
Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils – case studies of good practice

February 2020

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Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2019-2020. The report identifies effective school practices to support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. This may include work funded by the Pupil Development Grant (PDG). The best practice case studies in the report show how successful providers support these pupils and make a difference to their wellbeing and achievement.

This survey involved collating information from a range of primary, secondary and special schools across Wales with varying contextual factors such as size, levels of social deprivation, language medium and location. Estyn and regional consortia officers identified these schools as having effective practice in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. The report also draws on evidence gathered through inspection, in previous thematic reports and from best practice case studies already published on the Estyn website. The report is intended for the Welsh Government, schools, local authorities and regional consortia.

For the purpose of this report, **vulnerable pupils** are defined as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers to learning. It includes pupils who may belong to one or more of these groups:

- pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- looked-after children (LAC)
- children and young people living in poverty
- excluded pupils, and those at risk of exclusion
- pupils with behaviour and attendance issues
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (GRT)
- asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants
- minority ethnic pupils
- pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)
- young carers
- pupils who are young offenders and children of offenders
- pupils with mental health issues and medical needs
- pupils who have had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- pupils of service families / armed forces parents

Disadvantaged pupils are pupils who may have barriers to succeeding in school because of detrimental circumstances beyond their control. These may include financial and social hardships within pupils' families including:

- pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- pupils from low income families

Background

The National Mission

The Welsh Government aims to ensure that all pupils in Wales have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to learning support services that will help them overcome barriers to their learning.

In 'Education in Wales: Our national mission action plan 2017-21, the Minister for Education states that 'Our national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence' (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.3). This will be achieved by delivering the new transformational curriculum, focusing on the four key enabling objectives, including, developing 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being' (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.3).

In response to the national mission, each of the four Welsh regional education consortia has at least one priority linked to improving the wellbeing and outcomes for vulnerable pupils in its current business plan. Each of the consortia has appointed a strategic adviser with responsibility for supporting schools to improve the wellbeing and performance of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. These officers work closely with schools within their region to help promote good practice in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. They provide training and opportunities for schools to network to share good practice.

For further background, see appendix 3.

Main findings

- 1 In most schools, leaders understand the importance of supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers to learning. In the most effective schools, staff do not just focus on the challenges that pupils face, but identify individual pupils' interests and talents, and build on these positives.
- 2 Most schools across Wales focus strongly on trying to reduce the impact of poverty. The availability of extra funding contributes to this emphasis. Despite the funding, eFSM pupils continue to perform less well than other pupils. The proportion of primary and secondary schools that make effective use of the PDG remains at around two-thirds. Although most schools use grant funding to provide a similar range of support strategies, their impact varies. In the schools that best use their PDG, leaders use the grant strategically to ensure that all pupils make good progress towards their targets and improve their wellbeing – this work is a priority for them.
- 3 Schools that best support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils place the wellbeing of every child at the heart of their work. In these schools, there is a strong focus on providing a safe and nurturing environment where pupils and staff feel secure.
- 4 Leaders in successful schools place great importance on recruiting staff who share their school's vision for nurturing pupils and building positive relationships with families and the community. Where this strategy is in place, schools develop a whole-school approach to supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.
- 5 In schools that support their vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils successfully, staff track the wellbeing of individual pupils carefully. This helps them to quickly identify individuals or groups of pupils that need additional support, and to help them address barriers to their engagement in school.
- 6 Research suggests that classroom teaching has the greatest influence on pupils' learning of all education factors and that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit even more than their peers from high-quality teaching.
- 7 Inspection evidence shows that, in the most effective schools, teachers have high expectations of the achievement of all pupils, including those most disadvantaged and vulnerable. They do not see poverty and disadvantage as a reason for pupils not to succeed and they strive to find approaches and teaching strategies that help remove barriers to pupils' learning.
- 8 In many successful schools, staff have designed a curriculum that meets pupils' interests and engages vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils effectively in their learning.
- 9 Many schools support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to develop their talents and to widen their experiences by providing financial assistance, for example for music lessons, sporting activities and residential visits.

- 10 The attendance of eFSM pupils is a concern at all phases of learning. There is a gap in overall attendance between eFSM pupils and other pupils. In primary schools this gap is widening. In both primary and secondary schools, there has been no reduction in the rate of exclusions of eFSM pupils over time. These pupils are still much more likely to be permanently excluded or to receive fixed-term exclusions than other pupils.
- 11 Evidence suggests that absence, for whatever reason, among eFSM pupils has a substantially more negative impact on their attainment than on other pupils. These pupils often find it harder to catch up on their learning and then can potentially fall behind their peers.
- 12 Leaders in effective schools realise that they cannot work in isolation to support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. The most successful schools know their community well and work closely with other agencies and services that will benefit their pupils and their families.

Recommendation

Schools should:

R1 Consider the best practice outlined in the case studies contained in this report

Effective in-house approaches to support pupils' wellbeing

Whole-school approaches

- 13 Schools that best support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils place the wellbeing of every pupil at the heart of their work. In these schools, there is a strong focus on providing a safe and nurturing environment where pupils and staff feel secure. Leaders in these schools know their pupils and families well, and work openly, positively and productively with them in a non-judgemental way. They have a clear understanding of the barriers facing pupils who may have experienced trauma and harmful experiences and recognise the challenges these pupils need to overcome to become resilient, well and happy. They also have a secure understanding of the potential impact of poverty on pupils' achievement and ultimately life chances.
- 14 Schools that are the most effective in mitigating the impact of disadvantage and vulnerability, usually have these characteristics:
 - highly-effective leadership
 - high-quality teaching that supports all pupils to make the progress that they are capable of making
 - strong arrangements to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and stay in school (i.e. they are not excluded)
 - strong and effective wellbeing provision tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils
 - a clear understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils
 - high aspirations for all pupils
 - high-quality learning experiences that interest and engage all pupils
 - positive and trusting relationships with parents, the local community and with specialist services to meet the needs of pupils and their families
 - effective monitoring and tracking of pupils
- 15 Leaders in these schools place great importance on recruiting staff who share their school's vision of nurturing pupils and building positive relationships with families and the community to achieve this. Where this works well, schools generally have a strategic approach to supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.
- 16 In Herbert Thompson Primary School, there is an effective whole-school approach to supporting the large number of vulnerable pupils at the school.

Case study 1: A successful whole-school approach to supporting pupils' wellbeing

Herbert Thompson Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Cardiff.

The school is a caring environment where the values of respect, care, diversity, achievement, security and determination drive the whole school community. The wellbeing of all pupils and staff is central to the school's ethos and practices support high aspirations and improved outcomes for all pupils. Improving pupils' emotional health and wellbeing is a permanent key priority of the school.

To improve wellbeing provision, leaders have appointed a full-time emotional health and wellbeing support assistant to reach out to the increasingly challenging and complex needs of many pupils. She also provides daily bespoke support in one-to-one or group sessions delivering recognised interventions and crisis support when needed. This role also supports daily 'Time to Talk' self-referrals for instant dialogue around pupils' anxieties and worries. The school has developed two rooms as the school's 'havens' ('Herbies Havens') to provide calm, therapeutic spaces for pupils to access as needed.

Each year leaders develop and embed agreed whole-school practice in line with guidance and expectations. All staff reinforce whole-school practice and embed approaches to ensure consistency of daily routines. This includes:

- meeting pupils at the yard circle, greeting with a smile
- welcoming every pupil at the classroom door with a greeting chosen by the pupil, for example a handshake, hug or dance
- clear, consistent reminders including 'Superstar Learner' boards and classroom reflection steps
- staff sharing three positive pieces of news with parents at the end of each day
- a 'Chill Zone' for those pupils who require calmer environments at playtimes and lunchtime
- 'Calmelyons' – a pupil relationship team that supports pupils to resolve conflict and repair relationships

Staff and pupils recite the school 'values mantra' daily. This constant reinforcement aids understanding and helps to build pupils' self-esteem as they are reminded daily that they are: 'loved, strong, important and special'.

The impact of this whole-school approach has been widespread:

- There is good practice in place to ensure that staff identify and provide appropriate support for the most complex and vulnerable pupils.
- Emotional health and wellbeing support is excellent throughout the school.
- Directed funding to support vulnerable pupils has led to an increase in

the number of pupils receiving targeted support.

- Many targeted pupils show positive improvement in their self-image profiles.
- There has been a reduction in negative incidents and physical reactions at playtimes.
- Due to the emotional and wellbeing support provided for targeted vulnerable pupils, nearly all of these pupils now focus on their learning in class to achieve their full potential and show improved levels of enjoyment and attitudes to learning.
- There is a calm atmosphere around school.
- There are exceptional relationships between staff and pupils and an openness to share feelings.

The school uses its PDG to fund the role of the emotional health and wellbeing support assistant as well as to fund the professional learning of other key staff to deliver interventions and actively support the development of emotional wellbeing provision across the school.

- 17 At Cowbridge Comprehensive School, there is a whole-school approach to working with parents of disadvantaged pupils. The aim is to get parents 'on board' quickly in working with the school to help support their child to attend school regularly and to achieve well. The school also offers incentives to help mitigate against the effects of disadvantage.

Case study 2: Providing pupils with incentives

Cowbridge Comprehensive School is an English-medium secondary school in the Vale of Glamorgan. Leaders recognise the important role that the school can play in supporting disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. They have introduced a system of discreet incentives and support to help these pupils overcome potential barriers to learning. Their considerable programme of support includes:

- annual uniform vouchers for pupils with at least 96% attendance
- vouchers awarded to pupils with the highest attendance
- vouchers awarded to pupils with the best attitude towards learning, for those 'on track' for all subjects studied and for the most improved pupil in each year group each year
- music lessons funded by the school
- one residential trip during their time at the school funded by the school
- one day visit each year funded by the school
- complimentary tickets to the school's annual production

Nearly all parents of eligible pupils take part in this scheme and value to support that the school gives to their children. The school also supports disadvantaged pupils in other ways including providing them with information technology equipment if required, paying for transport and additional support with career or higher education choices. All eFSM pupils

have access to a mentoring programme where they meet regularly with a senior member of staff to track their progress and to help them overcome any problems.

As a result of this supportive work, the attendance of eFSM pupils has improved and most of these pupils have a positive attitude towards school and learning and want to achieve well. The school successfully removes a range of potential barriers to this group of pupils achieving as well as their peers.

Nurture approaches

- 18 There are many examples of schools across Wales that have successfully introduced nurture provision to help support the wellbeing of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems. This can include establishing internal nurture classes where the school supports pupils in a separate setting for all or part of the school day to help address their individual needs. The school then reintegrates pupils into their mainstream class when they are ready to return.
- 19 In Somerton Primary School, leaders have successfully introduced a nurture class to support some of their most vulnerable pupils and to reengage them in their learning.

Case study 3: Effective nurture provision to improve behaviour and attitudes to school

Somerton Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Newport. The school serves an area where many families face challenging circumstances. Staff aim to ensure that provision meets the needs of their most vulnerable pupils to enable them to achieve success and improved wellbeing. Three years ago, pupils were frequently excluded from the school and disengaged from learning. The school identified that pupil behaviour had deteriorated and staff morale was low. Leaders believed that they needed to change the culture urgently.

The school considered how best to meet each pupil's individual needs. This resulted in the establishment of a dedicated 'nurture' provision, available to all pupils who need it. The provision enables pupils to experience success in a small group situation. There are opportunities for pupils to cook, work in the garden and undertake activities to help them to learn about managing conflict and their own emotions. The pupils also complete the work they would do in their class. Up to 12 pupils access the nurture provision at any time. Most access the provision for a set period of time, which is reduced until they need very little or no support. Other pupils access the provision because they are going through a difficult time, such as a bereavement or a change in their lives. These pupils may only occasionally spend an hour or so in the provision as required.

The school has adopted a consistent, calm and nurturing approach to all pupils and their needs. Nearly all pupils now make good or better progress academically. Exclusions are extremely rare and vulnerable pupils,

including those with additional learning needs, achieve well in relation to their age and ability. Pupils are mostly resilient and most cope well with disappointment, should this arise. They have very positive attitudes to learning and nearly all feel safe at school. Parents have good relationships with staff and together are able to support pupils well during times of need.

- 20 In other schools, leaders have introduced other ways to support different groups of pupils using a range of different nurturing approaches.
- 21 In Clase Primary School, leaders initially established nurture provision in 2011 and it has now evolved into a bespoke, multi-faceted provision.

Case study 4: Expanding nurture provision to meet pupils' needs

Clase Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Swansea. The school has created a nurturing culture and supports all pupils effectively, particularly its most vulnerable pupils. The range of approaches employed are rooted in attachment theory, neuroscience and trauma-informed practice. Nurture provision extends across the school and is enhanced by a programme of family engagement activities tailored to meet the needs of all pupils and their families. The school refers to this as the 'Cwtsh Approach'.

The provision is led by a senior teacher and run by highly-trained support staff who work together to share their expertise. Staff strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for the pupils they support in terms of their personal, social and emotional development, readiness for learning and progress in learning. Their range of provision includes:

- 'Cwtsh in the Nursery', which runs every morning to provide early, effective support for identified pupils and their families with a focus on developing positive relationships, as well as engaging parents to build positive relationships and trust with school and any signposted outside agencies.
- 'Cwtch in the Cwtsh', which has been developed to meet the needs of key stage 2 pupils. A fulltime practitioner, based within the setting, runs wellbeing sessions for groups or individuals, depending on their needs.
- 'Cwtsh breakfast' and 'Cwtsh check-ins', which run in the foundation phase and key stage 2 for identified pupils. The session provides an opportunity for pupils to check-in and share and problem solve any issues that might impact their readiness for learning, giving them the best start to the day. Staff use information shared during check-in to support these pupils throughout the day, identifying times where they might need additional support or alternative provision, for example a quiet adult-led activity at playtime.
- 'Cuppa at the Cwtsh', a play-time drop-in facility for key stage 2 pupils. A member of the nurture team is always on hand to chat to the

pupils and to support problem solving.

