress toward concern and action for equal opportunities, social justice and sustainable development on local to global scales.

The aims of PSE are to:

- equip students to be personally and socially effective by providing learning experiences in which students can develop skills, explore attitudes, values and personal qualities, and acquire, evaluate and apply appropriate knowledge and understanding;
- develop students' self-esteem and personal responsibility;
- prepare students for the challenges, choices and responsibilities of work, employment and lifelong learning;
- empower students to participate in their communities as active citizens and to develop a global perspective;
- assist students to live healthy and fulfilled lives; and
- foster and encourage positive attitudes and behaviour towards the environment and the principles of sustainable development locally, nationally and globally.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning announced in October 2002 that PSE will become a statutory element within the basic curriculum for all students in compulsory education in Wales (aged five to 16 years) from September 2003.

What government/other initiatives have been introduced? What has been their impact?

See above regarding personal and social education (PSE).

Literacy and numeracy strategies

The policy for raising standards in education in Wales has been focused at primary level, as the source of general educational performance and achievement later in life. As part of this policy, each local education authority (LEA) has produced individual literacy and numeracy strategies which have been approved by the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW). The strategies have been based on framework documents, which set out guidance for the effective teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools as identified through inspection evidence.

The framework documents do not seek to spell out in precise detail how classroom teachers should set about their tasks; rather they highlight the importance of a strategic approach towards raising standards, and stress the extent to which the policies are dependent on the professional and creative skills of classroom teachers. No particular amount of teaching time for literacy and numeracy is specified. This is left for schools and teachers to decide.

The Learning Country

The Learning Country is the policy statement for education and training for Wales until 2010. It covers all phases of education from early years to adulthood and lifelong learning, and includes proposals for policy directions for students with special educational needs and for support for teachers. In addition, the publication describes proposals for four main phases of education in Wales: a new *foundation phase* for three- to seven-/eight-year-olds, an eight to 11 phase, 11 to 14, and a 14 to 19 phase which includes the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification for 16- to 19-year-olds.

Class size

As a result of a recent government initiative, there is a statutory maximum class size of 30 children in *key stage* 1 of primary education (students aged four/five to seven years). Increased general levels of funding in Wales are also assisting LEAs in reducing the size of *key stage* 2 classes (children aged seven to 11 years). The National Assembly for Wales has set the additional target that, by 2007, no primary class should exceed 25 children.

See section 5. Assessment, below for information regarding national targets.

What other trends are emerging in curriculum development? (eg new subjects/areas of learning being introduced)

Modern foreign languages in primary education

A strategy for modern foreign language learning is in existence in Wales. *Languages Count* aims not only to promote the study of languages beyond the age of 14 (when students may elect to no longer study a modern foreign language), but also to introduce pilot projects for modern foreign language learning in *key stage* 2 of primary education (children aged seven to 11 years).

In line with the strategy, pilot projects for the teaching of modern foreign languages at *key stage* 2 are expected to be introduced in some schools during the 2003-04 school year.

What other levers may be having an impact on curriculum content? (eg international studies: PIRLS, IEA, PISA, TIMSS)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

4. Organisation of the curriculum

What are the common features of curriculum organisation in the primary phase? (single subjects? planning subjects as 'topics'?)

At primary level in particular, teaching does not necessarily have to be organised and delivered within subject boundaries; teachers often organise their work in an integrated way, using thematic work as a way to teach several subjects at once.

How are subjects labelled?

National Curriculum subjects are known either as 'core subjects' or 'foundation subjects'. In addition in Wales there are *common requirements*. See above.

What examples are there of 'areas' rather than subjects?

What examples are there of clusters of subjects (eg Humanities, made up of geography and history) being brought together?

One of the foundation subjects is technology. This includes both design and technology *and* information technology (IT).

