



Creative learning through the arts –  
an action plan for Wales

2015–2020



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales

<b>Audience</b>	The entire teaching workforce and government and national partners, including regional education consortia, local authorities, governing bodies, arts and cultural organisations, and all leaders of funded non-maintained settings.
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Hafod Primary School children painting a mural at a local nursing home



School project, Artis Community (image: Nancy Evans)

## Ministerial foreword

Learning about the arts and culture, participating in the arts and developing creative skills should be prominent in the education of all children and young people. These are essential ingredients for a well-rounded, rewarding and motivational learning experience. Moreover, it is only through having high quality arts and creative experiences in schools, by valuing them and giving them their deserved place in our curriculum, by making them available to all children, especially those from deprived backgrounds, that we can nurture the potential of our learners and develop skills we need for our economy.

In March 2014 the Welsh Government issued a response to Professor Dai Smith's report on the review of *Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales* (2013), agreeing to all twelve recommendations. We made a pledge to develop a plan which would formally assert the central role which we envisage for arts education in the schools of Wales, which would also deliver our Programme for Government commitment to maximise participation in the arts and to work with the Arts Council of Wales to develop an action plan for arts and young people.

More recently, in *Qualified for Life: an education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year olds in Wales*, we set out our aims to build a successful education system which would directly contribute to greater innovation and creativity, to the cultural capital of the nation, and to a more equitable and successful society. The plan for creative learning through the arts will support us in achieving the *Qualified for Life* objectives: it will contribute to our plans to build an excellent professional workforce, and to develop a curriculum which is engaging and attractive to children and young people.

In his recent report, *Successful Futures*, which followed an independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, Professor Graham Donaldson has reaffirmed the importance of creativity in the development of our children and young people. Welsh Government is currently considering its response to Professor Donaldson's call for fundamental change.

Our commitment to funding the actions of this plan demonstrates our belief in the importance of the arts and creativity. This shared commitment – in the partnership between Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales - will bring about a sea change in the way that the arts and education sectors work together to deliver benefits for our learners.

### **Huw Lewis**

Minister for Education and Skills

### **Ken Skates**

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

## Our vision

The arts, and creative approaches to teaching and learning, should have a major role in all our schools, where collaboration with arts and cultural organisations and with creative practitioners is a common feature, and where good practice is shared and accessible to all.

## Our aims



## Context

This plan responds to the 12 recommendations of Professor Dai Smith's report (see Annex 1). Following the extensive consultation that took place during the period of Professor Smith's review, we have engaged in further consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including arts organisations, teachers and education consortia. In developing this plan, we have examined further evidence and drawn on the expertise and experiences of arts and creative learning programmes delivered across the globe.

The plan has also been informed by and seeks to support the delivery of a number of Welsh Government policies and strategic initiatives. Central amongst these is *Qualified for Life: an education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year olds in Wales* (2014), setting out actions to improve educational attainment, and to build an education system that will directly contribute to a stronger economy, greater innovation, greater creativity, and to the cultural capital of the nation.

Professor Dai Smith writes in his report:

*'In a twenty-first century, schooling will increasingly become the basis of a creative society, of a creative economy and a creative culture. Creativity, or being open to the acquisition of new knowledge and innovative skills, will shape our world like no other force imaginable.'*

For such creativity to thrive we need not only to recognise the importance of the arts, but also build infrastructures and programmes that put the arts at the core of our education system



Developing Dylan workshop with Laura Sheldon, Literature Wales (image: Sioned a Nia Photography)

and call on the talents of our creative individuals to work with young learners. We also need to provide opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who often have limited access to arts activities and cultural experiences - young people for whom active participation in the arts and working with creative practitioners can engage, motivate, build confidence and transferrable skills.