- ‘Cwtsh in the Forest’ and ‘Cwtsh in the Garden’, which are used by identified groups of pupils from key stage 2 who are able to attend two forest schools sessions each week. Pupils within the foundation phase nurture setting enjoy ‘Welly Wednesday’. Part of the outdoor learning provision includes planting, growing vegetables, caring for the school chickens and working within the outdoor classroom / polytunnel. Nurture groups regularly work towards projects engaging the wider community.
- ‘Cwtsh in the classroom’, which is used effectively across the school to ensure that pupils develop resilience and coping strategies through routines promoting co- and self-regulation, including regular opportunities to practise breathing and learning to recognise and control the physiological effects of emotional dysregulation.

Staff track the progress that individual pupils make throughout the year robustly. Ongoing teacher assessments and relevant information gathering from the Cwtsh demonstrate that nearly all targeted pupils make good progress in terms of their wellbeing and learning.

Tracking pupils’ wellbeing

- 22 In schools that support their vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils successfully, staff track the wellbeing of individual pupils carefully. This helps them to identify individuals and groups of pupils in need of additional support and to assist them in addressing any potential barriers to their engagement in school and their progress.

Case study 5: Effective tracking of pupils’ wellbeing

Ysgol Gymraeg Brynsierfel is a Welsh-medium primary school in Carmarthenshire.

Leaders in the school identified that many pupils experience emotional difficulties that stem from their home lives and that this has a negative impact on pupils’ mental wellbeing and their ability to concentrate at school.

The school has invested in a resource to track pupils’ wellbeing on a daily basis. The system provides an online survey that helps pupils to record their feelings at school and to draw teachers’ attention to those individuals that need support. Pupils from Year 2 to 6 record their feelings twice a day online, and staff publish the results anonymously on a display board every fortnight. Pupils can send messages to members of the school’s staff to attract their attention, and every teacher has a book to note any pupils’ concerns, the support that they are given and the effect of the intervention.

Tracking pupils’ responses on the electronic system over the last academic year has shown that the number of individuals that feel happy has increased substantially and that no pupil feels lonely at school. The number of pupils that feel angry, confused and anxious has also reduced.

One pupil said, 'I like to use the system because it helps me to share my feelings and I don't keep things to myself anymore. I have a chance to say what happens at home and what makes me sad or angry. I feel better after expressing my feelings and I like the fact that I can send a message to staff to discuss my problems'.

Leaders have used the PDG to employ an assistant to monitor vulnerable pupils' comments on the system and to organise intervention groups to respond to these pupils' needs.

Sensitive information that is captured by the system and through the intervention has proven to be valuable in case conferences with social services. This more detailed information has allowed the school and other services to provide appropriate support to families or move pupils out of dangerous situations. In addition, there has been a positive effect on standards throughout the school, with nearly all pupils making the expected progress.

Improving pupils' achievement

- 23 Despite the introduction of the PDG and the stronger focus in most schools on reducing the impact of poverty, over the past five years, eFSM pupils have continued to perform less well than non eFSM pupils in all indicators.

Improving teaching and learning

- 24 Education research strongly suggests that, of all education factors, classroom teaching has the greatest influence on pupils' learning. In recent years, many schools have had a greater focus on improving teaching as leaders recognise the link between high-quality practice and pupil success. Evidence suggests that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit disproportionately from high-quality teaching (Sutton Trust, 2011).
- 25 In the most successful schools, teachers have high expectations of the achievement of all pupils, including those most disadvantaged and vulnerable. They do not see poverty and disadvantage as a reason for pupils not to succeed and strive to find approaches and teaching strategies help remove potential barriers to pupils' learning.
- 26 In many successful schools, leaders have designed their curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' interests and engages vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils in their learning.
- 27 Here are two case studies from Ysgol Bryngwyn School and Mount Stuart Primary School where leaders have improved teaching and learning to particularly benefit their vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.

Case study 6: Raising the bar for all pupils

Ysgol Bryngwyn School is an English-medium secondary school in Carmarthenshire.

Leaders reflected on their strategies to ensure excellence in teaching and learning for all pupils, including the most disadvantaged. Previously, the school had operated intervention strategies including booster groups and catch up sessions to improve outcomes for their most vulnerable pupils. However, results were not showing that pupils were making enough progress. Leaders decided to develop a more holistic approach focused on the identification of the needs of pupils combined with an emphasis on excellence in teaching and learning for all. The aim was to ensure that they tailored practices to support all pupils regardless of background or ability.

Leaders placed greater emphasis on pedagogy and a better understanding of the needs of individual pupils. This led to the development of personalised learning across the school. This, combined with an innovative approach to curriculum design, brought notable improvements for the most vulnerable pupils over the last two years. The school's motto 'giving our

best to be the best', captures the school's determination to achieve excellence for all pupils.

The school has developed a curriculum driven by pupils' interests. It is highly flexible and personalised to pupils. The school provides an extensive range of subject options including a carefully-selected range of vocational qualifications. The most effective features are:

- high expectations of all pupils, pace, challenge, opportunities to use skills and a focus on developing and using knowledge are evident in all lessons
- a clear focus on 'getting literacy and numeracy right in key stage 3'
- a new approach in key stage 4 that introduced additional time and support integrated into the timetable for all pupils who need a focus on literacy and numeracy skills practice
- further opportunities to motivate and enthuse groups of pupils such as work-related programmes, visits to colleges or universities, competitions and weekend clubs
- extension options for more able pupils from all backgrounds and expanded vocational options with a new construction provision on site
- the use of baseline data to set targets, to monitor pupils' progress and to identify possible obstacles to learning; staff set challenging targets, which enables them to 'raise the bar' for all pupils, including the most disadvantaged
- undertaking rigorous data tracking, which helps identify underachievement or the need for additional support at an early stage.
- arranging interventions, including academic, pastoral and external to re-engage and motivate individuals – this ensures that they match support to individuals rather than providing generic support programmes for 'disadvantaged pupils'

The impact of this work has been that all groups of pupils experience high quality teaching and learning and nobody 'gets left behind'. The school's success culture and celebrating improvements creates motivated and resilient pupils. Personalised learning has brought more engagement and enjoyment, and as a consequence improved performance of many disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

The school has used its PDG to provide support for pupils' wellbeing, to train and develop support staff to provide wrap-around support for LAC, eFSM and other disadvantaged pupils, to facilitate strategies to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum and to improve the tracking and monitoring of a pupil's journey at the school.

Case study 7: A whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning

Mount Stuart Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Cardiff.

In 2017, leaders recognised that they needed to improve teaching and learning to help ensure that all pupils achieved as well as they could. They focused work on raising the quality of teaching and learning to impact positively on improving standards for all pupils. The whole staff team developed strategies and teaching models to support all pupils. For example, staff use flexible groupings to ensure that pupils are able to move up and down differentiated activities to support their learning. This has been highly effective in raising standards. Teachers track pupils' performance in rigorous half-termly pupil progress meetings.

Leaders recognise the need to invest time in training to develop teacher's ability to innovate and try new strategies for learning. They allocate time and space for all teachers to experiment with research, to try out new things in a safe, supportive environment and to spend time evaluating successes and development points.

As a result of improved teaching and learning, pupils' standards across the school are high. Most pupils make very good progress.

Raising aspirations and overcoming barriers

- 28 In schools where they successfully support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils to achieve well, leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They do not see barriers as a problem but as a challenge and strive to find approaches and teaching strategies help pupils overcome them.
- 29 In Tremains Primary School, leaders wanted to increase all staff's expectation about how well vulnerable pupils could achieve if they are challenged and supported appropriately.

Case study 8: Raising aspirations and improved staff challenge

Tremains Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Bridgend

One of the recommendations following the school's inspection in 2017 was to raise standards in the foundation phase. The school recognised that their pupil progress meetings were ineffective. They did not allocate enough time to them and leaders did not challenge teachers' end of phase targets, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils well enough. In addition, teachers did not track the year-on-year progress made by disadvantaged pupils well enough.

To address this, leaders introduced a new system for pupil progress meetings. During the meetings, staff discuss each vulnerable and disadvantaged pupil in detail and agree programmes of work and interventions to help these pupils meet more challenging targets. The

school has created a climate for more professional dialogue about individual pupil performance and meetings are more challenging and rigorous. There are clear and higher expectations for all pupils, including vulnerable and disadvantaged ones. Leaders and class teachers review individual targets and standards on a regular basis. Leaders ask class teachers challenging questions about the progress and standards for all pupils, but particularly eFSM pupils

The impact of this work has been that there is increased awareness among staff of the potential impact of disadvantage on pupils' achievement. In addition, there is improved confidence of staff in understanding and analysing performance data. Staff identify and establish steps to address under performance quickly. Most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils who receive interventions make good progress. Leaders are confident in supporting and challenging staff. The performance of eFSM pupils in both the foundation phase and key stage 2 has improved and they now achieve at least as well as their peers in end of phase teacher assessments.

The school uses the PDG grant to part fund support staff. These members of staff provide high quality literacy and wellbeing interventions and support for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils that may be a risk of underachieving. Much of their work is supporting disadvantaged more able pupils to achieve the higher levels.

- 30 In schools that know their communities well, leaders and other staff recognise the potential barriers to success that vulnerable and disadvantage pupils might face. This might include low expectations from their parents or other adults in their lives, a lack of positive role models in their community and issues over transport. Schools that are successful in helping pupils to overcome these potential obstacles to success work creatively to support pupils' needs.
- 31 Staff in Fitzalan High School know their pupils well and have established effective practices to help raise aspirations and to support their learning.

Case study 9: Support for pupils to overcome potential barriers to achieve as well as they can

Fitzalan High School is an English-medium secondary school in Cardiff.

Staff recognise the potential barriers to learning faced by pupils who have English as an additional language, particularly if they are not literate in their own language. They work closely with cluster primary schools to establish strong relationships with pupils. For example, they use a Welsh Government grant to employ a group of supply teachers across the cluster to cover planned absence so that pupils develop relationships with these staff in the primaries and secondary schools. These teachers also help support families of targeted Year 6 pupils with the admission process to correctly apply for a high school place.

The school offers pupils a wide range of additional opportunities to study

and revise, including holding sessions in the local community, close to pupils' houses. They hold homework clubs throughout the year in local community hubs. During the Easter holidays there are also hub-based key revision classes where staff volunteers support pupils in their learning.

The school operates an incentive scheme to encourage pupils to attend extra-curricular activities. Pupils can earn credits by attending after-school clubs and taking part in whole-school activities such as school plays. They can then spend these credits in the local community on experiences such as swimming, cinema and outward-bound trips. Through the school's charity committee, pupils raise money to help pay for trips and transport costs for pupils when they need it. This helps ensure that no pupils miss out on educational opportunities because of cost.

As a result of this work, there has been a change of culture at the school towards education and, nearly all pupils want to achieve well. There is better take up of extra-curricular opportunities such as music and sporting clubs.

Leaders recognised that vulnerable pupils needed to have a sense of belonging to help them thrive. To help foster this, they set up the first Royal Navy Cadet force in a school in Wales. This is a weekly club attended by up to 60 pupils. The pupils have access to a wide range of experiences including camps and field days and have the opportunity to meet children from other areas. School staff run the club. Staff do not exclude any pupils on financial grounds as the school subsidises activities and costs by using their PDG.

The school targets older pupils who have English as an additional language to take part in the 'Prince's Trust Achieve' programme. They particularly target pupils with behavioural issues, low attainers and pupils who form part of the school's wellbeing group. Through this scheme these pupils have access to vocational qualifications and gain confidence and develop skills. This work has helped reduce the number of pupils who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave the school.

More pupils now stay on at school in the sixth form. The school provides pupils with extensive career advice through their close relationships with Careers Wales, local universities and key employers in the area. The number of pupils who are NEET has reduced to low single figures and a higher percentage of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils now access university places and take up apprenticeships.

Developing pupils' talents

- 32 It is important that schools provide opportunities for talented disadvantaged pupils to have the chance to further develop their particular abilities. Many schools support disadvantaged pupils with financial assistance. For example, they cover the costs of music lessons, provide pupils with sports' kit or finance costs associated with taking part in school productions. Many successful secondary schools provide transport to enable pupils to take part in after-school activities.

- 33 In the Chepstow High cluster of schools, leaders recognised that they were not providing their disadvantaged pupils who were talented in expressive arts, opportunities to further develop their abilities.

Case study 10: Developing pupils' talents in expressive arts

Leaders of the five primary schools within the Chepstow High school cluster in Monmouthshire identified that there were vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils in their schools who were talented in aspects of expressive arts. However, they did not provide opportunities for the pupils to improve their talents well enough. This meant that these pupils did not always have opportunities to advance their talents in school and did not necessarily have high enough aspirations of what they could achieve.

After visiting an inspirational expressive arts lesson in the high school, the cluster co-ordinator suggested a cluster project based around developing the expressive arts skills of targeted disadvantaged more able pupils. They also invited schools from a cluster in Cwmbran to join the project. The aim of the project was to further develop these pupils' skills and to raise the ambitions of this group of pupils in terms of what they could achieve, for example in accessing higher education.

At the start of the project staff surveyed pupils to gather information on about pupils' aspirations. The survey indicated that 75% of pupils had ambitions to attend university.

The project ran for six weeks and involved the group of pupils meeting weekly to take part in an expressive arts project that would end with a concert. The pupils chose 'Mini Eurovision' as a theme so they could explore dance music culture and art of the countries they would represent. Each of the pupils took a role based on their talents and interests. For example, they wrote songs, acted, performed and made scenery and costumes. A group of more able Year 9 pupils from Chepstow High school, along with this school's expressive arts ambassadors, also joined the project. The pupils staged a 'Mini Eurovision' concert for parents in July 2019. Through a raffle and selling European foods they raised money for a trip for pupils and parents (particularly those who had not attended university themselves) to a university.