What are the common features of timetabling? (eg weekly lessons in each subject, English and mathematics taught daily)

Daily English and mathematics

As indicated above, although the amount of time to be allocated to each curriculum subject is not officially prescribed, and the literacy and numeracy strategies in use in

Wales do not prescribe daily literacy and numeracy lessons, many primary schools do dedicate a lesson each day to the teaching of reading and writing, and one to the teaching of mathematics.

5. Assessment

What is the purpose, nature and scale of assessment? (eg end of phase assessment, statutory, published test results, optional, national, local, timed tests, teacher-assessment)

There is no (national) certificate awarded to students on completion of primary education in Wales. There is, however, a system of national assessment, which includes:

Assessment on school entry

A statutory national system of assessment on school entry - known as *baseline assessment* - was introduced in September 1999. As a result, assessment is compulsory for all children aged four or five years being admitted to compulsory primary education in publicly-funded schools in Wales. This is regardless of whether children start at compulsory school age, five, or, at four, in the *reception class*, and regardless of whether they attend full- or part-time. Children are assessed within seven weeks of first entering primary school, in accordance with an accredited *baseline assessment* scheme selected by the school from a list of schemes published by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC). All accredited schemes incorporate ACCAC's *baseline assessment* scales, which cover assessment of language, mathematical, and personal and social skills, to ensure a consistent and standard approach to *baseline assessment*, and provide a common form for describing attainment in these skills.

The main aim of compulsory *baseline assessment* schemes is that they should enable children to be assessed for the purpose of assisting the planning of their learning and the measurement of their future progress. That is, the results of *baseline assessment* tests are used to provide teachers with an early understanding of each child's abilities, so that they can plan more effectively to meet the learning needs of individual children.

Assessment is carried out by a child's normal teacher with the aim of making it seem like part of an everyday classroom activity.

Private/independent schools are not required to use a *baseline assessment* scheme, but are encouraged to do so.

National Curriculum assessment

Assessment arrangements constitute a formal part of the National Curriculum. Statutory teacher assessment and statutory testing take place in relation to the National Curriculum Subject Orders, and therefore aim to chart students' attainment in those subjects. Although the tests, as opposed to teacher assessment, can cover only a limited range within each subject, they do still set out to provide a valid assessment of that range. They are therefore curriculum-based tests. This makes them different in

character from either intelligence tests or aptitude tests. They set out to assess children's achievement, rather than their potential.

National Curriculum assessment is measured against attainment targets. These define the expected standards of student performance and provide the basis for judging students' attainment in particular aspects of a subject at the end of each *key stage*. 'Level descriptions' are the basis for judging children's levels of attainment (against the National Curriculum attainment targets) at the end of the *key stage*. These are summary statements that indicate the types and range of performance which children working at a particular level of the National Curriculum should characteristically demonstrate. Since their introduction in 1995, teachers have had to judge which level 'best fits' a student's performance. There are eight level descriptions for each attainment target of the National Curriculum. Seven-year-olds (at the end of *key stage* 1) are typically expected to achieve level 2, and 11-year-olds, level 4.

All assessments are criterion-referenced. There are no quotas set for each of the National Curriculum levels. There are no underlying assumptions about the proportion of students who should be at any particular level. Proportions are determined entirely by how students' attainments measure up to the standards of the National Curriculum.

There is a distinction between everyday teacher assessment, which is formative and carried out as a normal function of teaching and learning, and end of *key stage* teacher assessment, which is summative.

The purpose of formative assessment (or ‘assessment for learning’ as it is increasingly becoming known) is to provide detailed information about students' attainment, so that future learning can be targeted appropriately and students helped to make progress.

Results from summative end of *key stage* tests and assessments aim to provide schools and parents with easily intelligible information about individual students' attainment. This needs to be in relation to both national standards (that is National Curriculum criteria) and national performance (that is, distribution of results). In other words, the results are intended to provide important information for parents and the public to help them judge the quality of the education being provided.

Statutory assessment applies to publicly-funded schools only. Privately-funded schools are encouraged, but not required, to take part in the assessment arrangements at the end of *key stages* 1 and 2.

