

Picking up the Curriculum Baton

Amanda Jones, Achievement for All's Regional Lead for Wales, outlines how our latest school improvement tool, a 'Curriculum Review for Wales', can support Primary and Secondary School Leaders to evaluate current practice and plot a coherent route going forwards despite the intensity of Covid-19 disruption.



School Leaders and their learning communities are facing challenges that we could never have imagined a year ago. We are all discovering how personally resilient we can be, both as individuals and within our professional capacities. How well we continue to overcome these challenges as well as seeking opportunities for positive change in these unprecedented times depends largely on the professional relationships around us.

We are all responding and managing this pandemic in our own ways. Some are feeling particularly anxious about becoming ill or the risks to older members of the family. Others may be coping with bereavement. Others facing employment worries. And you are expected to lead others and keep a school community safe whilst feeling like this. Make no mistake, leading is tough at the moment - we are all human, even Headteachers!

As we have all come to recognising and value the importance of Wellbeing for learners in our care and understand that;

An anxious frightened and angry mind can't learn.

Isn't the same is also true of teachers and leaders?

An anxious frightened and angry mind can't teach.

An anxious frightened and angry mind can't lead.

It is more important now than ever before, that self-care must be a priority for those leading schools at all levels. Leaders who are managing well, often have good social and emotional leadership skills. They are able and willing to support each other, as well as being able to reach out and ask for help when needed. As they do this they lead by example.

One example of this is Emotion Coaching, a recent addition to the Achievement for All arsenal. It is not just a highly effective tool for children and young people to manage their



emotions and behaviours: it can also help adults to self soothe and reduce personal stress levels in the here and now. It has as much value in the workplace, as for our young people.

Ask yourself how able do you feel to share your feelings and emotions with others? When did you last say I'm finding things difficult?

It's good to talk. It's ok to be 'emotionally open' even if you are a head teacher or leader, a man or a woman, in fact it's more than okay, it's good.

We all need someone to talk to who appreciates our position and hears our needs without judging. Many *Achievement for All* schools are particularly valuing the professional relationships with their Coaches at this time more than ever. Knowing that someone cares and has time to listen and support is so appreciated. That independent, discrete sounding board can be a big help.

So as leaders benefit from support networks and look after their own Wellbeing, they are able to support the wellbeing of learners, staff and the wider school communities.

Leaders are seeking to re-engage with parents and partners and beginning to restart their learning communities. A range of factors have impacted on this journey and returning and refocusing can be rather overwhelming- so many balls in the air, so many needs jostling for supremacy.

Finally, Significant pedagogical challenges have presented themselves, including the role of digital learning- The phrase 'connect to learn, learn to connect' (Harris and Jones [2012](#)) describes the daily reality of students and teachers trying to work together in this pandemic. Hence, moving forward, school leaders will increasingly need to be technologically savvy and well informed. How has your vision for the new curriculum in your school changed as a result of Covid-19?

"Working alongside our AfA coach engaging in professional dialogue and sharing and developing ideas has enhanced our provision and raised morale"

SENCO, Northamptonshire

The power of executive coaching with Achievement for All

Supporting Wellbeing and easing the pressure off staff at this time more than ever before, is a key priority for us all. Picking up the baton and continuing the journey towards the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales is indeed a challenge and plans may need re-evaluating in light of Covid-19. This is where the role of a Coach from Achievement for All, supported by a

wealth of knowledge and tools gleaned from high-impact, evidence-based activity with thousands of schools across England and Wales over the past decade, can be of huge personal and professional assistance.

As schools analyse their current provision in light of the new requirements and interesting questions emerge;

- Do we have the right skills (including digital ones) to lead, plan and deliver the new curriculum?
- Are we using the skillsets we have well?
- Where is pedagogical changes needed and what might this look like?
- Have our priorities changed after Covid-19?
- How can we be sure that a new pedagogical approach is right for our school?
- What professional learning do we need?

If we keep the 4 stages of curriculum evaluation in mind, it can help us in designing and managing the implementation of the new curriculum in our schools (Curriculum Innovation in Schools - Estyn 2018)

Stage 1: Evaluating the current curriculum within wider self-evaluation arrangements

Stage 2: Planning and preparing for change

Stage 3: Realising change

Stage 4: Evaluating change

How can Achievement for All support you?

Achievement for All has designed a **'Step-Up Curriculum for Wales Review'**.

The Curriculum Review introduces a school to an Achievement Coach with particular Curriculum-Change expertise, and knowledge who will work with you to:

- deliver an in-depth assessment of how your current provision/delivery meets the needs of the New Wales Curriculum;
- appraise staff expertise and skills essential to enable successful delivery and how they are currently used;
- make recommendations around how the necessary change in pedagogy might be realised, within a specified timeframe and budget; and

"Thanks, your feedback is really specific and constructive - gives us lots to move on with."

**Headteacher,
Birmingham**



- highlight effective practice and professional development opportunities relevant to your staff, to improve staff capacity and increase skills needed to lead, plan and successfully deliver the new Curriculum.

The Review will provide frameworks for auditing your existing curriculum practice and support you with ideas of how to address areas for development, as well as auditing staff expertise and skill requirements for the new curriculum.

This resource will support you to put Wellbeing at the heart of the process so that your extended leadership team benefit from coaching support. If there ever was a time to take your foot off the pedal and focus on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, it surely is now; easing the pressure by accepting help, making gentle bridges for staff to cross together and not hurdles for them to jump over.

Please get in touch if you want to know more.

Amanda Jones

Achievement for All

Country Lead for Wales

Visit afaeducation.org to learn more about our leadership development and professional training approaches that have reached nearly six thousand education settings over nearly a decade.



Get in touch

Donate

[About us](#) [Coaching Programmes](#) [Covid-19 Leadership Support](#) [Step-Up Reviews](#) [Our Impact](#) [News](#) [Join us](#) [Blog](#) [Awards](#)



We want to put Wellbeing at the heart of learning and help school communities across England and Wales to thrive emotionally, socially and academically, ensuring that social mobility is real.

[Read our Every Child Included in Education manifesto here](#)