The pupils studied various university prospectuses and chose Exeter University for their trip. After an inspiring day looking at course options and life at a university, staff re-surveyed the pupils. This time, 93% of pupils said that they would now think about or like to attend a university as they now knew more and were aware of the different course options available to them.

The schools viewed this project as a successful way to inspire more able and talented pupils who were disadvantaged or vulnerable to further develop their talents and to inspire them to have higher expectations of what they can achieve in life.

Improving attendance and reducing exclusions

- 34 Absence for any reason among disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils can have a substantially more negative impact on their attainment than on other pupils. Pupils eFSM in particular often find it harder to catch up on their learning and then potentially fall behind their peers (National Assembly for Wales, 2018).
- 35 Similarly to pupils who are absent from school for other reasons, the impact of not being in school on these pupils is far greater than for their peers. It is therefore important that schools improve the attendance and reduce the number of exclusions for disadvantaged pupils.

Improving attendance

- 36 From the data on the attendance of different groups of vulnerable pupils that Welsh Government collects, most groups of vulnerable pupils attend school less regularly than non-vulnerable pupils. In particular, the difference in overall attendance between GRT pupils and non-GRT pupils in both primary and secondary schools was more than 8 percentage points for the period 2016 - 2018. However, over the same period, the overall attendance of LAC pupils has been higher than non-LAC pupils in both primary and secondary schools.
- 37 The attendance of eFSM pupils continues to be a cause for concern at all school phases. There is a notable gap in overall attendance between eFSM pupils and other pupils.
- 38 In Gwenfro County Primary School, leaders recognised the need to improve the attendance of many of their disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and set about improving it.

Case study 11: Effective 'Walking Bus' provision

Gwenfro County Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Wrexham.

In 2015, the school's deputy headteacher started to review school attendance as this was significant school issue. At that point, attendance was 92.6% and the number of pupils arriving late was high. To start with the school completed action research into how to improve attendance and punctuality.

When they analysed patterns in attendance and punctuality, they were able to identify groups of vulnerable pupils who would benefit from support. From this they decided to start a 'Walking Bus - 'Bws Bore Da'. The aim was to not only improve pupils' attendance but to also establish better morning routines. The intended outcome was that, once these routines were established, the school could remove the pupil from the Walking Bus to allow the opportunity for other families to benefit from the support.

The school pays support staff an additional hour a day using PDG funding

to organise the bus. The school currently has two buses, with each staffed by three members of staff and carrying up to 10 pupils. Leaders risk assess each route and they provide pupils with high visibility jackets. The staff contact parents at 8am each morning to let them know that the bus is setting off from school. This approach helps ensure that pupils are up and ready when the bus arrives at their front door. All pupils who access the Walking Bus also access the school's Breakfast Club and receive a free breakfast when they arrive in school.

The impact has been that, since 2015, attendance at Gwenfro has risen to 94.1%. There is a decreasing trend in the number of pupils registered as 'late'. The Walking Bus data shows that, over the past four years, there is an upward trend in attendance in those pupils who have accessed the support. In 2019, those pupils who accessed the Walking Bus have increased their attendance by an average of 7.5 percentage points. In 2019, the average attendance of the 15 eFSM pupils who accessed the Walking Bus improved by five percentage points.

Effective practices to reduce exclusions

- 39 Over time, across Wales, in both primary and secondary schools there has been no overall trend of reduction in the rate of exclusions for eFSM pupils.
- 40 GRT, SEN or LAC pupils are more likely to receive fixed term exclusions in primary and secondary schools. In addition, SEN and LAC pupils receive more permanent exclusions than non-SEN or non-LAC pupils in both sectors.
- 41 Coedcae Secondary School have successfully reduced fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

Case study 12: Reducing exclusions of vulnerable pupils through better in-house support

Coedcae School is an English-medium secondary school in Carmarthenshire. Leaders carried out a robust self-evaluation exercise, which included evaluating the effectiveness of inclusion and support services. Historically, a high number of eFSM pupils had been undergoing a managed move or permanent exclusion, or had entered specialist provision within Carmarthenshire local authority. Following consultation with staff and pupils, leaders concluded that there was a significant strength in the skillset of staff at all levels at the school that could allow for the planning of an appropriate curriculum and targeted support for vulnerable pupils. This meant that, with appropriate funding and provision, more pupils could successfully maintain their school place without the need for a managed move to another provider or exclusion. The school therefore started to strengthen its provision for vulnerable pupils.

Leaders introduced policies and procedures that reflected the school's new and stronger ethos of inclusivity. They focused training on areas that would provide staff with a better understanding of social and economic issues

affecting pupils and their families. They provided training for all school staff in attachment awareness, emotional coaching and restorative approaches. The training helped to ensure that staff understood the importance of empathy, tolerance and patience during any behaviour support programme. They trained all staff in person-centred planning and the school produced a valuable person-centred toolkit for its staff to support them in their work with vulnerable pupils. Staff adopted a new school policy to ensure that any pupil who began to show signs of emotional or behavioural difficulty would have timely access to a key worker of his or her choice. To achieve this, staff at all levels opted to train as either in-house family liaison officers or pupil key workers.

Leaders found that maintaining a consistent level of focused intervention, together with a positive, productive relationship with parents, resulted in improved behaviour for pupils at risk of exclusion. Over time, the school has seen a notable reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions of eFSM pupils and in managed move requests. The whole-school ethos of inclusivity and support and its emphasis on showing empathy towards all pupils have had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and attendance.

The strong focus on continuous professional learning for teachers and support staff in inclusion matters has strengthened the school's ability to provide for the most vulnerable and challenging pupils without the need for external support.

Effective support for specific groups of pupils

Minority ethnic pupils and pupils with English as an additional language

- 42 Pupils from ethnic minority families are vulnerable to underachievement in schools for many reasons including language barriers and possible school cultural differences. In 2007, the Welsh Government introduced the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG). The aim of the grant was to help schools to raise the achievement of eligible pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in Wales. In 2015, the Welsh Government merged the grant with 10 other grants into the Education Improvement Grant. All regional consortia benefit from the grant.
- 43 In addition to the characteristics of schools that are the most effective in mitigating the impact of disadvantage and vulnerability, schools that address potential barriers to the achievement of ethnic minority pupils successfully have:
- a school ethos that embraces diversity
 - a flexible and inclusive curriculum
- 44 In addition, schools that know their communities and their particular challenges well, are often the most successful in supporting different ethnic groups.
- 45 In Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School, staff recognise the need for bespoke support for their large group of Polish pupils and their families.

Case study 13: Support for vulnerable Polish pupils

Welshpool Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Powys.

The high number of Polish families at the school presents potential challenges. Many families face frequent movement between Poland and Wales due to changes in family circumstances or related to health. Many families return to Poland for hospital appointments, operations or even to visit the dentist. Often the Polish families also work in the local factories where shift work means that the parents leave children at home from very early in the morning or have very little time with both parents as they often share shifts. This does not always make it easy to have contact with parents either by phone or to arrange meetings with them. Often factory work is unstable, meaning that sometimes the pupils are not with the school for long. Families often face language barriers including issues with communication and feelings of exclusion within the local community amongst parents and their children. There are often distinct cultural differences including issues surrounding attitudes to health, especially of young children, differences in education provision between the two countries, and differences of religion and special festivals, traditions and food.

The school has established many practices to help support Polish pupils

and their families. Leaders acknowledge the need to communicate effectively and so the school employs three Polish speaking support workers. These staff provide language support to pupils in lessons or with interventions. They provide support to parents with school issues such as filling in school forms and translating at parents' evenings and meetings. The support workers translate the weekly school newsletter, questionnaires and texts to parents into Polish. Staff organise drop-in sessions each week where the Polish speaking families can ask about any other issues they have problems with, such as doctors' appointments or queries with banks and social services. The school provides signs in Polish on each of their sites. The school's values and many displays are in English, Welsh and Polish. There is also a dedicated display entirely in Polish to celebrate their culture, environment and language. The school celebrates and promotes Polish cultural traditions and pastimes, for example fishing. The school works with the Canal and River Trust to provide angling sessions for pupils and their parents. Leaders aim these activities at year groups with the highest number of Polish pupils. There are regular opportunities to celebrate Polish food, crafts and language through stalls at school fayres. Staff organise a Polish club that allows pupils to use their Polish language skills.

There are representatives of the Polish community on the 'Friends of the School' committee and Polish speaking parents are part of Family Thrive groups and other parenting workshops. The Polish community is represented on the governing body (currently two members of the body are Polish speakers). This allows the school to hear and respect the voice of the community. In addition, Polish speaking pupils are representative on all of the school's pupil voice groups. The school holds regular multi-agency meetings involving police, social services, housing, health and education that aim to address any issues that arise in the local community between the indigenous population and the Polish community. These have been successful in addressing many of local conflicts that can spill over into school. Staff help parents work with their children at home by providing them with reading resources in Polish as early language support.

As a result of this work there is improved communication between the school and Polish families, which in turn has led to better family engagement. Many Polish pupils attend school more regularly. There is no gap in attainment between pupils who speak English as an additional language and English first language pupils overall at end of key stage 2. School data shows that wellbeing of most EAL pupils is high.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

- 46 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among some of the most vulnerable pupils in Wales. They face particular challenges in accessing education that makes the most of their individual talents, interests and abilities. This may include transient nature of their parents' work and cultural attitudes towards education. Despite Welsh Government and local authority commitment to drive improvements, the attainment rates of GRT pupils remain persistently low.

- 47 In April 2019, Estyn published a thematic report on ‘Provision for secondary school-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (Estyn, 2019a). The report highlighted that across Wales, only around half of Year 6 GRT pupils move on to secondary education in Year 7. In addition, although there have been some improvements in the examination performance of Gypsy and Gypsy Roma pupils at key stage 4 over the last few years, overall it continues to be the lowest of all ethnic groups in Wales and is below the Wales average. The report made six recommendations for secondary schools:
- Ensure that they evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies to improve the achievement, transition and attendance of GRT pupils and make improvements when strategies are not bringing about the desired outcomes
 - Ensure that anti-bullying and equality policies take account of the specific needs of GRT pupils
 - Ensure that schools promote GRT culture throughout the school curriculum
 - Ensure that GRT pupils have opportunities to express their views about their learning experiences
 - Work collaboratively to deliver and enhance services for GRT pupils
 - Explore ways of building the confidence of GRT pupils and parents to self-ascribe their ethnic identity accurately
- 48 The report includes case studies of effective in secondary schools to support this group of vulnerable pupils.
- 49 Below are two examples of effective primary school practice to support GRT pupils. Monkton Primary School provides support not only for pupils of primary age and their parents, but also has a facility on site for older pupils who do not transition to secondary education.

Case study 14: Effective support for GRT pupils and their families

Monkton Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Pembrokeshire.

As the school has a very high percentage of GRT pupils, staff have worked hard to establish a strong relationship with this community. The school has a highly effective partnership with a Flying Start setting, based at the school. The Flying Start staff, with the support of health visitors, ensure that all parents are happy for their children to attend, this includes many GRT parents. It is only in recent years that GRT parents have wanted their children to attend early years’ education. Now nearly all GRT pupils access Flying Start, and this has had a positive impact on pupils’ behaviour, attendance and standards.

The school offers support to all GRT parents. A minority have low literacy and numeracy skills. The school aims to provide parents with information and support so that they are able to support their child in school. This includes one-to-one meetings where the teachers explain reports and help parents to complete forms when needed.

Staff have developed excellent relationships with the secondary school.

They have embedded successful transition arrangements and ensure that staff support all pupils effectively. Initially staff support pupils and parents with the transition. Staff take GRT families to visit the secondary school and introduce them to staff that will be working with their children and who will be a point of contact for them if problems arise. The school continues to monitor GRT pupils to ensure they have settled and that their parents are happy with the new school.

However, a few GRT families are still unwilling to allow their children to go to secondary school. There are many reasons for this including their own experiences and fear that the school will promote different cultural values to their children. When this occurs, Monkton School offers an alternative to elective home education at their 'Priory Learning Centre'. This is a centre based at the primary school and provides education for GRT pupils aged 11 to 16 years old.

The school works closely with the University of Wales Trinity St David to provide 'Launch Adult Learning', an accredited course for parents and the local community. All of the courses are free, except the degree courses. Members of the GRT community have engaged with many of the courses that the school offers.

The school's inclusive approach to wellbeing has had a positive impact on the achievement of GRT pupils. In 2019, 70% of GRT pupils achieved the foundation phase indicator, and 50% achieved the core subject indicator at the end of key stage 2, with every traveller pupil achieving at least one level 4 in English, mathematics or science. The attendance of GRT pupils has also improved.

- 50 In George Street Primary School, leaders realised the need to make learning more authentic for their GRT pupils in order to engage them fully in school life.

Case study 15: Engaging GRT pupils by making learning real

George Street Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Torfaen.

Using the school's tracking and assessment tools, teachers identified a group of Year 6 GRT pupils who were making limited progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they were finding it very challenging to access the curriculum effectively. These pupils were disengaged during English and mathematics. On occasion this led to negative behaviours, disrupting other pupils in the class. This group of vulnerable pupils also had poor attendance despite numerous strategies and incentives being put in place to encourage them to attend school regularly.

Leaders and class teachers agreed that these pupils made the most progress when learning in an authentic, real-life context. They decided that

they needed to provide a more personalised curriculum to engage this vulnerable group of pupils in their learning more effectively.

Staff also realised the need to give these pupils ownership of the project. The pupils agreed that they wanted to be involved in an enterprise that allowed them to earn money. This took the form of a small business that would provide other pupils with hot snacks at break times. The pupils were withdrawn from their classes during English and mathematics lessons to develop their own small business. The pupils were very enthusiastic during this time as they were directing their own activity while using their literacy and numeracy skills at a level that challenged them fully.

In the early days of the project, pupils developed a range of literacy skills. For instance, they wrote letters requesting funding for the project, created questionnaires to carry out market research, sent emails to the school clerk with their shopping order and researched and read recipes.

