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Minority ethnic achievement in education in Wales



Information

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Audience	This document is aimed at leaders and practitioners throughout the education system in Wales, from schools to local authorities and regional consortia, through to government and national partners.
Overview	The Welsh Government is committed to enabling all children to achieve their full potential, including minority ethnic children. We see minority ethnic achievement as being inherent in our wider School Improvement Programme. This policy statement aims to situate minority ethnic achievement within the wider strategic framework governing education in Wales.
Action required	None – for information only.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Theresa Davies Support for Learners Division Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 029 2082 1658 e-mail: Diverselearners@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Learning Wales website at learning.wales.gov.uk

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Ministerial foreword

Wales's cultural, social and linguistic diversity continues to be reflected in our schools, where almost one in ten pupils is from an ethnic minority background. Our Government is proud that over 100 languages and 140 dialects are spoken within Welsh schools. Since becoming Minister for Education and Skills in Wales, I have visited many schools. During my meetings with educators and pupils, I have seen how our cultural diversity enriches students' learning experiences. Interaction with a diverse student community prepares our pupils to take advantage of, and succeed, in a global social and economic environment.

Unlocking every child's potential is at the heart of the Welsh Government's strategy for education and reflects article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have high aspirations for all learners, and are committed to supporting the success of students from all backgrounds. This vision is equally true for our minority ethnic pupils who may need English and/or Welsh language support, or face risk of underachieving for other reasons. I recognise that some pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds may need additional support to fully embrace the educational opportunities available in Wales. That is why we have continued to provide the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and the Gypsy and Traveller Education Grant— discrete funding through which, we ensure pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds needing our support are provided with it, to reach their potential.

The commitment, passion and drive of the education professionals supporting our minority ethnic pupils are clear. However, as the number of minority ethnic pupils in Wales increases and resources become constrained, our challenge is to continue supporting our minority ethnic pupils as they work towards their aspirations. We can only do this by challenging and supporting each other through innovative and collaborative approaches that build capacity in our services and classrooms.

This document situates minority ethnic achievement within the wider strategic framework governing education in Wales. It captures the need to utilise all the tools, initiatives and resources available to us. It reminds us of our role in delivering our collective ambition for all pupils in Wales to have an equal chance to succeed.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', is positioned above the printed name of the Minister.

Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills

Introduction

The Welsh Government has high aspirations for all pupils in Wales. Our ambitious education reform programme focuses on school improvement as the principal means of delivering our objective of ensuring all pupils succeed. The school improvement agenda has at its core three priorities: improving pupils' levels of literacy, improving numeracy skills and reducing the impact of deprivation on learner outcomes. School improvement is pertinent to *all* pupils in schools – including pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds¹.

The Welsh Government recognises that sometimes pupils may need additional support to realise and achieve their potential. This can be particularly true for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who require support learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) and/or Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL). This is because less developed language skills can make it difficult for pupils to access the curriculum, thereby putting them at risk of underachieving. We also recognise that some minority ethnic pupils could be fluent in English and/or Welsh but require additional support because they are at risk of underachieving for other reasons. Our goal is secure improved outcomes for all our learners. This means recognising where we need to target additional support, being innovative in delivering services that build capacity and ensuring we embed learning through collaborative working approaches.

Current situation

In Wales, unlike other parts of the United Kingdom (UK), the Welsh Government has continued to allocate funding streams to support the educational attainment of all minority ethnic pupils. The funding is awarded on an annual basis to local authorities, who have the statutory responsibility to provide children in their areas with suitable education. These funding streams serve to supplement the core funded education provision available to minority ethnic pupils.

Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant

The largest element of the funding is provided via the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (or MEAG). In 2013-14, the MEAG amounted to £10.5m and was distributed to all 22 local authorities across Wales. Over the years, most local authorities have used this funding to establish and deliver stand-alone Ethnic Minority Achievement Services. All of the services across Wales are different, reflecting local cultures, demographics and demand. However, many local authorities have used the funding to employ EAL specialists and bilingual teaching assistants with the necessary skills to work with minority ethnic pupils in schools. In a minority of cases, local authorities

¹ For the purposes of this document, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are included in the references to minority ethnic pupils.

have chosen to delegate the MEAG funding and/or MEAG funded resources directly to schools (based on pupil numbers and the level of need).

Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children

The Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children amounted to £1.1m in 2013-14. This grant is open to all local authorities in Wales to support the provision of education and education related services to Gypsy and/or Traveller pupils. Roma children are eligible for support under both this grant and the MEAG. Where local authorities have very small numbers of Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller children, they can buy-in support from the services of neighbouring authorities. In 2013-14, 19 of the 22 local authorities claimed funding through the Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children. The funding has served to establish Local Authority Traveller Education Services.

