2019

School teachers’ pay and conditions

The pay and conditions of teachers in Wales are being set by the Welsh Government from September 2019, following devolution of powers in 2018. The Minister for Education has announced an increase in pay for newly qualified teachers by 5% from September, as well as an increase of 2.75% for all other teachers. The pay increases will be subject to an eight-week stakeholder consultation.

This announcement followed the publication of the first report of the new Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) in June 2019 and the report of an independent review, Teaching: A valued profession, in September 2018.

The setting of pay and conditions of service for teachers and leaders in both England and Wales was the responsibility of the UK Government’s Secretary of State for Education until 30 September 2018. The Wales Act 2017 made provision for the power to set pay and conditions of service for teachers and leaders in Wales to be transferred to the Welsh Ministers. This was enacted under the Welsh Ministers (Transfer of Functions) Order 2018.

New arrangements for supply teacher procurement are also being introduced from September 2019. A supply teacher is a teacher appointed on a temporary contract to cover for an absent teacher.

Consultation on home education guidance

On 29 July 2019, the Welsh Government announced a consultation on a handbook of advice and information for home educating families and those thinking of home educating. The consultation is also seeking feedback on draft statutory guidance developed to support local authorities in assessing the suitability of education provided to children and young people not on any school register, nor in education other than at school (EOTAS). The consultation runs until 21 October 2019.

Future consultation is expected to seek views on regulations which will require local authorities to establish a home education database. This will follow a Welsh Government scoping exercise being undertaken with stakeholders to consider the requirements of the database, existing software available, and any practical or legal limitations.

The 2019 consultation follows a statement from the Minister of Education to the National Assembly in January 2018.
Professional standards for school learning support staff


The Welsh Government has introduced the standards to provide opportunities to increase assistants’ skills, help identify clear career pathways and commit to professional learning.

The standards are also intended to help those who wish to become higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) or go on to become fully qualified teachers.

They take account of a 2018/19 consultation on the draft professional standards for school learning support staff, the summary of responses [16] to which was published in May 2019.

The professional standards are for all those who work in classrooms to assist teaching and learning. They have been developed using the same five standards model as the standards for teaching and leadership:

- pedagogy
- collaboration
- leadership
- innovation
- professional learning.

School learning support workers are commonly referred to as teaching assistants (TAs) and higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs). There has been a significant increase in their numbers in recent years and, since 2003, an evolution in their role, largely due to the provisions adopted by **Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement**. [17] This has also been as a result of initiatives to improve provision for early years education and pupils with additional learning needs. There were previously no professional standards for TAs.

**Additional Learning Needs Code**


The draft ALN Code provides statutory guidance to help people and organisations work within the requirements of the **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act** [20]. The Act and draft Code are part of the Welsh Government **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Programme** [21], which aims to transform the separate systems for special educational needs (SEN) [22] in schools and **learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)** [23] in further education [24], to create a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN.

After the consideration of changes is complete, the Welsh Government proposes to lay a revised draft ALN Code before the National Assembly for its approval later in 2019. At the same time, it is intended that various supporting regulations to be made under the Act will be laid.

The new ALN system will be implemented over a period of three years beginning in September 2020.

**School governance regulatory framework**

In February 2017, a consultation [25] on proposed changes to the school governance regulatory
framework ended. In April 2019, the Education Minister announced [26] that, following the consultation, no legislation or changes were planned. However, in publishing a summary of the responses to the consultation in June 2019, the Welsh Government confirmed the immediate actions that will be taken to provide support and resources for governing bodies [27].

These include:

- supporting local authorities [10] in conjunction with their regional consortia [28] to ensure all governing bodies are fully up-to-date on curriculum reform
- producing a termly bulletin for governing bodies on the latest progress in delivering Our National Mission [29] (the action plan for education 2017-21)
- ensuring that the National Approach to Professional Learning [30] includes resources aimed at school governors
- creating a programme of learning relevant to the needs of school governors in Wales
- working with Cardiff University to develop a school governors’ recruitment scheme which aims to increase the number of university staff volunteering to serve as school governors.

Bullying in schools

Following a consultation [31] on draft anti-bullying guidance, which ran from November 2018 to February 2019, the Welsh Government published a summary of responses [31] in May 2019.

The consultation sought to establish whether the draft guidance and selection of supporting resources for schools met the needs of key audiences.