As the project progressed, these pupils developed a range of numeracy skills in practical contexts. For example, they used a variety of equipment in the kitchen when measuring ingredients and preparing food, recorded and presented data from questionnaires in tables and graphs and interpreted the results to respond appropriately to market demand. They up scaled recipes to cater for the number of pupils ordering food and handled money, giving change and calculating profit.

For the pupils involved, the project had a profoundly positive impact. It was noted by staff, not only in Year 6, but around the school how engaged the pupils were during their sessions. Pupils' attitudes towards tasks improved dramatically and they tackled work at a level that they would have disengaged from previously because of the high degree of challenge. As a result of the motivation shown by these pupils, their attainment in literacy and numeracy increased and progress was measurable.

Pupils' attendance, behaviour and self-esteem also improved as they felt a clear sense of satisfaction when they had completed tasks and were proud to be providing a service for their peers. They decided that the money raised by the business would be used to provide a party for all Year 6 pupils during the last week of term. This gave them a goal to work towards and a sense of responsibility that they enjoyed.

Service children

- 51 The 'Supporting Service Children in Education Wales' (SSCE) project provides educational support to schools by helping staff understand the issues service children in Wales may face. The project is a Welsh Local Government Association project initially funded by the Ministry of Defence Education Support Fund and then funded by Welsh Government in 2019. Since the project began in 2014, SSCE have worked with schools, local authorities, Welsh Government, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations. They have gathered their views and experiences, built networks across Wales and continued to raise awareness and

understanding. They have also developed guidance and digital resources for schools and families, run conferences and stakeholder days and commissioned research to better understand the needs of service children in education.

- 52 In the SSCE Cymru school survey (2019) findings, the project found that the most common challenges service children face in primary schools are dealing with the emotions related to the separation and return of parent(s) from deployment and making friends when they move schools. In secondary schools, challenges include making friends, adapting to different curricula and missing content, missing friends and family and learning Welsh. In addition, the survey found that the most common challenges schools face in supporting service children is understanding their emotional and wellbeing needs, supporting them with gaps in their learning due to mobility and understanding the military lifestyle. The survey reported that the most beneficial support offered by schools to service children is tailored pastoral support, followed by having a dedicated member of staff to support them.
- 53 There are various grants available for schools to apply for to help them support service children overcome the challenges they face in education as a result of their military lifestyle. These include the Welsh Government's Supporting Service Children in Education - Wales Fund (SSCEWF) and the Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants programme.
- 54 Prendergast Primary School and Crickhowell High School have successfully used grants to support their service children.

Case study 16: Supporting service pupils and their families

Prendergast Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Pembrokeshire.

Following a renewed approach to inclusion in 2014, the school secured a Ministry of Defence (MoD) grant to appoint a keyworker to support service pupils. The school recognised the strengths that military families brought to its community but wished to find out more about the vulnerabilities and uniqueness of this particular group of pupils. The school actively sought information about the lives of these families from children, parents and by liaising with key military personnel. Leaders researched available information including visiting other providers with effective practice. They led whole staff training to raise awareness of attachment and to generate a greater understanding amongst staff of the possible adverse effects of the many transitions that service children can experience through their parents' deployment and mobility.

The school refined its induction arrangements with more effective pre-admission strategies. This included early engagement and readily available parent information regarding transition into a Welsh school, as families could arrive from a range of countries from around the world. The school's inclusive approach includes a daily check in system for all service children. The keyworker follows up and brokers bespoke intervention for any pupil who needs additional support.

The school is aware that service families can feel isolated. Staff make

every effort to engage these parents at all levels. Key family events, including assemblies, information sharing, family workshops, coffee afternoons or sports days take place wherever possible on a Friday as this is a rest day for serving parents. There is a weekly drop-in clinic, 'Forces Friday' for forces families. The governing body is also proactive and actively seeks Ministry of Defence representation and there are members of staff and volunteers who are from service families.

The work undertaken at Prendergast School impacts positively upon the lives of service children across Wales. The school has shared its work through digital stories, case studies, presentations at national conferences and working alongside SSCE Cymru partners.

Case study 17: Recognising and addressing the needs of service pupils

Crickhowell High School is an English-medium secondary school in Powys.

The school recognised the need to support the specific needs of their service children. The school noted that service children experience additional demands on their mental and emotional wellbeing at key times. For example, when family members are deployed, are not present for celebratory achievements and activities or when family members experience mental health issues as a result of their service experience. Staff in the school are aware that service children are at risk of experiencing 'Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' symptoms or attachment disorder, and can be generally affected through emotional dysregulation.

Staff record and track the progress of service children closely and ensure that they have an enhanced level of intervention, care, support and guidance.

The school sought opportunities for service children to have some respite and have taken a group away on a Mindfulness Wild Camp. During the trip, the pupils spent time practising coping strategies, working on traditional life skills, being around nature and bonding with other potentially vulnerable young people. This created a sense of empowerment and belonging amongst the pupils and their peer relations and staff relations strengthened.

The school has developed strong army community connections. This resulted in pupils having the opportunity to attend week long survival trips at a local army camp. The school has also arranged for inspirational speakers from the camp to lead assemblies.

The school has secured additional grant funding to support these pupils and has recently appointed a Services Support Officer (SSO) for one year. The positive impact of this has been immediate and it has meant that the school offers extra intervention work for these pupils. For example,

transition is a major emphasis of the SSO role and the officer writes support plans for all Year 7 service children. Where families are relocating due to the service career requests, the SSO shares the pupil's full profile with the new provider.

They school has established an effective peer mentoring system where sixth form service pupils support and care for those in the lower school. The SSO also undertakes one-to-one mentoring with the service children and each of them have a detailed support plan which staff review on a termly basis. The collaboration with family members has resulted in the service children feeling understood and the specialist SSO has helped them to regulate their emotions, set aspirational personal and academic targets and has significantly reduced their risk of disengagement.

A group of staff are trained Cadet Supervisors. As a result, the school has established Crickhowell High School's Army Detachment, which pupils attend as part of their extra-curricular engagement. This helps to provide many pupils with a sense of purpose, fulfilment and social interaction.

Looked-after children (LAC)

- 55 Despite the award of the Welsh Government LAC PDG, there are still longstanding concerns regarding the educational attainment of LAC. LAC are vulnerable to underachievement in schools for many reasons including negative pre-care experiences, experiences within the care system and disruption to their education due to changes in care arrangements.
- 56 In 2016, Estyn (2016) produced a best practice report on 'Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after'. The report recognised that schools that, in addition to the characteristics in schools that are the most effective in mitigating the impact of disadvantage and vulnerability, schools that are most effective in supporting LAC have the following features:
- a clear vision and strategy for supporting LAC
 - a member of the school senior management team who has responsibility for delivering the school's strategy for LAC
 - a clear understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of LAC
 - staff that are aware of LAC, their needs and what strategies are available to support them
 - strong support for LAC to develop their literacy and numeracy skills
 - support to build resilience, self-esteem and confidence that is planned and well matched to the needs of LAC for example through nurture groups
 - a named individual who provides support such as learning coach
 - provision of access for LAC to after-school clubs and other extra-curricular activities such as trips or work experience
 - a committed designated governor with a strong understanding of the needs of LAC
 - targeted work with carers to develop their skills and understanding better to support the children they look after

- a clear focus on developing the life skills of LAC and planning for their transition and leaving care
 - regular evaluation of their approaches, including seeking feedback from LAC to improve outcomes and provision for this group
- 57 The report recommended that regional consortia should improve how they plan for the LAC PDG to make sure that schools are clear on the priorities for the use of the grant and that their plans take enough account of the complex needs of children who are looked after.
- 58 Since April 2015, the four regional education consortia have been responsible for determining how the LAC PDG is allocated. Regional consortia officers allocate funding to individual and clusters of schools to their action plans for LAC.
- 59 Staff at Ysgol Eirias have shared research and successful practice in supporting LAC with cluster primary schools to benefit a wider number of pupils in the area.

Case study 18: Effective cluster working to support LAC

Ysgol Eirias is an English-medium secondary school in Conwy. Pastoral leaders recognised a gap in their provision for disengaged pupils. The school had vulnerable pupils, many of whom were LAC, who were not engaging fully in their learning. Leaders worked in collaboration with regional consortium officers and found evidence-based training in trauma and attachment. This led to staff developing a deeper understanding of the impact of traumatic experiences on brain development and learning.

Leaders recognised that early intervention is key for pupils who have had adverse childhood experiences and felt it would be useful to engage with their primary cluster of schools. The cluster headteachers agreed that they would all introduce nurture sessions in every school and to transfer the data they collected when pupils transitioned to secondary school. The schools used the cluster LAC grant to fund this work.

Taking a whole school approach, leaders across the cluster shared the vision of 'Nurture UK' that no child fails through lack of nurture and educational opportunity. In Ysgol Eirias this included:

- introducing the 'Boxall' assessment tool, which has evidence-based results in providing a methodology of supporting young people with social, emotional, behavioural and mental health issues
- setting up a nurture room, managed by a nurture co-ordinator, who also runs nurture groups, nurture interventions, break and lunch time drop-ins
- extending the school's extra-curricular to support pupils' wellbeing and opening a nurture garden
- giving vulnerable pupils access to a quieter environment at break and lunch time where they have greater opportunities to relax, talk and play
- extending staff training to enrich understanding of how to build better relationships with pupils
- embedding the principles of nurture as a toolkit for the whole school;

this has helped to shape the school ethos, so that staff support pupils' social, emotional and mental health effectively

- establishing 'Universal Provision' which promotes nurture as a responsibility for everyone, so that pupils have a broader range of support for their emotional needs and wellbeing
- employing two nurture leaders to help embed a nurturing culture across every aspect of the school
- building a more inclusive school with the emphasis of equity for pupils
- setting up a nurture action research group to discuss and evaluate the implementation of nurture
- greater collaboration with parents of identified vulnerable pupils

Taking a cluster approach, the schools developed a shared vision. Leaders in Ysgol Eirias invited primary stakeholders to relevant training events to upskill staff on trauma and attachment, particularly for LAC. They offered sessions for the school's nurture co-ordinator to help facilitate the primary nurture groups. Leaders invited each of the five cluster primary schools to join them on the national nurturing schools programme.

By creating a closer working relationship, it allowed the schools to be more proactive in identifying the most vulnerable LAC transferring from primary school. This involved greater collaboration primary staff to collect accurate data to plan for the smooth transition of these vulnerable pupils.

As a result of these projects, vulnerable pupils experienced:

- improvements in their social, emotional and behavioural skills and stronger social networks
- a positive attachment to school which in turn has improved attendance of many LAC
- improved engagement in lessons
- better self-regulation and ability to transition back to lessons after break times
- improved relationships with peers and staff
- a greater degree of empathy and understanding from staff

60 Penygarn Community Primary School staff successfully led work in their cluster of schools by using the LAC PDG to introduce nurture work to support their LAC.

Case study 19: Use of LAC PDG to support vulnerable pupils effectively

Penygarn Community Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Torfaen. The school recognised the need to prioritise pupil mental health and wellbeing, particularly for LAC and has allocated PDG and LAC PDG funding to a variety of tailor-made provisions and interventions to support vulnerable pupils throughout the school.

Schools within the cluster decided to allocate the cluster LAC PDG proportionally to each school based on the number of pupils who are LAC

at each school. Leaders also use the grant to fund the National Nurturing Schools programme to develop a nurture ethos throughout the whole cluster of schools. Key to this ethos is all stakeholders following the six nurture principles that have been shared and developed into child-friendly language with the pupils.

At Penygarn, the school invested in significant nurture training for the key staff who deliver specialised nurture provision across the school. These highly trained staff focus on the development of key skills that the pupils need, such as social skills, behavioural and emotional management and coping strategies. The nurture provision has a high adult to pupil ratio to ensure pupils have the individualised support they need.

The school has employed a full time, in house play therapist who liaises closely with staff and parents to create personalised sessions for referred pupils. She works on an individual basis with vulnerable pupils who have been referred via a number of avenues such as teachers, parents, outside agencies and pupils themselves. It is a confidential space for pupils to explore any personal issues that they are experiencing at that time. After a block of sessions, the play therapist offers booster sessions and drop in periods for emotional check ins where required.

Young carers

- 61 In May 2019, Estyn (2019b) published a thematic report on ‘Provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales’. The report includes a useful checklist to assist schools, college and pupil referral units in evaluating their provision for young carers. As noted in the report (Estyn 2019b, p.1), research by the University of Nottingham (Sempik and Becker, 2013, 2014) found that young carers:
- ‘miss or cut short an average of 48 days of education a year because of their caring role
 - were four times more likely to drop out of college than their peers
 - have higher rates of poor mental and physical health than the average young person
 - experience higher rates of bullying.’
- 62 The report identified that there is a lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in educational establishments in Wales (Estyn, 2019b). Many providers do not know which of their pupils have a caring role. A consequence of this is that the provision for young carers varies widely. In providers that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers, they have robust systems to identify these pupils. They track their wellbeing needs regularly and adapt their provision carefully to meet the individual needs of each young carer.
- 63 Providers that have a named lead member of staff for young carers generally provide a higher level of care, support and guidance for these pupils. As a result, young carers are confident to raise concerns, assured that the lead member of staff will

champion their rights and liaise sensitively with parents and other professionals. There are a few award schemes that provide schools with useful resources and toolkits to shape their provision to meet the needs of young carers. In addition, specialist agencies provide high quality resources and support to raise awareness and meet the needs of young carers.

- 64 In Tonyrefail Community School staff provide exceptional support for their high number of young carers.

Case study 20: Effective support for young carers

Tonyrefail Community School is an English-medium all-age school in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school established that, due to their caring role, young carers often lacked the opportunity to socialise and a few had with poor attendance or were regularly late for school. They also found the homework expectations and time constraints placed on them during the school day a struggle. Staff identified this as a significant barrier to them making progress in school. The school also accepted that many young carers had difficulties in managing their emotional wellbeing and often spent the school day being unable to focus due to worrying about parents/carers at home.