In his report on the curriculum and assessment in Wales, Professor Graham Donaldson reaffirms the importance of creativity and the status of the arts in the curriculum:

The expressive arts provide opportunities to explore, refine, and communicate ideas, engaging thinking, imagination and senses creatively... Engagement with the expressive arts requires application, perseverance and close attention to detail, capacities that have benefits across learning more widely. In the review of *Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales* commissioned by the Welsh Government, Professor Dai Smith said powerfully, "It is clear ... that countries across the world recognise the significance and potential of the arts in enabling improved educational, social and economic outcomes."

Professor Graham Donaldson,  
*Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales, 2015*

We will use creative teaching and learning and arts activity to tackle lack of aspiration and low levels of engagement and achievement amongst disadvantaged learners. In this way the plan will help to achieve a number of the objectives of *Rewriting the Future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* (2014).

Through strong partnerships with the four regional education consortia, our actions will align with the school improvement framework set out in the *National Model for Regional Working* – the guidance for regional consortia and local authorities. We will seek to align the new arts and creative 'offer' with the regional consortia infrastructure in order to support school leaders and teachers.

By engaging the arts and creative approaches to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, we will support schools in implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Through our actions we will also support the Arts Council of Wales's Young Creators strategy and the implementation of a number of recommendations of *Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the power of the arts culture and heritage to promote social justice in Wales* (2014) report by Baroness Kay Andrews.

## Our actions

This plan is designed to bring about a step change in the range and quality of opportunities that our children and young people are given to engage with and learn about the arts and culture. Its success will depend on **strong partnerships: the Welsh Government in partnership with the Arts Council of Wales, working with the regional education consortia, schools, local authorities and the wider arts and cultural sector.**

Every aspect of the plan requires the active involvement of artists, creative professionals and arts, culture and heritage organisations working in partnership with teachers and schools. **The actions set out on the following pages will be taken forward by the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales.**



Myths, Arts Connection school project

## 1. Improve attainment through creativity

With careful planning and appropriate professional learning, nurturing the creativity of children and young people through the deployment of the arts across the curriculum can bring about significant improvements in motivation, behaviour and attainment among children and young people.

To prepare our young people to thrive in the future economy of Wales, Professor Smith's report called for creativity to be given a central role within the curriculum, which in turn will require our teachers to be supported to develop a more creative approach to teaching and learning.

We will achieve this through a **Lead Creative Schools Scheme** - an intensive intervention that draws on the skills of creative practitioners and teachers working together.

- Schools applying to be Lead Creative Schools will identify key issues they wish to address through a creative approach to learning. For example, a secondary school may choose to tackle low attainment in maths at KS3, using a range of techniques to engage and motivate learners; a primary school may wish to develop innovative cross-curricular approaches to boost literacy skills.
- Schools participating in the scheme will be allocated a specially trained creative professional who, in collaboration with the regional consortium and challenge advisor, will work with the school to develop a programme which will address the identified priorities. The programme will be embedded in the school's improvement plan, benchmarking criteria agreed and data gathered to evidence impact.
- Artists and creative practitioners will be active in the delivery of the programme.

- The teacher will be central to the programme at all times, partnering with the creative professionals in designing, delivering new approaches and reflecting on their practice.

The **Lead Creative Schools Scheme** will:

- support schools over a minimum of two years to bring about improvements in outcomes for learners;
- embed changes in teaching practice to generate a sustainable impact;
- be run in partnership with the 4 regional education consortia;
- be available to around a third of schools in Wales (provision for both Welsh and English-medium) over the 5-year period of this plan;
- support schools to find creative approaches to literacy, numeracy and reducing the attainment gap between learners eligible for free school meals and their peers;
- include the expectation that teachers will share the knowledge, skills and experience they gain from the scheme, both within their school and with others;
- for schools achieving Lead Creative School status, provide recognition of these schools' commitment to improvement through creative learning and the arts.

We believe that this approach will result in sustained improvement and changes to pedagogy. Senior management support to embed this intervention with whole-school improvement policy will be the key to its success.