The revised guidance, which is for schools, school governors, local authorities, parents/carers, and children and young people, aims to explain the following key aspects more clearly:

- what bullying is
- what bullying is not
- who should be responsible for and involved in addressing bullying inside and outside school settings
- what to do if bullying is happening
- reporting, recording and monitoring bullying
- prevention strategies for challenging bullying behaviour
- children’s rights
- roles and responsibilities for addressing bullying holistically
- legislation underpinning anti-bullying.

The responses to the consultation are being used to inform the development of the final suite of guidance and the supporting resource toolkit, which will be published in the 2019/20 school year.

Progress on the new curriculum

In April 2019, the Welsh Government published [32] curriculum and assessment materials for the new Curriculum for Wales for feedback. The materials included:

- a Guide to Curriculum for Wales 2022 [33]
- guidance documents for the six draft Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) [34]
- assessment proposals [35] to inform the development of statutory guidance.

The final versions will be available in January 2020 for use in schools from 2022.
The publication of these materials for feedback follows a 2019 consultation [36] that ran from January to March, focusing on the legislative framework for the new curriculum. It covered:

- the purpose and structure of the curriculum
- the Welsh and English languages
- relationships and sexuality education (RSE) for 3- to 16-year-olds
- religious education (RE) for 3- to 16-year-olds
- the right to withdraw from RE and RSE
- the assessment of learners.

The new curriculum will include four core purposes [37] and six areas of learning and experience [38], with literacy, numeracy and digital competence taught as cross-curricular subjects.

Similar to existing arrangements, the new curriculum will be provided for 3- to 5-year-olds who attend nursery classes in maintained schools [39] and those attending funded nursery settings; and 5- to 16-year-olds who attend maintained schools in Wales.

The curriculum [40] will be introduced from nursery to Year 7 (the first year of secondary education) in 2022, rolling into Year 8 (age 12/13) for 2023 and so on until it is introduced for Year 11 pupils in 2026.

The decision to develop a new curriculum followed the publication of Professor Donaldson’s February 2015 report, Successful Futures [41], which included 68 recommendations regarding curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. The recommendations were accepted in full by the Minister for Education in June 2015.

**Additional INSET days 2019-2022**

On 16 July 2019, the Minister for Education responded [42] to a consultation [43] on additional professional development days for teachers, which ran from 5 March to 1 May.

In her response, she confirmed her proposal to make amendments to the Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) Regulations 2003 [44] to allow schools one additional training and development (INSET) day per year for three years, until 2022. These days will take place annually in the summer term and will focus specifically on professional learning to support the introduction of the new curriculum.

The Minister also confirmed that she will be making a recommendation to schools that, out of the five INSET days already allocated to schools, a minimum of a further one day each academic year should be used to prepare for the new curriculum. This day can be taken at a time to suit the school.

To support this training and schools’ readiness for the new curriculum, the Welsh Government will also develop a bank of digital resources.

**Welsh language strategy action plan 2019-20**

In March 2019, the Minister for Education announced [45] the publication of Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers - Action plan 2019–20 [46]. This sets out specific actions for 2019/20 to implement the objectives laid out in the Welsh Language Strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers [47]. The action plan reflects the priorities previously identified in the Work programme 2017–21 [48], published in tandem with the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy.

Educational aims in the strategy include to:
• provide children with the best start in the Welsh language, by expanding support for families to transmit the language in the home
• expand Welsh-medium provision in the early years as an access point for Welsh-medium education
• create a statutory education system which increases the number of confident Welsh speakers
• develop post-compulsory education provision which increases rates of progression and supports everyone, whatever their command of the language, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace
• plan the education and training workforce that can teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh, and the resources and qualifications needed to support increased provision.

**Estyn to introduce changes to inspection arrangements in schools**

In February 2019, Estyn, the office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales, announced plans to introduce changes to school inspection arrangements to accommodate the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales (due to be implemented nationwide from September 2022).

Any changes will be subject to consultation, but include a proposal for a partial suspension of inspection for maintained schools from September 2020 to August 2021. This is to allow Estyn to work closely with schools on curriculum reform. Estyn has also proposed, in the longer term (from 2024), to increase the frequency of inspection by inspecting and validating a school’s self-evaluation process more than once within a seven-year cycle.