National Curriculum assessment at the end of *key stage* 1 (aged seven)
In general, all children in their final year of *key stage* 1 (normally in Year 2 and aged seven by the end of the school year) are assessed.

The statutory assessment arrangements for the end of *key stage* 1 cover the core subjects of English, Welsh in Welsh-speaking schools and classes, mathematics and science and, since the 2001-2002 school year have consisted of teacher assessment only. Until the 2001/2002 school year, children at the end of *key stage* 1 also had to

take national tests and tasks in English, Welsh in Welsh-speaking schools and classes, and mathematics. These national tests and tasks are now no longer statutory, but remain available for schools to use on an optional basis.

Statutory assessment at the end of *key stage* 2 (11 years)
In general, all children in their final year of *key stage* 2 (normally in Year 6 and aged 11 by the end of the school year) are assessed by teacher assessment in all compulsory National Curriculum subjects, and by national tests and tasks in English, Welsh in Welsh-speaking classes and schools, mathematics and science. Those children working below level two of the National Curriculum eight-level scale (see above) are not required to sit the tests. Teacher assessment does remain a statutory requirement for such children. The National Curriculum *key stage* 2 tests are externally marked and all students usually continue to secondary education, regardless of the outcome of the end of *key stage* 2 assessment.

Teacher assessment and statutory tests are intended to give complementary information about students' attainment. The tests and tasks show what students have achieved in selected parts of selected National Curriculum subjects on a particular day. Teacher assessment of each student's achievements in relation to the attainment targets in all National Curriculum subjects is a judgement of performance in the whole subject over time, based on observations of practical and oral work in the classroom and written work completed in class over the course of the *key stage*.

The tasks and tests are designed to be accessible to the vast majority of children, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Special arrangements for the administration of the tests may be appropriate for some such children who may, for example, be unable to sit and work at a test for a sustained period, or for children for whom English is an additional language. Braille and modified large print papers are also available. A very small number of children, including those with chronic and severe illness, may be unable to take the tests, even when these have been adapted or other special arrangements have been made.

The results of *key stage* 1 and 2 assessment are published annually by schools in their prospectus and in the annual report of the school governing body. The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) also publishes results for each local education authority (LEA) and for Wales nationally, but not for individual schools.

The results of National Curriculum assessment may also be used as a resource to help schools raise standards and help their students reach their full potential. Schools in Wales are required to set and publish targets each autumn for three-year rolling periods for a range of indicators at the end of *key stages* 1 and 2. For example, schools are required to set and publish targets predicting the proportion of students who will achieve level 4 or above in the statutory end of *key stage* 2 tests.

Performance data in the form of end of *key stage* 2 test results accompany students as they leave primary education and enter lower secondary school.

The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) has set the following targets for compulsory primary education:

- By 2002, between 70 and 80 per cent of 11-year-olds should attain at least level 4 of the National Curriculum eight-level scale in the separate subjects of English, Welsh (where Welsh is a student's first language), mathematics and science. (Results for 2002 showed that between 73 and 86 percent of 11-year-olds are achieving at least level 4 in these subjects.)
- By 2004, between 80 and 85 per cent of 11-year-olds should attain at least level 4 in the separate subjects of English, Welsh (where Welsh is a student's first language), mathematics and science.

Optional assessment materials (OAMs)

The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) has developed optional assessment materials (OAMs) to support teacher assessment in selected subjects at any point during *key stages* 1 and 2. The materials cover the programmes of study of the National Curriculum subjects and are structured to allow teachers to assess children and record the outcomes, which can be used as part of the school's portfolio of work in the individual subjects. ACCAC believes that, "when used throughout the school, OAMs can lead to greater consistency in teacher assessment and provide comparable information about children's progress".