## In summary: our actions

We have	We will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Included consideration of the place of creativity in the curriculum as part of Professor Donaldson's Review of Curriculum and Assessment.</li><li>• Considered models of creative practice in education and have developed methodology for a 'made in Wales' Lead Creative Schools Scheme.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a Lead Creative Schools Scheme, with the potential to reach a third of schools in Wales over the 5-year period of this plan.</li><li>• Consider the impact, if any, of Professor Graham Donaldson's report on Assessment and the National Curriculum for the methodology of the Lead Creative Schools Scheme.</li><li>• Support our Lead Creative Schools over a minimum of two years to bring about improvements in outcomes for learners.</li></ul>



Ffotogallery animation workshop, Stanwell School, Penarth

## 2: Increase and improve arts experiences and opportunities for learners

Professor Dai Smith's report highlighted the fact that there is already a rich and varied arts and cultural offer available to schools across Wales. The challenge is in making that offer more widespread and more relevant to schools.

To meet this challenge we will establish an **All-Wales Arts and Education Programme** in order to:

- increase and improve opportunities for teachers, learners, artists and arts/cultural/heritage organisations to work together (through the medium of English and Welsh);
- increase opportunities for young people to experience the work of Wales's artists and arts/cultural organisations; and
- create more opportunities for communication and partnerships between schools, artists, arts/cultural/heritage organisations and local communities.

Through the Arts and Education Programme, schools will be able to: draw on the knowledge and practice of artists and arts/cultural organisations to enhance and complement the teaching of the arts in schools; support schools in delivering the Minister for Education and Skills' three priorities of literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of disadvantage on attainment; and provide arts and cultural experiences for learners, both within and outside the curriculum.

We have already signalled our commitment to this agenda by actions such as remitting Estyn to undertake a best-practice review of the arts in schools, commissioning a toolkit to support literacy and numeracy through the arts, and other actions listed on page 13 below.

### Communicating what's on offer

Improving communication about what is on offer is key to widening access. To address this,

a new **arts and creative learning portal** will be established and hosted on Hwb, the all-Wales learning platform.

The portal will be designed for use by teachers, learners, arts and cultural organisations and practitioners. It will provide information on opportunities for schools, showcase best practice, host resources for teachers and arts/cultural organisations, provide information on professional learning opportunities, and contacts for local, regional and national networks.

### Regional working

We will improve arts and creative opportunities for learners through regional networks. **Four Regional Arts and Education Networks** will deliver the Arts and Education Programme, with close links to the regional education consortia, challenge advisors, and the co-ordinators responsible for the Lead Creative Schools Scheme. The remit of the networks will include:

- Collating and disseminating best practice;
- Establishing and co-ordinating arts and creative learning networking opportunities (face to face and digital), for teachers, artists, arts and cultural organisations;
- Providing a 'brokerage' service between schools and artists, arts/cultural organisations;
- Providing training opportunities for arts practitioners to improve and tailor their provision to the needs and priorities of schools;
- Providing opportunities for teachers and artists to develop and share their knowledge and skills; and
- Managing and co-ordinating a 'local arts champions' programme.

**Local Arts Champions** will be experienced teachers of the arts. Their schools will be funded to release them to spend short periods of time promoting best practice, supporting others to adopt similar approaches, or bringing others into their school to observe and learn. Artists and arts/cultural organisations will also have opportunities to undertake this role.

For schools to gain the benefits of participating in the Arts and Education Programme, senior management of schools will be asked to

demonstrate their full support. We will ask them to nominate a member of staff, preferably a head of department or member of the senior management team to play the role of **School Creativity and Arts Champion**. This person will be the link between their school and the opportunities available through the regional network. They will help their school to identify their arts education priorities, ensure that their school is aware of best practice and can make the most of the benefits of greater access to arts and creative opportunities.