**Evaluation and improvement (accountability) arrangements**

On 19 February 2019, the Welsh Government published draft Evaluation and Improvement Arrangements. These draft new accountability arrangements, which will support the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales from 2022, are based on four key principles. They will be:

• fair – promoting equity, inclusion, choice, individual pathways to learning and never losing sight of the learner
• coherent – allowing each part of the system to work together without overlapping, with clear roles and responsibilities
• proportionate – ensuring that the implementation of the new arrangements and process is manageable and makes a difference. They will be underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity, allowing responsibility for accountability for schools to be local, led by self-aware schools
• transparent – recognising the breadth of learning experience across schools and the value added by teachers in class.

**2018**

**Measures to support rural schools**

In November 2018, the School Organisation Code was updated to include a presumption against the closure of rural schools.

The School Organisation Code is made under Sections 38 and 39 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. It imposes requirements and provides guidelines in respect of school organisation proposals, i.e. proposals to reconfigure school provision, for example to open or
close a school.

The changes to the Code strengthen the presumption against closing rural schools, and specify that cases to close rural schools must be strong and that local authorities [10] must consult more rigorously and consider all viable alternatives before deciding upon a closure. A definition of what constitutes a rural school will be developed for the first time.

The proposals were announced [53] in November 2016 as part of a package of measures to support rural schools. In addition, rural schools will be encouraged to work together through federations, and the Welsh Government is introducing a rural and small schools grant to support schools in working together.

School teachers’ pay and conditions

On 30 September 2018, under the Wales Act 2017 [6], the Welsh Government acquired responsibility for setting pay and conditions of service for teachers in Wales.

In August, it had issued its response [54] to a consultation on a proposed mechanism to do this. The ‘Teacher Engagement Model’ will operate on an annual basis and include the involvement of an independent review body, similar to the School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) [55] in place in England. It will combine this with a social partnership based forum, to allow for discussion and shared decision making.

The Welsh Government’s independent review to examine the issues involved reported on 21 September 2018. Teaching: A valued profession [4] included the recommendations that:

- a School Teachers’ Review Body for Wales is established
- a new, coherent ‘Career, Conditions and Pay Framework for Teachers in Wales’ document is written
- teachers should be entitled to seven days of professional learning each year
- early stages of a teacher’s career should carry a reduced teaching commitment
- a new system role of Specialist in Pedagogy should be established
- pay ranges should initially retain direct comparability with England
- there should be a salary uplift for teachers with an appropriate Master’s qualification
- a new pay progression arrangement should be implemented and the upper pay range discontinued.

Assembly committee inquiry into Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

The Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales has published the responses [56] from a consultation on the status of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). The consultation, which ran from 3 July to 20 September 2018, was part of a Committee inquiry [56] into the revised WBQ [57] that was introduced for teaching from September 2015.

The Committee inquiry is looking at the qualification at Key Stage 4 [58] and post-16, and focuses specifically on:

- the extent to which the WBQ is understood and valued by learners, parents, education professionals in schools and colleges, higher education institutions and employers
- the extent to which the WBQ is considered by learners, education professionals in schools and colleges, employers and higher education to be an equivalent, rigorous qualification
• the status of the WBQ in schools and colleges, including the Welsh Government's target for universal adoption and the potential impact of this approach
• the wider impact of studying the WBQ on other curriculum subjects and education provision
• the benefits and disadvantages of the WBQ to learners, schools and colleges, higher education institutions and employers.

Improving outcomes for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

On 26 June 2018, the Welsh Government published the Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers plan, replacing the 2011 Travelling to a Better Future Framework for Action and Delivery Plan. The publication of the plan followed a consultation, which ran from 28 September to 21 December 2017.

The plan aims to improve social inclusion for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, as well as to narrow the gap in their educational outcomes. Under the theme 'Ambitious and Learning', it includes measures to:

• improve the confidence of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and parents to self-ascribe their ethnicity at school, to ensure performance can be better understood and learning supported
• ensure Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have their culture reflected in the school environment
• support and challenge local authorities and regional education consortia on actions they are taking directly, and through support to schools, to improve educational outcomes for all learners
• tackle bullying in schools against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

The inspectorate, Estyn, also carried out a thematic review of the quality of and provision for secondary-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils in 2018-19. The report of the thematic review, published in April 2019, focuses on progress since its 2011 report on Gypsy and Traveller education.

It recommends that local authorities and schools should:

• 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.

Report of inquiry into targeted funding to improve educational outcomes

The Children, Young People and Education Committee of the National Assembly for Wales published a report on its inquiry into targeted funding to improve educational outcomes on 20 June 2018.