In order to provide the best support for these pupils, the school enrolled in the local authority's 'Young Carers Schools' award. The school must meet 10 recommendations to gain the award. Due to the range in ages of the young carers, the school also completed the 'Young Carers Primary Schools Award.'

All staff received training to enable them to spot the signs that pupils may display if they have a caring role and how to support each individual. Leaders send regular emails to staff highlighting who the young carers are along with tips and advice for staff.

The school provides a range of ways to support their young carers on a day-to-day basis:

- All young carers have continuous access to nurture provision. Staff tailor support to meet the individual needs of the pupil. Many access this provision regularly as it is a calm environment and a chance to catch up on missed school work.
- Pupils have the opportunity to contact home to check on relatives which alleviates anxieties and stress for the pupils.
- They can access a breakfast club before school and at break time.
- The school nurse offers pupils one to one sessions to discuss their anxieties and offers support and guidance when needed.
- They have access to 'Eye to Eye counselling' who offer one to one sessions for young carers who are not coping well and also arrange group sessions around managing anxieties during exams.

The school has an alternative curriculum room. This curriculum offers

pupils a range of vocational qualifications and bespoke provision for young people from a variety of backgrounds. Catch up sessions for missed coursework are particularly important for the young carers. Staff also offer identified young carers an extension on homework and coursework if needed.

The school also has in-house attendance and wellbeing officers (AWOs) who offer one-to-one support to improve attendance. They reduce timetables, set targets and offer rewards for improvements made. The AWOs know the young carers well and ensure that they receive extra support, for example to deal with lateness or absences due to their caring role.

The school gives young carers the opportunity to be involved in the Schools' Award reviews and have a say in the support staff offer them.

Staff identify young carers on a tracking systems. They are highlighted in a data analysis, five times a year. Pupils that are struggling are highlighted and targeted interventions are then put in place. The quality of this support is closely monitored for impact.

The impact of this work is that most young carers at the school feel safe and well supported by the school. Most young carers attend school regularly and most make at least expected progress.

- 65 Within Estyn's (2019b) young carers thematic report, there are more examples of strong practice in schools to support young carers:
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/provision-young-carers-secondary-schools-further-education-colleges-and-pupil>

Pupils with complex learning needs

- 66 Pupils with complex learning needs are vulnerable to underachievement in school for many reasons. Many pupils struggle in their specific area of diagnosed academic weakness but also perform below their potential in subjects where they have no disability.
- 67 This form of underachievement in school is damaging because it can affect a pupil's self-esteem, can lead to school failure and stop pupils from reaching their full potential in school and later in life. Successful schools recognise that, in order for pupils to achieve as well as they can, staff need to support their social and emotional needs effectively.
- 68 Maesgwyn Special School has highly effective practices to support their vulnerable pupils with complex learning needs.

Case study 21: Bringing out the best - successful support for pupils with complex needs

Maesgwyn Special School is an English-medium special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The pupils who attend Maesgwyn have a wide variety of needs, that are quite often multiple and complex. Staff have developed a relationship-based whole school policy where the emphasis is based on creating a nurturing, caring, 'Maesgwyn family' environment. Staff have a proactive approach to understanding the behaviours of the young people in their care to ensure that they are more able to implement effective support strategies.

The school's vision is: 'Bringing out the best'. Every one of the pupils receives the respect, encouragement and opportunity they need to prepare them for their adult lives. Key to the school's success is enabling the pupils to develop a strong foundation of wellbeing with a balance between an academic and vocational 'hands-on' curriculum that promotes life skills. This enables pupils to mature into adult life successfully. Staff strive to bring out the best possible standards in their pupils so that they become effective members of society.

When pupils start at Maesgwyn, the school meets their individual needs through a bespoke transition experience that aims to settle the anxieties of both the pupils and their parents. Staff invite prospective pupils and their parents/carers for a tour of the school prior to their start date where they meet with the wellbeing manager who is able to answer any questions they have and provide them with all the relevant information. Staff understand the pupils they support are vulnerable, often presenting with high anxiety, therefore, they offer new pupils and their parents several more visits prior to their start date.

Following the individual tours of the school, the wellbeing manager and a member of the wellbeing team meet the pupils in their current schools. Staff observe pupils in an environment in which they are comfortable so that they can allocate the right class for them when they begin at Maesgwyn. As part of the transition period, staff invite all new starters to spend the day at the school's wellbeing centre. The pupils are welcomed by wellbeing staff, provided with breakfast. They meet their class teacher, support assistant and new class mates. This helps to develop positive relationships with their peers and staff. Staff create pen portraits of each pupil while teachers hold daily morning meetings to review transition arrangements.

Due to a profile of highly vulnerable pupils, the wellbeing staff provide specialised and targeted interventions to support the social and emotional needs of the young people. They run these interventions for an average of eight weeks. On completion, the wellbeing staff complete an end of intervention report that identifies strategies that support the pupils' individual needs. This report is then shared with all staff. Staff use the assessments to monitor and track social and emotional development whilst also recognising that wellbeing does not always increase in a linear

fashion. They place high importance on the ‘soft outcomes’ such as smiling faces, increased engagement in lessons, less behaviour incidents and all-round contribution to school life.

The wellbeing centre helps the school to meet the individual social and emotional needs of pupils. However, they recognise that the wellbeing interventions will not fully address all challenging behaviours. Staff view the interventions and approaches as a toolkit that supports a holistic, whole-school approach in which positive relational experiences with emotionally available adults are available to pupils at all times. Leaders ensure that all staff receive training to develop strategies to help regulate the pupils’ emotions and demonstrate ways in which to communicate with empathy and compassion.

This expertise has created a nurturing, caring, relationship-based ethos while the growing reputation has seen the development of an external training programme.

The impact of this approach has been that fixed term exclusions have decreased and there have been no permanent exclusions in last five years. There has also been a reduction in the number of behavioural incidents dealt with by staff. Staff report increased pupil engagement in class.

The school has used PDG funding to increase capacity in their wellbeing team to support wellbeing interventions and to run literacy and numeracy intervention programmes across the school.

Effective working with others

- 69 Effective schools realise that they cannot work in isolation to support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. The most successful schools know their community well and engage productively with services and groups of people that will best benefit their pupils and their families. This might include accessing specialist services or working with other schools, charities and parents.
- 70 Usually in these schools, staff build strong trusting relationships with parents and families. As a result, school often help families to access other forms of support for their children provided by other services.

Co-ordinating services

- 71 Leaders in St Martin's School employ a range of specialist professionals that provide a range of services for pupils and their families.

Case study 22: Co-ordinating wellbeing services

St Martin's School is an English-medium secondary school in Caerphilly. Support for the academic and personal development of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils is at the heart of the school's inclusive vision. The school has established a highly qualified wellbeing team that compliments the work of other staff. This team consists of a school nurse, family engagement officer, community outreach worker, safeguarding lead, school counsellor, nurture staff, additional learning needs co-ordinator, deputy co-ordinator, attendance support worker, a community outreach driver and 13 learning support assistants. The school uses its PDG to part fund these posts.

Creating a cohesive approach to pupils' wellbeing has helped the school to remove significant barriers for pupils and their families. This has resulted in strengthened personal and academic growth for those at the school who are most at risk of underachieving.

The school identified the widening gap between education and health and saw how this was resulting in reduced access to social care provision for disadvantaged families. It set out a plan to reduce the impact of poor health upon academic attainment by employing a school nurse to bridge the divide between education and health.

The school nurse operates as part of the wellbeing provision. The nurse works closely with families and pupils to create bespoke plans that help to reduce the impact of a vulnerable pupil's healthcare needs on their learning. This helps increase pupils' ability to maintain good attendance, emotional stability and flourish academically. The nurse provides teachers with detailed overviews of a pupil's needs that helps them to adapt their teaching approaches to help improve the pupil's performance. The nurse

also supports disadvantaged pupils' families effectively by facilitating access to wider healthcare facilities within the local community. By building these partnerships, the school has been able to enhance its ability to reduce the impact of the link between poverty and poor health and educational attainment.

The nurse has provided training to help teachers consider the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils when planning lesson. She has helped to empower staff to provide an effective balance of support and challenge in their classrooms to these pupils.

The school has also invested in the recruitment and training of a wellbeing team with specific roles that wrap support around a pupil and their family. This has helped to tackle pupils' healthcare needs and to remove significant barriers to learning, often caused by adverse childhood experiences.

The work of the wellbeing team, and in particular the role of the school nurse, in supporting, signposting and treating a range of needs has resulted in accelerated outcomes in the attendance of many disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. This in turn has improved their attainment as well as their ability to socialise, remain in a mainstream school setting and access wider school enrichment opportunities.

Placing a nurse within a school context has increased the confidence of pupils and their families to speak about their health needs to a professional within a familiar and supportive environment. This has begun to instil in the pupils the importance of seeking advice and taking charge of their own health throughout their lives.

Working with other organisations

- 72 There are many examples of school staff working effectively with other organisations to support their pupils. For example, Cardiff High School employs an independent therapist who brings a small, trained dog onto the school site. The therapist gets to know the pupil he is working with and then works off site, while walking with the dog. The dog helps break down barriers and allows for meaningful dialogue to take place. The programme strives to benefit the lives of young people with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is based on the trauma recovery model and works with young people who have had childhood trauma, lived through adverse childhood experiences or who simply require additional learning support.
- 73 Staff at Palmerston Primary School have built positive relationships with the prison service. They believe that by working in partnership together with prison staff, they can provide support in school for pupils who have a family member in prison. The prison service has raised awareness for staff of the impact on families when faced with this type of loss by holding staff workshops and after school training. A school assembly has explored this situation and helped develop greater empathy for pupils who are sometimes dealing with this in a private way. School staff attend family parents' afternoons at Parc Prison, alongside pupils and fathers in the Family Wing.

Pupils share their work with their incarcerated family member. This has a positive impact on both parent and child. It enables continued communication and a celebration of the pupil's work, shared together in a positive way.

- 74 In Townhill Primary School, leaders work closely with a range of outside agencies to share information to support their vulnerable pupils and their families.

Case study 23: The co-ordination of outside agencies to support pupils and their families

Townhill Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Swansea. The school has worked effectively to develop a strong sense of community spirit in an often challenging and socially deprived area. The ethos of the school is to work alongside families holistically, to encourage positive parenting, supporting families to create a home environment that is suitable for children to develop in every aspect of their lives.

Critical to the school's success in supporting disadvantaged pupils has been very strong practice in sharing information. Staff use an online reporting system to record any negative changes in pupils and their families that they become aware of. As a result, the school identifies vulnerable pupils and swiftly pick up and deal with concerns.

The school works closely with the health visitors, based on site and also with community housing officers. This collaboration has proved invaluable over the years, enabling the school to be proactive with early intervention for pupils and their families and preventing crises escalating at a later stage.

The school makes effective use of a very wide range of different agencies that are able to support their families. The school uses its PDG to employ a pastoral manager. As part of her role, she collates information from these services and uses it to target appropriate support for pupils and crucially their families.

Staff are mindful that many parents may have had a negative experience of school life. When they initially arrange meetings, staff have a gentle positive approach to get a feel for any vulnerabilities and establish a nurturing a trust-based relationship. This gives staff an indicator as to where best they can signpost the families, or if it is a situation that they can manage and support appropriately in-house.

As a school, staff identified the difference in pupils when they work holistically with the family unit. Very often, this means mediation between parents that struggle to communicate with each other. Frequently in these circumstances their children's voices become lost and adults do not meet their needs. Staff ensure that the children have a voice and work with the pupils to help them to communicate their thoughts and feelings with their parents. This almost always has a positive impact on the family involved.

The school has improved the attendance of the children of the families with whom they engage. Many pupils now have higher self-esteem and

improved behaviour and self-control, and are more engaged in school and their learning.

Most families now see school as a positive part of their family lives and support network. They appreciate the school making the time to sit with them, listening to sometimes very difficult and personal admissions of their life experiences and struggles which are impacting on their family lives. As a result, most parents trust and value the school, feeling grateful for the signposted support to improve their family's lives.

Working with other schools to aid transition

- 75 Schools have long seen the benefit of working with each other to share ideas and effective practice. Schools within the same cluster of schools often serve comparable communities and therefore have groups of vulnerable pupils with similar needs. Many schools have robust transition arrangements to ensure that all pupils transition to secondary education seamlessly and with appropriate support in place.
- 76 It is important that the receiving schools work closely with primary schools to support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils with this process. Schools that are successful in this begin the process of supporting pupils and exchanging information well in advance of pupils leaving the school.
- 77 Staff at Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan work closely with local primary schools to aid the smooth transition of vulnerable pupils from Year 6 to Year 7.

Case study 24: Cluster approach to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils

Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan is an English-medium secondary school in Conwy. The school works closely with the local primary schools in a cluster model. Their approach to transition builds on strong historical transition links to provide continuity in support for all pupils, especially those identified as disadvantaged or vulnerable. The headteachers, the transition co-ordinator and senior leaders from the cluster of schools meet regularly to share good practice and common approaches between schools and across key stages.

This has led to sharing key support roles within the cluster. For example, a Cluster Attendance lead officer is employed across the cluster to improve attendance and participation. This allows consistent links with families for pupils who are at risk of poor attendance. The development of an on-site family centre provides support for pupils and their families in the cluster at the point of need.

The 'Engage @ Emrys' extra-curricular programme ensures that learning is a stimulating, exciting and enriching experience for all pupils beyond the classroom as well as in lesson time. Staff create as many opportunities as possible for pupils to extend their learning and engage with the school. Close tracking of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils ensures that the school addresses any pupil's barrier to attendance at extra-curricular

activities, such as transport issues, by the use of the PDG. They extend this programme to the cluster primary schools, including sessions based in both primary and secondary schools.