Hafod Primary School children studying sculpture and producing charcoal drawings

## Experiencing the arts

An 'Experiencing the Arts' fund will encourage schools to provide children and young people with opportunities to 'go one step further' in their exploration of creative, cultural and arts experiences. These opportunities will have particular benefits for learners from deprived backgrounds with limited access to active participation in the arts. This fund can be drawn on to support visits to venues such as galleries and theatres in order to enrich learning in the classroom, or used to support new and innovative collaboration between schools and arts and cultural organisations. In all cases, schools will be expected to demonstrate how the activity contributes to and enriches learning and offers learners something new and stimulating.

## Progression routes

We recognise the need to consider **support and progression for our more able and talented** learners. A number of arts initiatives exist in Wales that provide opportunities for talented children and young people, enabling them to participate in enrichment activities and to work alongside our leading arts professionals. However, these opportunities are not available nationwide.

Mapping will be undertaken by the Arts Council of Wales to develop a more comprehensive picture of what is currently available from our arts and cultural organisations for our talented young people. This research will highlight opportunities and gaps in provision as well as identifying the current and future resources needed to support this work.

The Welsh Government is conducting a review to identify the provision available for more able and talented (MAT) learners aged 3-19 across Wales. This includes provision for learners pursuing creative or arts subjects, such as performing and visual arts. The purpose of the review is to understand how schools, FE institutions/colleges and local authorities identify, support and challenge MAT learners. The findings of this review, together with the outcomes of the Arts Council of Wales research, will inform our future actions.

Wherever they are on their creative journey, young people need access to balanced and informative advice on **careers** so that they are aware of the opportunities available and the skills required. We recognise that there is work to be done with stakeholders and partners such as sector skills councils, and our national cultural organisations, on how young people can gain a better understanding about pathways into this sector. We will explore options for communicating information on opportunities and career pathways to teachers and learners. We will also ask Careers Wales to work with the arts and creative sectors to provide up-to-date and accessible online information about occupations.

We also recognise the powerful role that the arts and creative skills can have in engaging, motivating and building the confidence of young people who are at risk of leaving school without qualifications and with no clear route into further education or employment. The regional networks will foster links between arts organisations, schools, local authority Youth Engagement and Progression coordinators and lead workers who support young people at risk of disengaging from education and training. Through these links we will increase awareness of and participation in the creative opportunities available for marginalised young people, and align the implementation of this plan with the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.

## In summary: our actions

We have	We will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commissioned a toolkit to support literacy/numeracy and the arts.</li> <li>● Remitted Estyn to undertake a 'best practice' review of the arts in schools at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.</li> <li>● Published case studies on the arts in education on Learning Wales.</li> <li>● Included the arts in the Pupil Offer for Pathways to Success Schools as part of Schools Challenge Cymru.</li> <li>● Published guidance on using the Pupil Deprivation Grant in support of arts and cultural activity.</li> <li>● Included the arts in the Welsh Government commissioned Review to Identify More Able and Talented Provision across Wales.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop an arts and creative learning portal to be hosted on Hwb, the all-Wales learning platform.</li> <li>● Fund four Arts and Education Networks to deliver a range of activities at regional, local and school level.</li> <li>● Set up an 'Experiencing the Arts' fund for schools.</li> <li>● Integrate arts-based activities where appropriate in the training and support provided to schools to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.</li> <li>● Work with the arts and heritage sectors to promote opportunities to support learners to develop literacy and numeracy skills.</li> <li>● Work with arts and cultural organisations to increase their education 'offer' to schools, to make it more accessible and in line with schools' needs and priorities.</li> <li>● Continue to work with Pathways to Success Schools (Schools Challenge Cymru) to incorporate the arts within their Pupil Offer.</li> <li>● Develop a learning pack on the Pupil Deprivation Grant and arts and cultural activity.</li> <li>● Consider the findings of the Review to Identify More Able and Talented Provision across Wales, and develop appropriate actions.</li> <li>● Ask Careers Wales to work with the sector to provide up-to-date and accessible online information about arts and creative occupations.</li> </ul>

## In summary: our actions

We have	We will
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with our national cultural organisations and other stakeholders to explore options for communicating information about career pathways in the arts/cultural/creative sectors and to strengthen links between schools and these sectors.</li><li>• Work with Youth Engagement and Progression coordinators in the local authorities to promote participation in the arts for young people at risk of leaving school without qualifications.</li></ul>



School visit to Oriol Myrddin Gallery (image: Seren Stacey)

### 3: Support our teachers and arts practitioners to develop their skills

Sustainability will be built into this plan by making changes to the way teachers, arts practitioners and cultural institutions develop their practice, and to the way in which schools, consortia and cultural organisations develop their policy.