The Welsh Government targets additional resources at particular groups of pupils, primarily through the Pupil Development Grant (PDG). The impact of this targeted approach was the focus of the Committee's inquiry, which began in October 2017. The recommendations of the report, On the Money, for the Welsh Government include that it should:
• regularly assess the scale of investment required for the PDG in terms of value for money and opportunity cost. In particular, the Welsh Government should closely monitor, on an ongoing basis, the PDG’s impact on the pupils it targets.
• take all steps to emphasise that the PDG is to be used to support all eligible learners, including those who are more able and talented.
• ensure there is coherence in its approach to targeting funding to improve educational outcomes, addressing any inconsistencies between the principle behind the PDG and the ending of other targeted education grants.
• ensure Key Stage 4 performance measures and school accountability arrangements incentivise schools to support pupils eligible for free school meals in achieving as high grades as possible.
• encourage and place an onus on schools to take full account of the available evidence and expertise on what constitutes effective use of the PDG, whilst enabling school leaders to take appropriate decisions for their own pupils.

The Welsh Government published its response on 21 September 2018 and accepted the majority of the inquiry’s recommendations. These included:

• a commitment to regular assessment of the scale of investment required for the Pupil Development Grant (PDG).
• updating the PDG guidance to emphasise that it should be used to support all eligible learners, including those who are more able and talented.
• working with parents to identify adopted children so they can receive PDG support.
• monitoring and evaluating how regional consortia provide challenge and support to schools requiring improvement.

**Review report on role of inspectorate**

The report of the independent review of the role of Estyn, the inspectorate, was published on 7 June 2018. Announced in July 2017, the review, which examined Estyn’s role in supporting education reform, was undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson. It began in August 2017.

The review report made 34 recommendations including that:

• Estyn’s system of school inspection should be adapted in a phased way, in line with wider reforms, ultimately to one which is directed towards validation of schools’ self-evaluation.
• The Welsh Government’s proposed national evaluation and assessment framework should clearly define the standards and outcomes expected from the reforms, together with relevant quantitative and qualitative measures and indicators.
• The ‘high stakes’ aspects of the current accountability arrangements that are likely to undermine the Welsh Government’s aims for a self-improving and learning culture should be replaced by other approaches, while still ensuring rigour.
• The strategic purpose of inspection, self-evaluation and wider accountability mechanisms should focus on answering four main questions:

  1. How well is the school engaging with the purposes of the Curriculum for Wales?
  2. How well are pupils progressing in their learning and achieving appropriately high standards?
  3. How well developed are the fundamental building blocks for learning:
     • the breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum?
     • the quality of learning and teaching?
     • the wellbeing of all pupils?
4. How well does the school use self-evaluation and professional learning to identify its current strengths and set priorities for development?

The report also proposed that inspection reports should provide a stronger explanatory narrative about the performance of the school in relation to these four questions, wherever possible drawing on the school self-evaluation process.

Estyn has published its response to the review.

**Eligibility for free school meals consultation**

Following the introduction of Universal Credit, the Welsh Government needed to revise its eligibility criteria for free school meals and held a consultation on the proposals in June 2018.

It proposed to introduce an earned income threshold of £7400 (€8409.09*) for Universal Credit claimants who want to claim free school meals for their children. Measures were also proposed to give transitional protection to families affected by the change.

The consultation ran from 6 June to 14 September 2018 with a summary of responses published in December 2018.

Following the responses, the Minister for Education announced an annualised net earned income threshold of £7400 for Universal Credit claimants who wish to claim free school meals for their children, with effect from 1 April 2019.

*Exchange rate used: €1 = £0.88, ECB, 14 June 2018.

**Digital Competence Framework**

In June 2018, the Welsh Government published updated guidance for the Digital Competence Framework (DCF). Formally launched in September 2016, the DCF applies to all learners aged 3 to 16 as part of the new Curriculum for Wales.

Made available in advance of the new curriculum, which will be introduced from September 2022, the Framework encourages the integration of digital skills across the full range of lessons, giving digital competence the same cross-curricular priority as literacy and numeracy. It consists of four strands of equal importance, each with a number of elements:

- **Citizenship**
  - identity, image and reputation
  - health and wellbeing
  - digital rights, licensing and ownership
  - online behaviour and cyberbullying
- **Interacting and collaborating**
  - communication
  - collaboration
  - storing and sharing
- **Producing**
  - planning, sourcing and searching
  - creating
  - evaluating and improving
- **Data and computational thinking**
problem solving and modelling
- data and information literacy.