The schools use the PDG to fund key roles which support the engagement of pupils in the school, including pastoral and skills improvement support. For example, the transition co-ordinator role is funded by the PDG to ensure that pupils transition successfully.

Effective work with parents and families

- 78 Parents who have the confidence and ability to support their children’s learning can have a significant impact on pupils’ achievement. Research suggests that their involvement can have more influence over a child’s education than the quality of the school that they attend. (Department for Education and Skills, 2003)
- 79 Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have parents who are not involved in their education and who have a negative perception and experience of schooling.
- 80 In 2017, the Welsh Government commissioned an evaluation of its programme, *Evaluation and research for the parental engagement programme of work*, (Welsh Government, 2017c), which found that parents view schools as the most trusted source of information on education. Parents in affluent areas see education as a responsibility that they share with the school. The evaluation confirmed the findings of early studies that parental engagement changes with the age of the child.
- 81 Estyn’s (2018) report on *Involving parents: Communication between schools and parents of school-aged children* found that an increasing number of schools have appointed home-school co-ordinators to support their work with vulnerable pupils and their families. A few schools also provide a valuable range of opportunities for parents to develop their own parenting skills.
- 82 Staff at Pillgwenlly Primary School work with a charity to provide parents with access to a family engagement programme.

Case study 25: Effective Family Engagement programmes

Pillgwenlly Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Newport.

Staff at the school organise an annual ‘Families Connect’ programme. This is an eight-week family engagement programme funded by the charity Save the Children. The funding includes staff training for delivery of the programme and resources. The focus is to develop the wellbeing, literacy and numeracy skills of targeted vulnerable or disadvantaged reception year pupils and their parents. The programme helps to develop routines at home, reward systems, healthy eating and social skills in addition to academic skills. It helps parents support their child’s education at home.

Since its inception, the school has seen growing number of parents

accessing the course. There has been improved behaviour of the targeted vulnerable pupils in school. Staff have also seen improved relationships between the parents who attended the course and the school. Many of the parents who attended have more skills and knowledge to help them successfully work with their child at home.

- 83 In Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm, staff realised that many pupils did not always have the basic resources or support at home to enable them to complete homework and enhance their learning outside of school.

Case study 26: Supporting pupils' learning at home

Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm is an English-medium primary school in Powys.

Many of the school's families experience the negative effects of disadvantage and the school very much recognise that in order to have an impact on the social, emotional and academic progress of pupils, they need to work alongside parents, carers, families and wider networks. Therefore, they invest significantly in building these relationships and supporting families to be able to bridge the gaps and maximise the pupils' opportunities to access all aspects of their education. Leaders know that it is essential that the school provides a bespoke package of support and experiences which meet the specific needs of families.

The school provides a wide range of support beyond the curriculum which helps to bridge the gaps that many pupils experience. This helps to ensure that these pupils are able to access the curriculum. These programmes are both school and family based. Pupils and families access this support through a variety of avenues such as teacher referral, parental or pupil request and partner agency referral.

The 'School home aiming to reach excellence' (SHARE) group is the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils which encourages parental engagement in their children's learning. Targeted parents agree to work alongside their children at home whenever possible and, in return, the school provides these pupils with basic resource packs and activities which will support their learning. Pupils return their packs and activities weekly with parental comments. A trained learning support assistant renews the materials and activities and works with pupils who have been unable to complete the work at home. Activities mirror classroom practice and allow parents to become partners in learning.

The school's community manager organises a range of engagement activities designed to support families to enable them to become actively involved in their child's educational journey. These include the running of a 'Families and communities together' (FACT) project weekly, based on the needs and requests of families themselves and the setting up of and running of a 'Big Book' library. In addition, she works on a one to one basis with parents supporting their specific needs. She signposts and scaffolds

their access into securing employment, benefits, further education opportunities and essential provisions in emergencies.

Most pupils feel that the school has enabled them to be aspirational, citing professions in law, medicine and equal rights as ambitions for the future. Despite the number of vulnerable pupils at the school with social and emotional difficulties, the behaviour of nearly all pupils is exemplary. The consistently high-quality relationships and mutual respect between pupils and adults are key strengths of the school.

The use of grant funding to support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils

The use of PDG funding in schools

- 84 Most schools in Wales have a strong focus on trying to reduce the impact of poverty. The availability of PDG funding contributes to this emphasis. Schools know that they are accountable for using this funding appropriately. Since the Welsh Government first introduced the funding, the way that schools use the PDG has improved and now the majority of schools target the grant appropriately to support eFSM pupils.
- 85 Generally, the types of activities that schools use the funding for include:
- developing systems to track the progress of different groups of pupils including those eFSM and LAC
 - improving attendance
 - family engagement work, for example through work of a wellbeing / pastoral support officer or by involving parents in literacy, numeracy, language and play courses
 - effective work with pre-school groups, such as Flying Start, and working with parents before pupils join nursery or reception classes
 - withdrawal programmes such as catch-up
 - improving aspects of wellbeing
 - paying for educational visits, musical tuition and residential trips
 - literacy and numeracy projects
 - professional learning for staff
- 86 Although most schools use grant funding to provide a similar range of strategies, the impact is too variable overall. The proportion of schools that make effective use of the PDG has remained at around two-thirds of primary and secondary schools. In these schools, disadvantaged pupils benefit positively from the grant spending.
- 87 Successful schools integrate their plans for using the PDG into their overall school development plan and plan actions and interventions that focus on improving the attainment of pupils from deprived backgrounds, specifically those who are eFSM. They draw on best practice and well-evidenced interventions as part of a whole-school strategy. They are clear in what they expect from an intervention, they monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness. Leaders in these schools balance whole-school and targeted interventions to ensure that every eFSM pupil benefits as an individual and that the school as a whole improves its capacity to support all pupils to reach their full potential.
- 88 In schools that use their PDG well, leaders use the grant strategically to ensure that all pupils make good progress towards their targets and improve their wellbeing. For example, they employ staff to lead and co-ordinate all aspects of provision for disadvantaged pupils and evaluate the impact of their actions, so that they know what works well. They do not simply accept that a particular approach will work in

their context because it has worked elsewhere. They do not use poverty as a reason for under-attainment, but have high expectations of all pupils and staff for all aspects of their work. They have effective arrangements to secure high rates of attendance and punctuality among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In these schools, most eFSM pupils make good progress from their starting points and attain well in relation to other pupils.

Looked-after children (LAC) PDG

- 89 In 2015, the Welsh Government separated the funding provided for eFSM pupils and LAC into two grants. The Welsh Government awards the LAC PDG to the four regional consortia rather than directly to schools, with the aim of facilitating a more strategic approach to using the funding across regions. The allocation amounts to around £4 million a year. The Welsh Government expects the regional consortia to use the grant to support school improvement to reduce the barriers that LAC face. For example, they can use the grant to work collaboratively with local authorities, schools and other partners to develop effective interventions to improve the educational outcomes for this group of pupils.
- 90 In 2019, the Welsh Government commissioned an evaluation of the LAC PDG *Evaluation of the implementation of the Pupil Development grant for Looked after Children* (Welsh Government, 2019b). The review identified the following activities as potentially having a positive impact on LAC:
- **Interventions** that are co-produced with children and young people and consider the broader context and needs of LAC.
 - **Strategic tools:** Establishing robust monitoring systems and tools and clear evaluation procedures that local authority and school staff are trained to use. Systems should include clear outcomes measures that focus on capturing wider holistic needs.
 - **Training activities:** Providing training to school staff on the social and emotional needs of LAC and how to meet them; and providing training to foster carers to help them better support children's educational needs at home.
 - **Capacity building:** Building capacity through the wider system through training and providing support to designated teachers, social workers and foster carers.
 - **Specific support:** The strongest evidence base of evaluations with rigorous designs suggests that individual and small group tutoring interventions can be effective in improving the academic skills of LAC. Material resources can be effective but only when combined with the provision of trained support to foster parents or tutors to ensure that young people use resources constructively.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

The findings in this report draw on:

- evidence from recent inspections
- evidence from Estyn best practice case studies
- telephone conversations and visits to a range of schools
- best practice case studies from schools spoken to
- conversations with the four regional consortia wellbeing officers

The following schools provided information used in the report

Secondary schools

- Brintirion Comprehensive School, Bridgend
- Bryngwyn Comprehensive School, Carmarthenshire
- Cardiff High School, Cardiff
- Chepstow High School cluster of schools, Monmouthshire
- Coedcae Secondary School, Carmarthenshire
- Cowbridge Comprehensive School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Crickhowell High School, Powys
- Emrys Ap Ewan Foundation School, Conwy
- Fitzalan High School, Cardiff
- St Martin's High School, Caerphilly
- The John Frost School, Newport
- Ysgol Erias, Conwy
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr, Cardiff
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg, Vale of Glamorgan
- Ysgol Maes y Dderwen, Powys

All-age schools

- Tonyrefail Community School, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Primary schools

- Clase Primary School, Swansea
- George Street Primary School, Torfaen
- Golwg y Cwm Primary School, Powys
- Herbert Thompson Primary School, Cardiff
- Monkton Priory School, Pembrokeshire
- Mount Stuart Primary School, Cardiff
- Palmerston Primary School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Penygarn Primary School, Torfaen
- Pillgwenlly Primary School, Newport
- Prendergast Primary School, Pembrokeshire

- Ringland Primary School, Newport
- Somerton Primary School, Newport
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bridgend
- Ton Pentre Primary School, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Townhill Primary School, Swansea
- Tremains Primary School, Bridgend
- Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School, Powys
- Ysgol Golwg y Cwm, Powys
- Ysgol Gwenfro Primary, Wrexham
- Ysgol Gymraeg Brynsierfel, Carmarthenshire

Special schools

- Maesgwyn Special School, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Ysgol Bryn Castell, Bridgend

Appendix 2: Background information on schools providing case studies ¹

A successful whole-school approach to supporting pupils' wellbeing

Herbert Thompson Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Cardiff. In January 2019 there were 520 pupils on roll. Around 53% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 37% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average. Around 33% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and 22% speak English as an additional language. The school has a Flying Start provision on site for children from two to three years old as well as a base for health visitors who serve the local community.

Providing pupils with incentives

Cowbridge Comprehensive School is an English-medium secondary school in the Vale of Glamorgan. In January 2019 there were 1,532 pupils on roll. Around 4% of pupils are eFSM, which is well below the national average. Around 7% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, again below the national average. A very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.

Effective nurture provision to improve behaviour and attitudes to school

Somerton Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Newport. In January 2019 there were 182 pupils on roll. Around 35% of pupils are eFSM which is well above the national average. Around 34% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average. Around 31% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and 24% speak English as an additional language.

Expanding nurture provision to meet pupils' needs

Clase Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Swansea. In January 2019 there were 309 pupils on roll. Around 57% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 54% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also well above the national average. Few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a very few speak English as an additional language. The school has four specialist teaching facilities for pupils with autism and moderate learning difficulties.

¹ All contextual information (unless otherwise noted) is taken from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). Information about pupils on roll includes pupils of all ages, but eFSM, SEN, ethnicity and EAL percentages are calculated for pupils of statutory school age (5-15 y.o.).

Effective tracking of pupils' wellbeing

Ysgol Gymraeg Brynsierfel is a Welsh-medium primary school in Carmarthenshire. In January 2019 there were 207 pupils on roll. Around 21% of pupils are eFSM, which is slightly above the national average. Around 39% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, again in line with the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and no pupils speak English as an additional language.

Raising the bar for all pupils

Ysgol Bryngwyn School is an English-medium secondary school in Carmarthenshire. In January 2019 there were 1,043 pupils on roll. Around 18% of pupils are eFSM, which is slightly above the national average. Around 39% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is well above the national average. Very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. The school is part of a secondary federation with Ysgol Glan-y-Môr, Burry Port.

A whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning

Mount Stuart Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Cardiff. In January 2019 there were 479 pupils on roll. Around 23% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 26% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs which is similar to the national average. The school is a diverse community with 95% of pupils from an ethnic minority background and 76% speak English as an additional language.

Raising aspirations and improved staff challenge

Tremains Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Bridgend. In January 2019 there were 483 pupils on roll. Around 16% of pupils are eFSM, which is below the national average. Around 18% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is below the national average. A few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a very few speak English as an additional language.

Support for pupils to overcome potential barriers to achieve as well as they can

Fitzalan High School is an English-medium secondary school in Cardiff. In January 2019 there were 1,724 pupils on roll. Around 26% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 27% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is slightly above the national average. Around 84% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and many speak English as an additional language.

Effective 'Walking Bus' provision

Gwenfro County Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Wrexham. In January 2019 there were 360 pupils on roll. Around 45% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 30% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. A few

pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. There are two mixed-age resource provision classes, providing education for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs.

Reducing exclusions of vulnerable pupils through better in-house support

Coedcae School is an English-medium secondary school in Carmarthenshire. In January 2019 there were 837 pupils on roll. Around 30% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 51% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs which is well above the national average. A few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language.

Support for vulnerable Polish pupils

Welshpool Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Powys. In January 2019 there were 306 pupils on roll. Around 28% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 39% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs which is also above the national average. Around 30% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Many of these pupils are Polish.

Effective support for GRT pupils and their families

Monkton Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Pembrokeshire. In January 2019 there were 221 pupils on roll. Around 48% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 49% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average. Around 37% of pupils are from the GRT community. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has two attached units for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. There is also a facility called the Priory Learning Centre which provides support for GRT pupils who do not transfer to mainstream key stage 3.

Engaging GRT pupils by making learning real

George Street Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Torfaen. In January 2019 there were 465 pupils on roll. Around 31% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 22% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is below the national average. A few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a very few speak English as an additional language. Around 13% of pupils are from GRT backgrounds.

Supporting service pupils and their families

Prendergast Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Pembrokeshire. In January 2019 there were 491 pupils on roll. Around 10% of pupils are eFSM, which is below the national average. Around 21% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also below the national average. A few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a very few speak English as an additional language. The school reports that around 8% of pupils on roll are service children whose parents are with the 14th Signals Regiment stationed

at Cawdor Barracks. This figure fluctuates and can rise to more than 20% of the school's population.