We know that the features of successful change to teaching practice include the establishment of professional learning communities, access to specialist expertise from outside the school environment, learning rooted in evidence gained from experimenting with new approaches in the classroom, and challenging negative assumptions about what pupils can and cannot achieve. This is in line with the principles of the Professional Learning Model which has been developed to support the professional learning of all educational practitioners in Wales as part of the New Deal for the Education Workforce. We will apply these approaches to the methodology for **professional learning in the Lead Creative Schools Scheme and the All-Wales Arts in Education Programme**.

To enable teachers and creative professionals to fulfil their roles in the Lead Creative Schools Scheme, high quality professional learning will be provided for teachers, creative professionals, arts champions and arts and heritage organisations.

Schools participating in the programme will share the knowledge and experience gained with other schools, in an approach which continues to be modelled by our Lead and Emerging Practitioner Schools Pathfinder programme. Establishing opportunities for teachers and arts/cultural practitioners to come together to share experiences and to learn with and from each other is central to the delivery of this plan. **Local, regional and national networking** opportunities will be developed to share best practice and to ensure that the improvements in practice are sustained.

We need to ensure that the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver the plan are transferred and embedded in the education and culture sectors within Wales. We will therefore run a programme to 'train the trainers', to ensure that we have the capacity to continue delivery of high quality professional learning provision, on completion of this 5-year plan.

Our investment in the development of artists and creative practitioners will result in a powerful cohort of trained cultural professionals. Evidence from elsewhere in Europe suggests that such professionals, once trained, remain active within the educational sector employed and supported directly by schools and other agencies. As schools experiment with a wider range of creative and cultural opportunities, supported by the Professional Learning Model, they will become much more discerning and effective consumers of arts and cultural opportunities.

We will also explore the opportunities for **collaboration between Welsh Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET) centres and the Lead Creative Schools Scheme**, and the possibilities for sharing best practice in developing creative teaching methodology. Longer term changes may of course be influenced by the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of Professor Donaldson's Review of Assessment and the National Curriculum for Wales, and the recommendations emerging from Professor John Furlong's review of ITET in Wales, including proposed changes to the Qualified Teacher Status Standards as part of the work to support the professional standards for teachers.

## In summary: our actions

We have	We will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developed a framework to support the professional learning of all educational practitioners in Wales – the Professional Learning Model.</li> <li>● Included the arts in the Masters in Educational Practice unit on Poverty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop professional learning opportunities for teachers and arts practitioners in our All-Wales Arts and Education Programme that support the national priorities of improving standards of literacy and numeracy and of narrowing the attainment gap and which are fully aligned to the Professional Learning Model.</li> <li>● Offer a bespoke professional learning programme for practitioners – teachers and creative/arts practitioners – in our Lead Creative Schools Scheme.</li> <li>● Develop a sustainable approach to professional learning through ‘training the trainers’ for our Lead Creative Schools Scheme.</li> <li>● Include creative teaching methodology and collaboration with arts/cultural organisations in the structure for the new Masters programmes that will be launched in 2016.</li> <li>● Encourage ITET centres to promote creative teaching methodology and links with the Lead Creative Schools Scheme, and encourage the embedding of the arts into ITET programmes.</li> <li>● Develop case studies of effective practice, including examples of arts participation in line with the Professional Learning Model.</li> </ul>