Relationships and sexuality education curriculum reforms

On 22 May 2018, the Minister for Education announced [78] that the provision of sex and relationships education (SRE) will become a statutory part of Wales’ new curriculum which will be in place from 2022. She confirmed also that it will be known as relationships and sexuality education (RSE). RSE will be compulsory for learners between the ages of 5 and 16. Content will be developmentally appropriate, with a focus on healthy relationships.

The Minister for Education also announced that there would be changes to sex education training in both initial teacher education and within the existing workforce, with funding being made available to regional education consortia [28] to identify professional learning needs in this area.

Sex education currently forms part of the 'basic curriculum', with schools able to decide on the content and approaches they use. Both an Expert Panel review report [79], published in January 2018, and Estyn, the inspectorate’s, June 2017 thematic review [80] of healthy relationships education, provided evidence that schools needed greater support to provide consistently high quality sex education.

The change in name to relationships and sexuality education will precede the implementation of the new curriculum, and will be introduced in refreshed guidance for the current curriculum. A summary of the responses to a consultation [81] on the refreshed guidance was published in July 2019.

Establishment of National Academy for Educational Leadership

An In Brief article [82] from the National Assembly for Wales Research Service, published on 17 May 2018, highlights the official launch of the National Academy for Educational Leadership on 16 May 2018. A year previously, in a statement [83] to the National Assembly for Wales, the Minister for Education had announced that a new body would be established to support educational leaders. Setting up this body was a key action in the September 2017 document, Education in Wales: Our national mission. Action plan 2017–21 [29].

The National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) [84] will work with partners across the system to provide strategic support for those in current leadership roles, as well as providing encouragement and inspiration for those who wish to pursue a leadership career in education.

This is in response to concerns about the quality of leadership in schools, including:

- a lack of succession planning
- a limited number of well-tailored professional development opportunities for senior and middle-level leaders, and teachers
- school leadership not being considered an attractive profession.

The core objectives of the Academy will be to:

- ensure the availability of programmes and provision to support leadership development, and where there are gaps, commission suitable provision
- quality assure provision through a process of endorsement
- promote the use and accessibility of leadership research and national and international best practice
- offer support and advice on leadership career pathways.
• create a community of peers and offer information and advice.

The first two programmes endorsed by the NAEL are:

• Leadership Development Provision for Experienced Headteachers
• Leadership Development Provision for Acting Headteachers and those New to Headship.

Further details of the endorsement timeline are available on the NAEL website.

**Identifying and supporting more able learners**

In February 2018, the Minister for Education announced £3 million (€3.39 million*) funding for a new national approach to identifying and supporting more able learners, backed with comprehensive new guidance. This will include a new definition of more able learners.

The main elements of the approach are:

• better identification and support at school, regional and national levels
• opportunities that will inspire the highest levels of achievement
• the development of evidence to support further investment and work.

The Seren Network, which supports Wales’ most academically able sixth formers in gaining access to leading universities, will be expanded to target younger learners. From September 2018, the Network began targeting learners before their GCSEs, connecting pupils from different schools and communities and building on Seren’s existing links with leading global universities.

*Exchange rate used: €1 = £0.88, ECB, 27 February 2018.

**Children not receiving suitable education and supporting home educators**

In January 2018, the Minister for Education made a Statement to the National Assembly for Wales on plans for a package of support for home educators, and assistance for local authorities to identify school-aged children not in formal education.

The support for home educators will include help with exam registrations, additional learning needs support, access to Wales’ digital learning platform Hwb, exploring opportunities for home-educating families to learn Welsh, and support from Careers Wales.

The Minister for Education has also announced that she intends to consult on using existing legislation to require local authorities to establish a database to assist them in identifying children not on a school register, not in education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) and not receiving a suitable education.

**Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018**

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017 and became an Act on 24 January 2018, after receiving Royal Assent.

The Act makes provision for:

• a statutory basis for the term 'additional learning needs' (ALN)
• a unified legislative framework to support children and young people from birth to age 25 with
ALN. This replaces two separate systems – one operating to support children and young people of compulsory school age who have special educational needs (SEN) [94]; the other supporting young people in further education [24] who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) [23].