The *key stage* 2 OAMs in English (speaking and listening, reading and writing), for example, are designed to:

- provide schools with standard materials that can give evidence of children's attainment in English to contribute towards, and enhance the consistency of, teacher assessment throughout the *key stage*;
- provide children's responses that may be included in school portfolios designed to exemplify standards in English;
- provide a straightforward means by which schools can gain comparable information about their students' performance in relation to particular aspects of work in English at any point during the *key stage*;
- provide examples of a range of valid and reliable methods of assessment in English that teachers might use to guide them in preparing their own assessment materials;
- provide examples of assessment criteria linked to the programmes of study and level descriptions for English;
- contribute, by their use throughout the *key stage*, to the raising of standards in English, by helping teachers to promote progression and to identify students' strengths and weaknesses; and
- contribute towards raising the standard of literacy and information technology capability.

Use of OAMs is decided locally.

In addition

Some primary schools require older children to sit tests at the end of the school year and, for this purpose, often use commercially available standardised tests.

How far is the curriculum driven by assessments? (eg evidence of teacher preparation for testing, 'booster' or 'catch-up' classes in schools)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

6. Teaching profession/training

What changes can be identified in initial teacher training programmes?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

What kinds of continuing professional development/on-going training are provided?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

To what degree are teachers'/schools' planning subject to scrutiny?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

To what degree are teachers using electronic formats to plan?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

7. Pedagogy

Which teaching approaches are dominant or developing a higher profile, and which are receding? (eg collaborative work, whole-class instruction)

Teaching methods and learning materials are decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject coordinators (classroom teachers, who, in addition, have responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school).

Each teacher is responsible for planning their class lessons and for drawing up schemes of work to ensure that the curriculum provided meets the statutory requirements. The teacher is also responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for differentiated work for children of all abilities. Differentiation is defined as the process of providing learning experiences which are matched to the needs, capabilities and previous learning of individual children.

Many primary school teachers are supported in their teaching by non-teaching staff, such as paid classroom helpers and parent volunteers.

What is the impact of ICT in teaching practice? (eg use of electronic whiteboards, intranets, managed learning environments/local grids)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

To what degree are teaching approaches focusing on developing thinking skills, creativity and building on children's learning styles?

Communication skills, mathematical skills, information technology skills, problem-solving skills, creative skills, personal and social skills and skills specific to an understanding of the culture of Wales are embedded in the school curriculum through the *common requirements*. See '*Common requirements'* above.

8. Resourcing

How far are resources to support teaching made available via government/central/local agencies?

National Curriculum

The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) website (at http://www.accac.org.uk) provides access to the National Curriculum Orders for the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum in Wales.

Welsh language materials

ACCAC is also responsible for commissioning classroom materials to support the teaching of Welsh, the teaching of other subjects through the medium of Welsh, and Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum (*Curriculum Cymreig*).

To help schools in Wales deliver the curriculum, ACCAC's commissioning strategy seeks to improve the range of educational opportunity available through the medium of Welsh, and increase children's opportunities to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the Wales-specific aspects of the curriculum. The strategy includes provision for the development of information technology materials.

Access to some resources in Welsh is also available via the Welsh Language Board website at http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk/html/index-e.html

Other resources

All schools have computers available for use by students. Teachers may also use audio-visual equipment such as television, videos, slides, radio and audio recordings. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) is the focus for expertise in the use of technology in learning (http://www.becta.org.uk). In addition, the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative (http://www.ngfl.gov.uk) aims to provide a wealth of on-line teaching and learning materials.

How far, and in which subjects, are resources statutory/ recommended/ subsidised? (eg textbooks, courses, lesson plans for teachers, web-based materials)

Textbooks

Textbooks are not approved by the State and there are no prescribed texts at primary level. Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers and teachers are responsible for determining teaching methods and materials. Teaching methods and learning materials are therefore usually decided by the class teacher, in consultation with the headteacher and subject coordinators (classroom teachers, who, in addition, have responsibility for a particular subject area and who give help and guidance to their colleagues within the school).

Although compulsory booklists and prescribed texts do not exist, the programmes of study for English do contain criteria and categories from which schools are expected to select the range of reading and study material.

Publicly-funded schools provide textbooks for primary students and may not charge for books or stationery.