## Evaluation and reporting

An **evaluation** will be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the Lead Creative Schools Scheme and the All-Wales Arts in Education Programme over the 5-year period of the plan. This will collect and examine evidence in relation to outputs, outcomes and impact; including data-gathering from schools and regional education consortia. The research will be designed in a way to capture impact that might be attributable to the Lead Creative Schools Scheme in particular, as well as provide evidence about implementation that can be used to improve the scheme and the All-Wales Arts in Education Programme over the period of the funding. In particular, the evaluation will consider the impact of the plan on three aspects of pupil development:

- Progress in attainment in numeracy and literacy;
- The impact of the programme on reducing the differences in attainment of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds; and
- The creativity of learners.

The research undertaken to evaluate the Lead Creative Schools Scheme and the All-Wales Arts in Education offer will be published on the Welsh Government website.

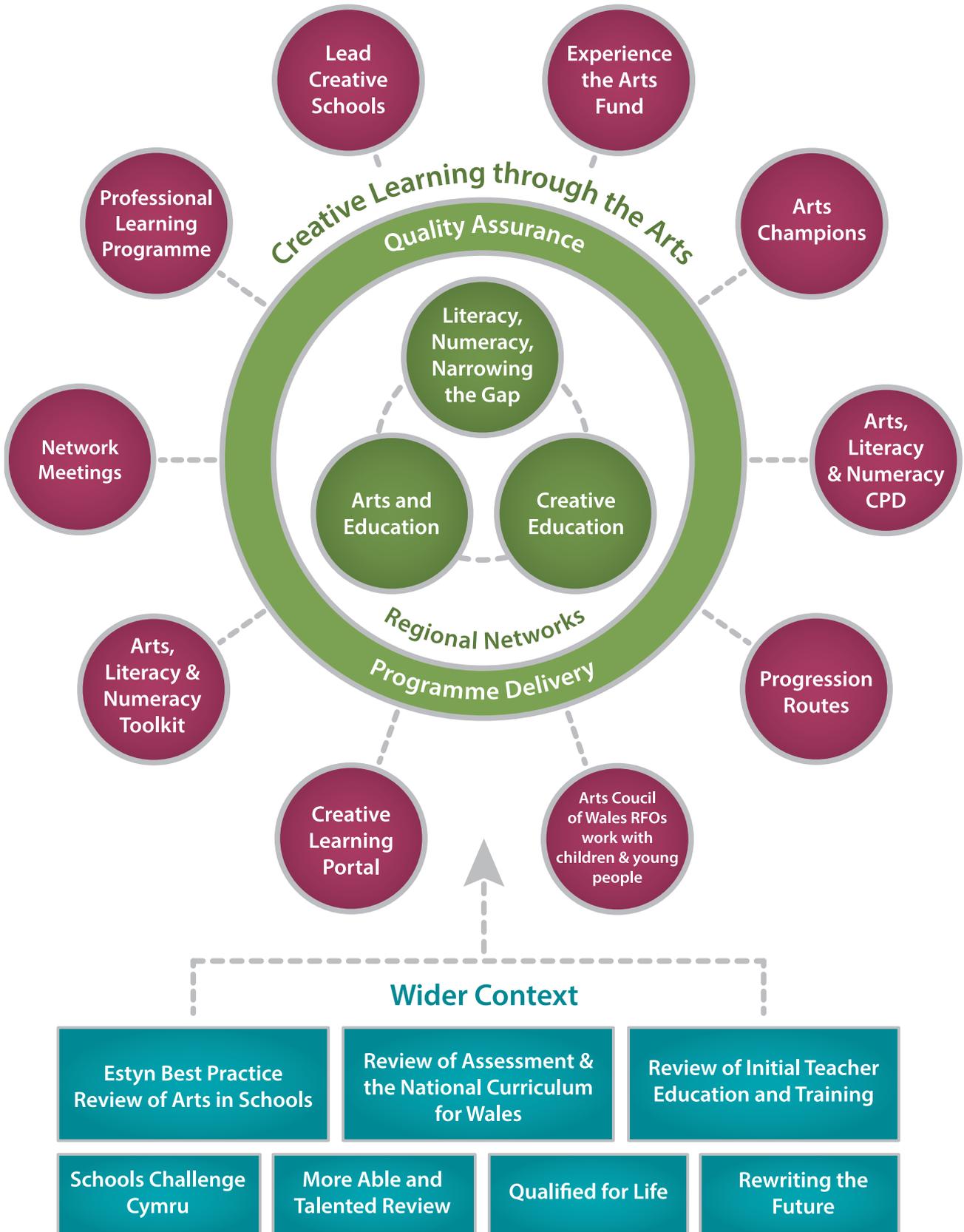
### In summary: our actions

#### We will

- Gather evidence to demonstrate the impact of arts interventions on educational outcomes.
- Publish reports on the progress of this plan each year, with actions for the following year.
- Publish research papers relating to the evaluation during, and on completion of, the 5-year plan.

## Strategic partnership

Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales  
working with regional education consortia and other stakeholders



## Annex 1

### Summary of recommendations from an independent report for the Welsh Government into Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales

1. The **Welsh Government** should formally assert the central role which it envisages for arts education in the schools of Wales by making a commitment to the provision of high quality arts education and access to the arts.
2. The **Welsh Government** should promote the use of the arts in helping to deliver improved numeracy and literacy, and in reducing the attainment gap.
3. The **Welsh Government** should enhance the current curriculum to include creativity, alongside numeracy and literacy as a core theme across all the subject disciplines and in both primary and secondary education; further the Welsh Government should consider an arts rich education to be core to the whole school experience of all pupils, and should, with the Arts Council of Wales, seek to enable wide experience of the arts outside school as well as interaction with professional artists in the school environment.