- The introduction of a new individual development plan (IDP) as a statutory document, containing a description of the person’s ALN and a description of the additional learning provision (ALP) that the person’s learning difficulty or disability calls for.

The Welsh Government ran a consultation [95] on how best to implement the new system from February to June 2017, following which it decided to adopt a phased approach to implementation. The new system established by the Act will be introduced over a three-year period from September 2020.

The National Assembly for Wales Research Service has produced a summary [96] of the Act.

2017

Education otherwise than at school

In December 2017, the Welsh Government published Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS): Framework for Action [97].

EOTAS is education provision to meet the specific needs of pupils who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a mainstream or special school. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) [98] are a common form of such provision.

The framework was developed by the EOTAS Task and Finish Group, with engagement from the sector, as a response to reports by Estyn [99], the Children’s Commissioner for Wales [100] and the University of Edinburgh [101].

The EOTAS Task and Finish Group was established in September 2015 with the purpose of developing practical solutions to the recommendations of these reports. The Group was chaired by the former Estyn Chief Inspector Ann Keane and included representatives from the Welsh Government, local authorities [10], schools, PRUs, Estyn and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner.

The framework for action includes encouraging the involvement of PRUs in collaborative working, improved information collection and sharing, and greater stability in the structure and organisation for PRUs and other EOTAS providers.

Use of assessment data below national level

In November 2017, the Welsh Government began a consultation on regulations which remove requirements placed on schools, local authorities and other bodies, to use teacher assessment and test data from the Foundation Phase. [102] to Key Stage 3 [58]. The regulations mean that, from 2018/19, the Welsh Government will no longer routinely publish teacher assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Tests data below the national level.


School workforce data collection

The Education (Supply of Information about the School Workforce) (Wales) Regulations 2017
require schools and local authorities to provide more detailed information on the school workforce. They came into force in October 2017.

The regulations enable changes to the collection of individual-level information on the school workforce in Wales. They broaden the information collected which was regarded as too limited to provide the evidence needed to support policy making around the recruitment, development and retention of the workforce in Wales. The regulations were made following a Welsh Government consultation which took place between January and March 2017.

The Welsh Government’s intention is for a school workforce census (SWAC) to take place in November of each year, with the first census day to take place on 5 November 2019. Technical completion notes were published in August 2019 as guidance. The SWAC is being introduced on a phased approach - with phase 1 in November 2019 and phase 2 to follow in November 2020. Phase 2 will include the phase 1 snapshot data and an additional historical data module for recruitment, retention, supply and absences. The November 2020 return will be the first full SWAC.

**Action plan for education 2017-21**

In September 2017, the Minister for Education announced a new plan to raise standards in education. *Education in Wales: Our national mission. Action plan 2017–21* sets out how the school system will move forward over the period 2017-21.

The priorities in the plan include:

- reducing class sizes
- reforming teacher training
- strengthening support for learners with additional learning needs
- establishing a national approach to long-term career development for teachers
- establishing a new National Academy for Educational Leadership
- reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for teachers
- investing in an upgrade of school buildings.

**Changes to inspection arrangements**

The Welsh education inspectorate, Estyn, introduced revised inspection arrangements from September 2017. The key changes are:

- The notice period for inspections has been reduced to 15 days.
- Inspections will typically take four days rather than five.
- Inspections will focus on five areas: standards; well-being and attitudes to learning; teaching and learning experiences; care, support and guidance; and leadership.
- They will also focus on a thematic area to help inform Estyn’s thematic reports, the Chief Inspector’s Annual Report, and the advice Estyn gives to the Welsh Government.
- The previous four-point judgement scale will remain, but its wording has been amended to focus on actions to be taken to support improvement.
- Providers subject to ‘follow-up’ inspections will get more flexible support to help them make positive changes faster.

**Professional standards for teaching and leadership**

New professional standards for teaching and leadership are being phased in from September 2017. The standards:
- bring together professional standards for teaching and leadership to better reflect and support career pathways
- create a single set of entry standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and the successful completion of induction
- replace the Qualified Teacher Status Standards Wales (2009), Practising Teachers Standards (2011) and Leadership Standards (2011).

Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) commencing induction on or after 1 September 2017 are required to work to the new standards. All other serving teachers and leaders will move to the new standards by September 2018. The new standards are optional for initial teacher education programmes from September 2018 and mandatory from September 2019.