Recognising and addressing the needs of service pupils

Crickhowell High School is an English-medium secondary school in Powys. In January 2019 there were 892 pupils on roll. Around 6% of pupils are eFSM, which is well below the national average. Around 19% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is below the national average. Only a very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. The school reports that around 7% of pupils are from service families.

Effective cluster working to support LAC

Ysgol Eirias is an English-medium secondary school in Conwy. In January 2019 there were 1,375 pupils on roll. Around 12% of pupils are eFSM, which is below the national average. Around 17% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also below the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. The school reports that fifteen pupils are LAC, which is greater than the local authority average.

Use of LAC PDG to support vulnerable pupils effectively

Penygarn Community Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Torfaen. In January 2019 there were 463 pupils on roll. Around 44% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 28% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a very few speak English as an additional language. The school reports that there are currently 13 pupils who are LAC.

Effective support for young carers

Tonyrefail Community School is an English-medium all-age school in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In January 2019 there were 1,395 pupils on roll. Around 23% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 29% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. The school identifies 18 pupils as young carers, the highest number within the local authority.

Bringing out the best - successful support for pupils with complex needs

Maesgwyn Special School is an English-medium special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In January 2019 there were 127 pupils on roll. Around 61% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. The school has pupils aged 11-19 with complex multiple learning difficulties including autistic spectrum disorder, moderate and severe learning difficulties and Behaviour, Emotional & Social difficulties. The school reports that around 10% of pupils are LAC.

Co-ordinating wellbeing services

St Martin's School is an English-medium secondary school in Caerphilly. In January 2019 there were 985 pupils on roll. Around 17% of pupils are eFSM, which is similar to the national average. Around 19% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is below the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language.

The co-ordination of outside agencies to support pupils and their families

Townhill Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Swansea. In January 2019 there were 515 pupils on roll. Around 49% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 38% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also well above the national average. Around 12% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and a few speak English as an additional language.

Cluster approach to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils

Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan is an English-medium secondary school in Conwy. In January 2019 there were 978 pupils on roll. Around 27% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 43% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language.

Effective Family Engagement programmes

Pillgwenlly Primary School is an English-medium primary school in Newport. In January 2019 there were 678 pupils on roll. Around 37% of pupils are eFSM, which is well above the national average. Around 37% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average. Eighty-eight per cent of pupils are from an ethnic minority background and 82% speak English as an additional language.

Supporting pupils' learning at home

Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm is an English-medium primary school in Powys. In January 2019 there were 216 pupils on roll. Around 30% of pupils are eFSM, which is above the national average. Around 37% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is also above the national average. A very few pupils are from an ethnic minority background or speak English as an additional language. The school hosts three area Specialist Teaching Facilities as well as a Flying Start setting and an Early Years 3+ setting.

Appendix 3: Background information on PDG

Background to the Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

In 2012, the Welsh Government introduced the Pupil Deprivation Grant (now renamed the Pupil Development Grant) to provide additional funding to schools based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) or who are looked after children (LAC). Originally the PDG targeted pupils from Year 1 to Year 11 and was extended to include nursery and reception age pupils in 2015. The grant aims to help overcome the additional barriers that prevent pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.

In 2019, the Welsh Government also introduced a new access grant of £125 to help cover the costs of school uniform, equipment, sports kit and kit for activities outside of school. Parents of eFSM pupils can apply for this grant for the 2019-2020 school year, if they are:

- entering reception class or year 3 in primary school
- entering year 7 or year 10 in secondary school
- aged 4, 7, 11 or 14 in special schools, special needs resource bases or pupil referral units

For Year 7 learners the grant is £200, recognising the increased costs associated with starting secondary school.

The Welsh Government currently allocates schools £1,150 for every pupil at the school from Years 1-11 who is eFSM or who is LAC. In addition, the early years grant is £700 for pupils in nursery and reception classes. In March 2018, the Minister wrote to all schools to inform them of new flexibility in the use of the grant. The Minister's statement to schools said:

'The PDG should be used to support the needs of all children who are or have been eFSM in the previous two years or are looked after. The PDG is intended to provide support to disadvantaged learners to overcome the additional barriers that prevent those from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential' (Welsh Government, 2018b).

In June 2018, the National Assembly for Wales Children, Young People and Education Committee (2018) published a report 'On the Money? Targeted funding to improve educational outcomes'. The report investigated the extent to which the PDG was improving the educational outcomes of those pupils it targets.

The committee also considered whether the PDG was reaching all those pupils it is intended to help, and to ensure that it was also supporting those most able and talented pupils to achieve their full potential. The report includes 31 recommendations for the Welsh Government, around half of which were aimed at making the most of the investment in the PDG.

Estyn reports on a school's use of PDG funding in all inspections (except when there are no or very few pupils at the school who are eFSM). Inspectors consider the impact of provision funded by the grant on improving the progress, attainment and wellbeing of eFSM pupils as a part of their overall evaluation of a school's resource management.

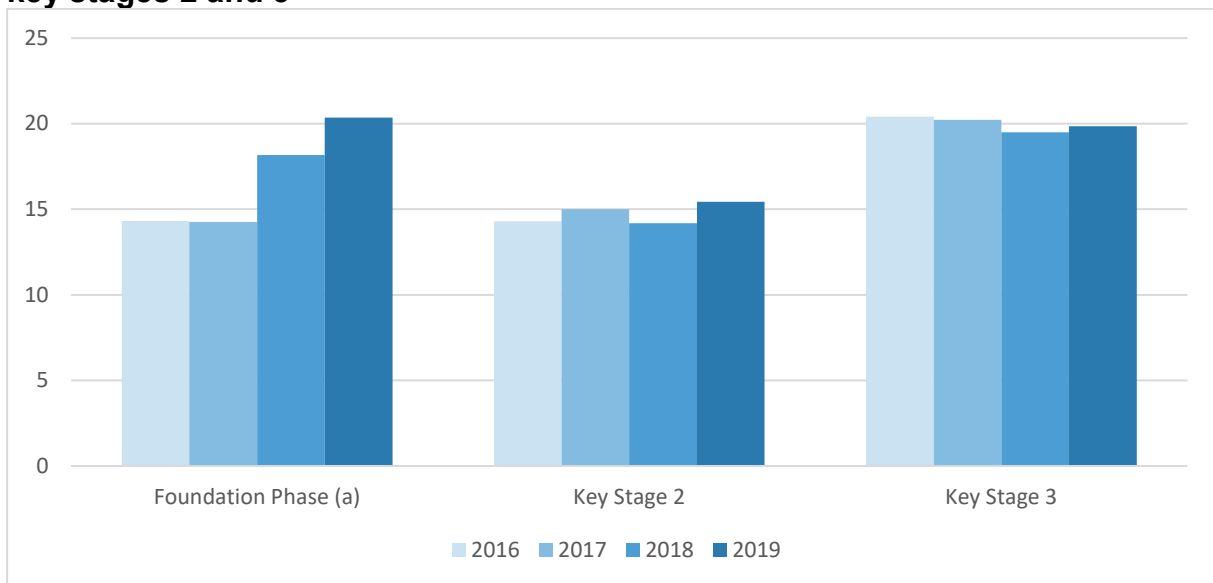
Appendix 4: Data on performance, attendance and exclusion of disadvantaged pupils

Disadvantaged pupil achievement

The gap between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils achieving the foundation phase indicator (FPI) increased between 2016 and 2019. Similarly, in key stage 2, the gap between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) increased. Over the last three years, the gap in performance at key stage 3 between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils has remained constant around 20 percentage point difference.

At the end of key stage 4, the percentage of eFSM pupils achieving the Level 2 inclusive (L2 incl) measure is around half of that of non eFSM pupils. This gap in performance has remained at similar levels over the last few years. The gap in performance at the level 1 (L1) measure has widened in recent years.

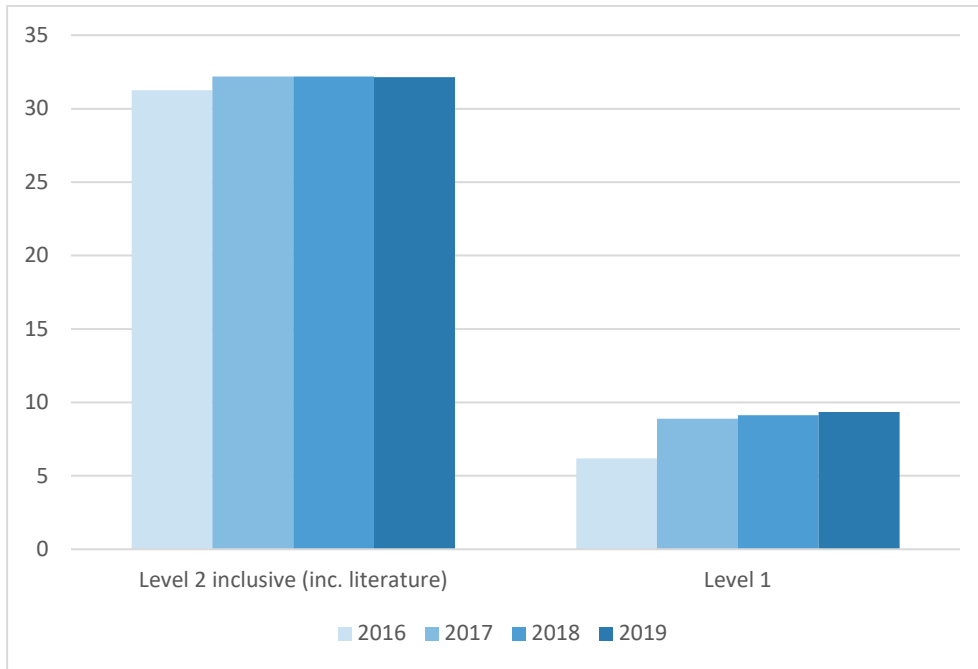
Figure 1: Percentage point gap in performance between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils in the foundation phase indicator and the core subject indicator at key stages 2 and 3



(StatsWales, 2019c; 2019d; 2019e)

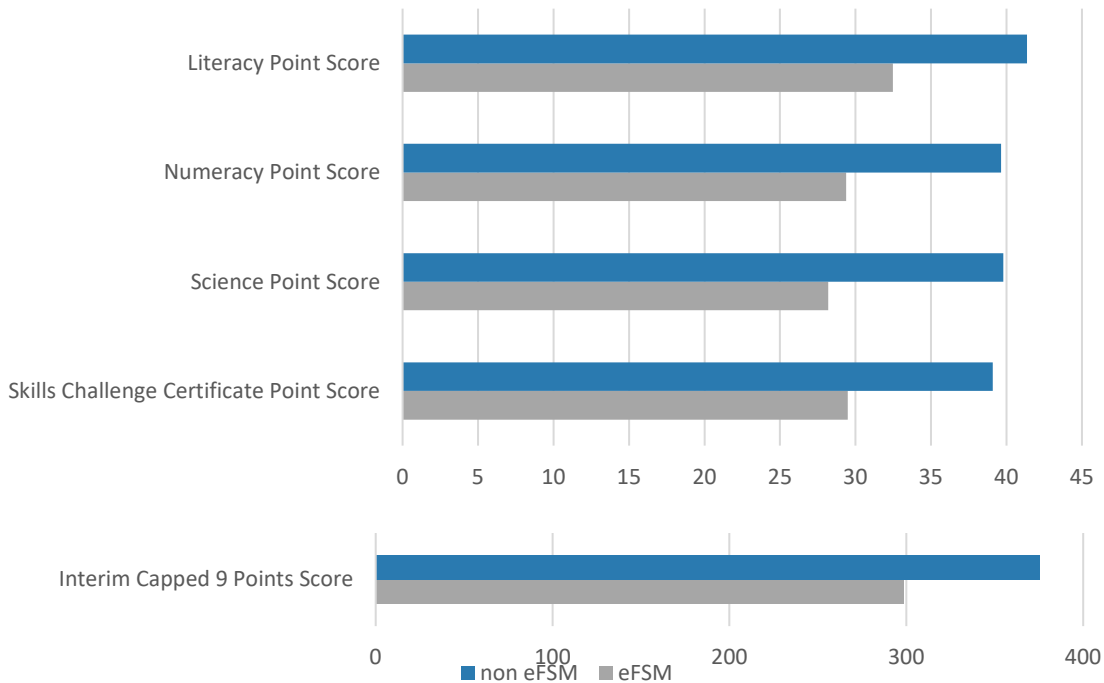
(a) – Following changes to the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning comparisons between 2018 and earlier years should be avoided.

Figure 2a: Percentage point gap in performance between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils in key stage 4 indicators



(Welsh Government, 2019c)

Figure 2b: Gap in performance between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils in key stage 4 interim performance measures, 2019

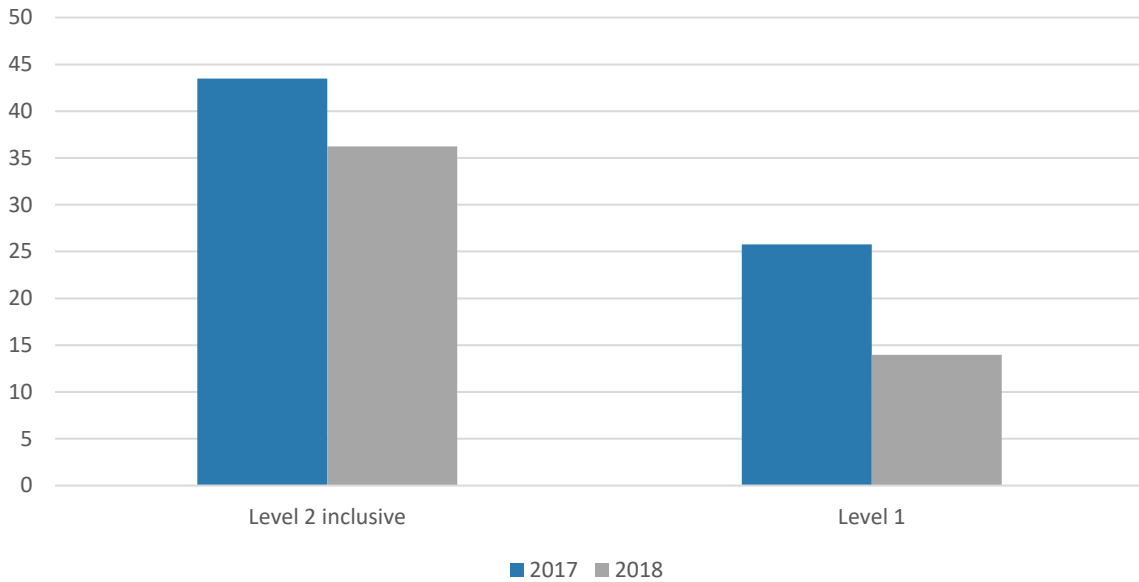


(StatsWales, 2019b)

LAC pupil achievement

By the end of key stage 4, there is still a large gap in the number of LAC achieving the Level 1 and Level 2 inclusive thresholds when compared to all pupils.