4. That all initial teacher training (ITT) delivered by **HE institutions in Wales** should ensure that creative teaching methodology is 'core' to educational practice.
5. The **Welsh Government** and the **Arts Council of Wales** should work with a group of experienced education practitioners to develop a new framework for arts related continuing professional development (CPD). This should address the needs both of teachers and of arts practitioners, and support the national priorities of improving standards of literacy and numeracy and of narrowing the attainment gap.
6. The **Welsh Government** should support:
  - The fostering of schools 'arts champions' within the new national plan for creative learning
  - Welsh Arts Awards and/or medals for individual teachers
7. The **Arts Council of Wales** and **Local Government** should be remitted to work with local authorities and education consortia to prioritise a range of specific initiatives, to support and develop creative teaching, to include:
  - WAM (Wales Arts Mark) Certificates
  - Mentoring of teachers with arts practitioners and arts organisations
  - Working with local government to identify, develop and sustain a system of schools 'arts champions'
8. The **Welsh Government** and the **Arts Council of Wales** should ensure that a Creative Education Portal is developed, as an additional, integrated element of 'Hwb', the all-Wales Digital Learning Platform.
9. The **Arts Council of Wales** should be remitted to work with its revenue funded clients and other cultural institutions to establish 'Creative Learning Networks' to encourage arts, artists, teachers, parents and educationalists to exchange ideas and information, and to work together with Professional Learning Communities to improve standards of creative learning in schools. The Networks should reflect and inform the four regional education consortia.

10. The **Welsh Government** should explore funding options aimed at ensuring that equitable provision is available to young people in all art forms, and that exceptionally talented young people are able to pursue and develop their talent.

11. The **Welsh Government** and **Careers Wales** should work in partnership to support a stronger focus on providing more balanced careers advice to young people to highlight opportunities and pathways in the arts and creative industries sector.

12. The **Welsh Government** should require **Estyn** to undertake a periodic audit of Welsh schools to assess the embedding of creative learning, and the quality of the ongoing arts experience and its impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes.



Creative storytelling workshop with Emma Cartwright, Mission Gallery