Accreditation of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes

In March 2017, the Minister for Education launched new accreditation criteria for programmes of initial teacher education (ITE) in Wales. From September 2019, all ITE programmes will need to be accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) and accreditation is to be awarded for a five-year period. This new EWC function will replace the process of accrediting ITE providers’ programmes through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

The Welsh Government intends that the new criteria should enable more specific consideration of how ITE programmes will raise the quality of provision and attract people with the right skills, qualifications and aptitudes to enter the profession.

These changes form part of a package of reforms being undertaken in response to the Furlong review, Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers (2015).

Guidance for special educational needs coordinators

In March 2017, the Welsh Government published guidance to clarify the role of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), a role which must be held by a designated person in each school. The SENCO may be a teacher or a non-teaching member of staff. The guidance provides information on planning, target setting and interventions that will support learners with special educational needs (SEN), and aims to support a consistent approach to SENCO practice across Wales.

Under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, the Welsh Government intends to introduce Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos), a statutory role that will replace SENCOs.

Funding to assist learners with additional learning needs

In February 2017, the Welsh Government announced funding of £20 million (€22.84 million*) over the following five years to support learners with additional learning needs (ALN).

The funding will assist the education sector to transition to new arrangements set out in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, by encouraging organisations to work closely together, developing the workforce and raising awareness of ALN.
Guidance on elective home education

In January 2017, the Welsh Government published non-statutory guidance covering:

- the rights and responsibilities of the local authority and of home-educating families
- how local authorities can support home-educating families
- local authorities’ safeguarding duties.

There is also an information leaflet for parents and carers considering educating their child at home.

During July to October 2019, the Welsh Government is consulting on a new handbook of advice and information for home educating families and those thinking of home educating.

Wales Act 2017 and teachers’ pay


The Act amended the Government of Wales Act 2006, devolving further legislative powers to Wales and changing the devolution model from a ‘conferred matters’ model to a ‘reserved matters’ model. The reserved powers model set out in the 2017 Act provides a clearer separation of powers between what is devolved and what is reserved, enabling the Welsh Assembly to legislate on any subject except those specifically reserved to the UK Parliament.

The powers devolved to Wales by the 2017 Act include the framework for teachers’ pay and conditions, which was previously set for England and Wales by the UK Government.

Funding to reduce infant class sizes

In January 2017, the Minister for Education announced a new fund aimed at reducing class sizes in infant classes and at raising standards. The funding will target classes where teaching and learning needs to improve and where there are high levels of deprivation. The £36 million (€41.66 million*) fund, consisting of both revenue and capital funding, will be invested over the four years up until 2021.

The Minister for Education provided an update on the use being made of the funding on 20 April 2018.

Data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) indicated that, in January 2018, 8.1% (8695) of infant pupils in Wales were in classes of over 30, down from 8.2% (8794) in January 2017.

* Exchange rate used: €1 = £0.86, ECB, 27 March 2017.

National network of excellence for science and technology

In January 2017, the Welsh Government announced that it would fund a new national network of excellence for science and technology to raise standards in Welsh schools.

The network aims to target the improvement of teachers’ skills in science and technology, and to involve schools in working with the science and technology departments of
universities, regional education consortia, and further education, and with other experts, to learn from the best practice available. It will do this by:

- drawing together knowledge about good teaching practice in science and technology for 3- to 18-year-olds
- coordinating the development and delivery of science and technology professional development for teachers, based on international and local evidence of what works
- improving learners’ experiences of science and technology in schools across Wales
- enabling schools to work together to develop courses, teaching resources and class-based research.

The network was officially launched by the Minister for Education on 7 December 2017. It followed the launch, in November 2016, of a similar national network of excellence for mathematics. This involves schools, universities and regional consortia working together to improve teaching and learning in maths. It provides support to develop subject leadership and classroom practice, promotes conferences and events on effective teaching practice, and accredits evidence-based professional development programmes. Further information on the work of the network is available from its section of the Welsh Government’s Hwb website.

Article last reviewed September 2019.
[111] https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-standards
[112] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-77_en#QualifiedTeacherStatus(QTS)
[115] https://gov.wales/initial-teacher-education-programmes-accreditation-criteria
[117] https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/home/home.aspx
[118] https://beta.gov.wales/role-special-educational-needs-coordinator-senco
[119] https://gov.wales/plans-ps20m-investment-help-those-additional-learning-needs-announced
[120] https://beta.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme
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