Figure 3: Percentage point gap in performance between LAC and all pupils in key stage 4 indicators



(StatsWales, 2019a)

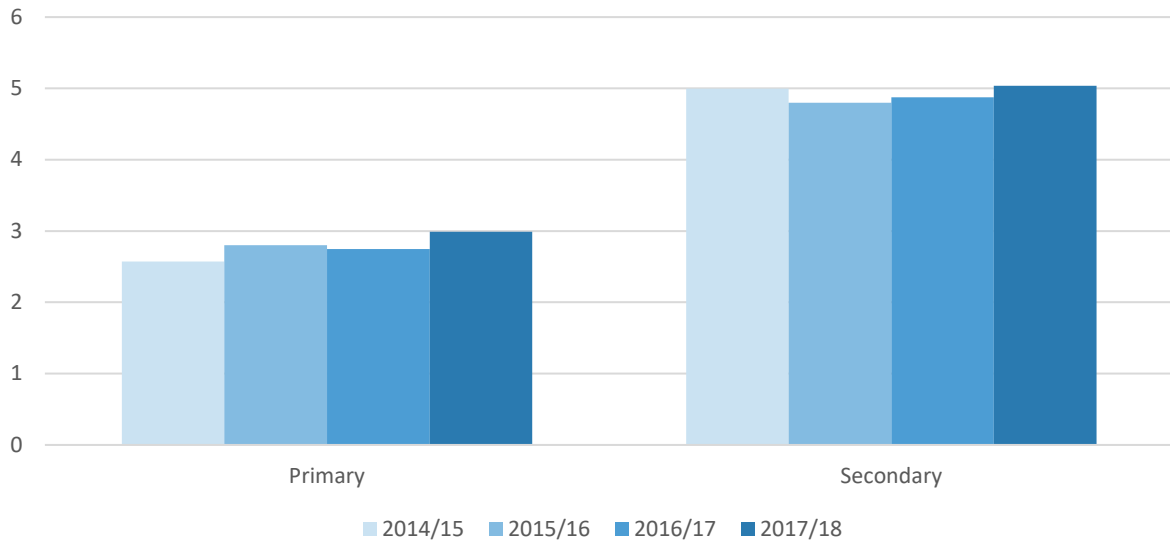
Attendance data

In 2018, around 27% of eFSM pupils in key stage 2 attended for less than 90% of the time (10% for other pupils) and only 42% attend for 95% or more (62% for other pupils).

In secondary schools, and especially by key stage 4, the situation deteriorates further. Around 39% of eFSM pupils at key stage 4 have less than 90% attendance (15% for other pupils) and only 36% attend for 95% or more (61% for other pupils).

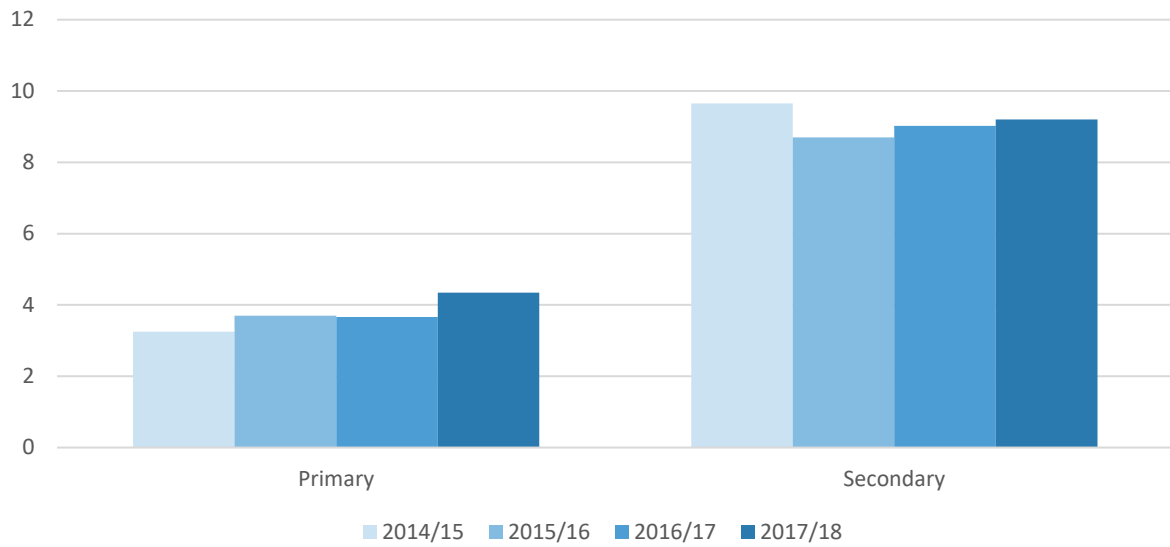
In addition, persistent absence of eFSM pupils continues to be a concern in both primary and secondary schools. In 2017-2018, the gap between the % of eFSM pupils and non-eFSM pupil who are persistent absentees increased in both sectors.

Figure 4: Percentage point gap in attendance between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils



(Welsh Government, 2016, 2017a; 2018a, 2019a)

Figure 5: Percentage point gap in the proportion of eFSM and non eFSM pupils who are persistent absentees

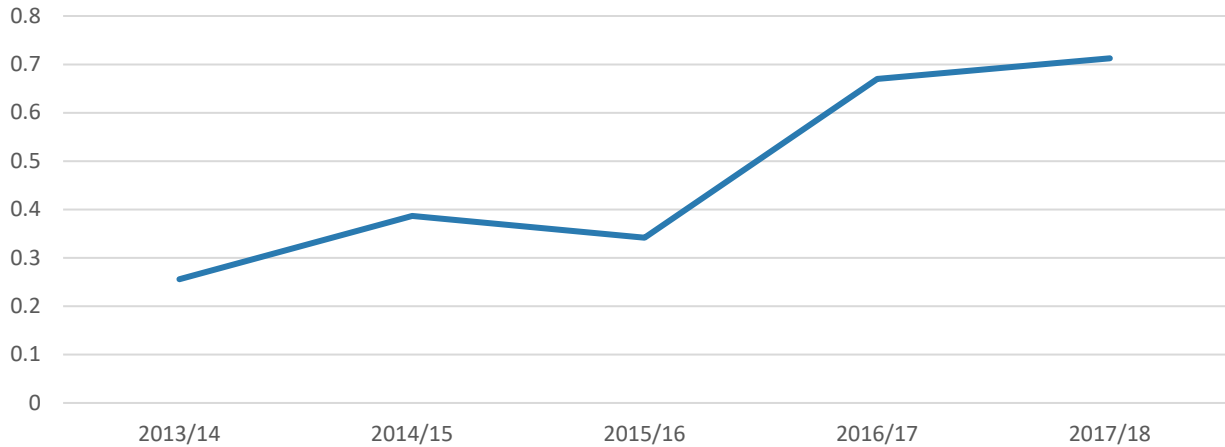


(Welsh Government, 2016, 2017a; 2018a, 2019a)

Exclusion data

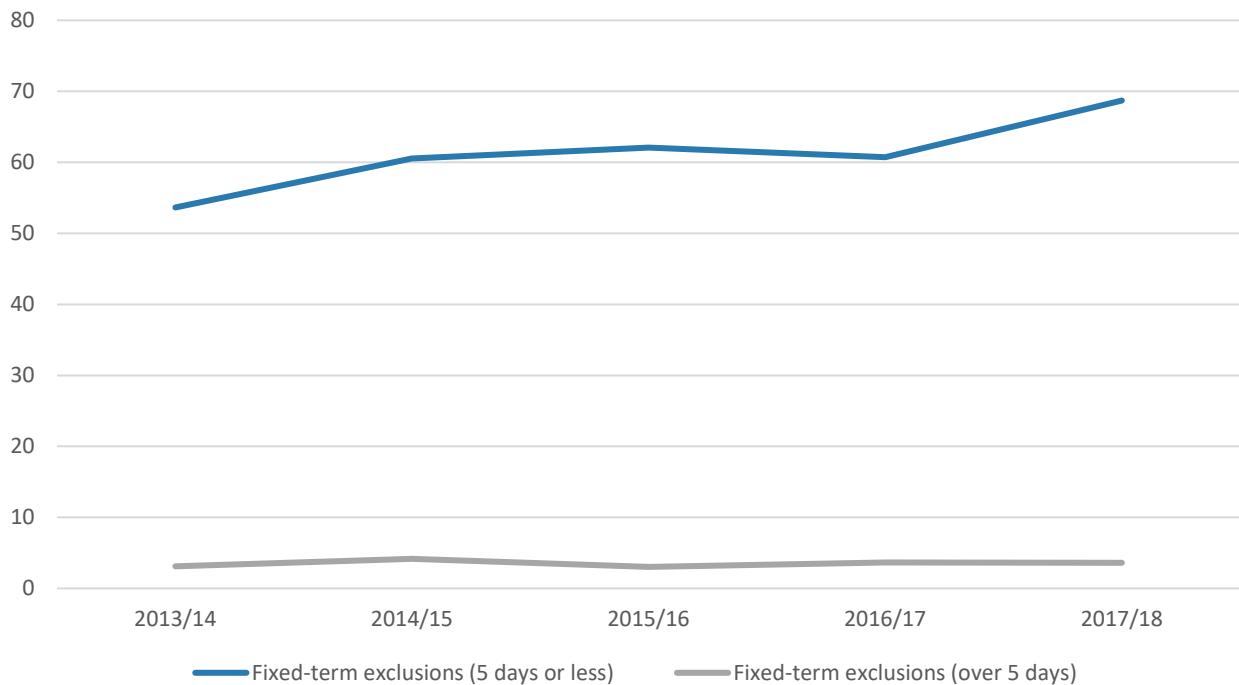
The rate of exclusions of eFSM pupils is consistently at least four times higher for eFSM pupils than non eFSM pupils for fixed exclusions (five days or less), fixed exclusions (over five days) and permanent exclusions in the period from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018.

Figure 6: Gap in the rate (per 1,000 pupils) of permanent exclusions between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils



(Welsh Government, 2019d)

Figure 7: Gap in the rate (per 1,000 pupils) of fixed-term exclusions between eFSM pupils and non eFSM pupils



(Welsh Government, 2019d)

Glossary

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Stressful or traumatic events, including abuse or neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders, mental illness or are incarcerated.
ALNCo	Additional learning needs co-ordinator
Attachment Disorder	Attachment disorder is a broad term to describe disorders of mood, behaviour, and social relationships arising from a failure to form normal attachments to primary carers in early childhood.
Boxall Profile	The Boxall Profile is part of the nurture movement. It is an assessment tool designed to track the progress of cognitive development and behavioural traits of children and young people through their education.
Cluster of schools	A secondary school and the feeder primary schools. Most pupils within the primary schools transfer to the secondary school.
CSI	Core subject indicator – pupils who achieve at least the expected levels at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 3 in English, mathematics and science
Emotional Dysregulation	Emotional dysregulation (ED) is a term used in the mental health community that refers to emotional responses that are poorly modulated and do not lie within the accepted range of emotive response.
Flying Start	Flying Start is a Welsh Government funded Programme and is available in targeted areas supporting all families to give 0-3 year olds a Flying Start in life. The scheme aims to provide intensive support services for children aged 0-3 years old and their families.
FPI	Foundation phase indicator – pupils who achieve at least the expected outcome at the end of the foundation phase in language literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social education
Intervention	Actions taken to improve pupils' wellbeing or standards

LAC	Looked-after children – children who are in the care of the local authority
Level 1 threshold	A volume of qualifications at level 1 equivalent to the volume of five GCSEs at grade D-G
Level 2 threshold	A volume of qualifications at level 2 equivalent to the volume of five GCSEs at grade A*-C
Level 2 inclusive threshold	A volume of qualifications at level 2 equivalent to the volume of five GCSEs at grade A*-C, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
Nurture	The nurturing approach aims to identify missing early nurturing experiences and give children and young people the social and emotional skills, which can help them improve peer relationships, develop resilience and increase confidence.
PDG	The annual Welsh Government grant that provides financial support to schools to help tackle the effects of poverty on pupils' attainment
Persistent Absentees	Persistent absentees are pupils who are absent for at least 20% of the number of half-day sessions that schools are open to pupils.
PISA	PISA evaluates countries' education systems based on the performance of a sample of 15-year-olds across three main domains: reading, mathematics and science. It is held every three years and is run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Reading was the lead domain in PISA 2018, which meant that there were additional questions and greater analysis of the results.
Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	Secondary Traumatic Stress. Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first-hand trauma experiences of another.
Service Children	The term includes children of HM Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel and MOD sponsored organisations stationed overseas.
Special educational needs (SEN)	Pupils who are on the school's special needs register at School Action, School Action+ or who have statements of special education needs
SDP	School Development Plan – a statutory school document

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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