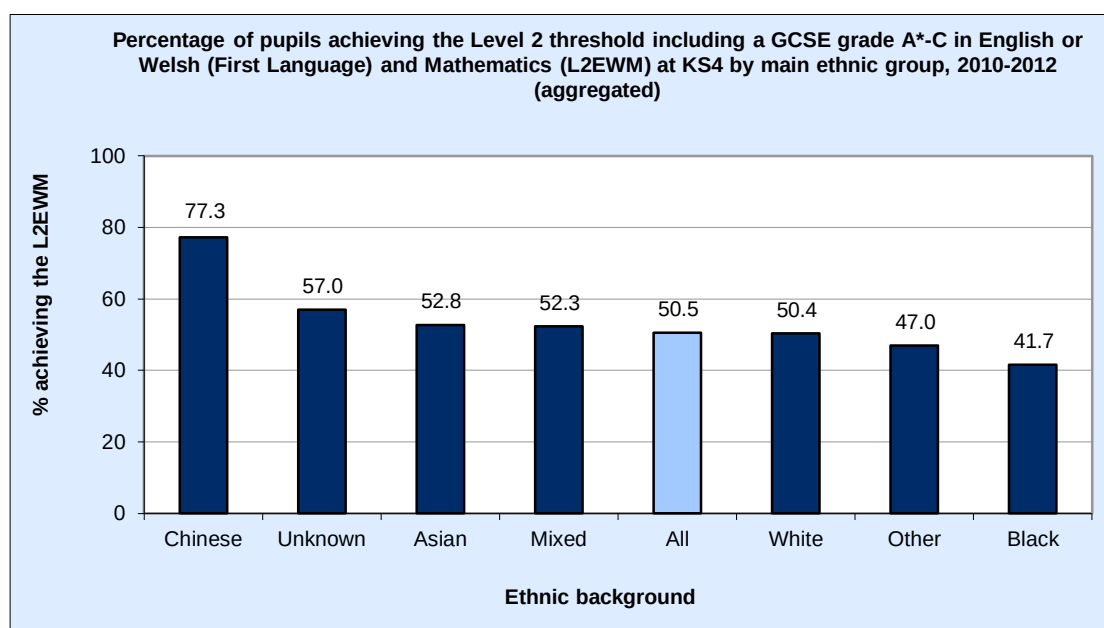
In some areas, one service lead or manager takes responsibility for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and Traveller Education Service. Even where this is not the case, we expect both service managers to work closely alongside each other to complement the educational support provided to eligible children.

Improving outcomes

Our fundamental objective is centred on securing improved outcomes for our learners. For pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who require additional support to reach their potential, this means ensuring services:

- **better target funding and support at those who need it;**
- **build capacity to meet increased demands;**
- **work collaboratively with all partners; and**
- **are held to account for delivering improved learner outcomes.**

By and large, the performance of minority ethnic pupils in Wales is improving. Minority ethnic pupils with EAL and/or WAL needs also tend to achieve in line with their level of language acquisition. We attribute this success to the targeted support provided by Ethnic Minority Achievement Services. However, there is more to do. The performance of Black/Black British pupils shows a gap in attainment that increases through each Key Stage to 35.6 percentage points by the end of Key Stage 4 (see below)².



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children also stand out as having the lowest levels of educational attainment of any learner group³. The Welsh Government's immediate priorities for these groups of learners centre on improving school attendance and supporting the transition to secondary school. We have high aspirations for Gypsy and Traveller children and want to ensure their equal access to the educational opportunities available to all children in Wales.

² When compared to the attainment of Chinese pupils (77.3%). SOURCE: Statistical Bulletin 28/3/13: Academic Achievement by Pupils Characteristics, 2012.

³ SOURCE: Statistical Bulletin 28/3/13: Academic Achievement by Pupils Characteristics, 2012.

Targeted funding and support

Since 2007, the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased by approximately 35 percent. There were over 42,000 children eligible for support under the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) in 2013-14⁴. As 2014-15 is the first financial year in which the MEAG is not set to increase, local authorities will need to apply innovative new strategies to meet any additional demands. The Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children will also remain static at £1.1m for the next financial year. As a result, Traveller Education Services will need to make their resources stretch further to meet increased demand from new Gypsy, Roma and Traveller arrivals.

We know that minority ethnic attainment is continuing to improve in general, but we need to step up the pace of improvement to continue to address inequalities in educational outcomes. In an environment where resources are becoming increasingly constrained, doing more of the same will not be sufficient in our effort to continue delivering improved outcomes for minority ethnic pupils. Instead, we must focus on providing better targeted support to those who need it most, *together* with a drive to build capacity in services, schools and classrooms. In this way, we can take important steps to meet the education needs of minority ethnic pupils more efficiently.

Capacity building

The professionals responsible for our Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services have sought to build capacity within their services. These services are offered in conjunction with other local authority services to help secure better outcomes for learners. Investment in the development of Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education service staff through CPD and other relevant training and development programmes is integral to building capacity in services. But we need to do more. Recently, the more developed services have begun to support holistic strategies to build capacity at school level and better support our classroom practitioners. The objective is to improve minority ethnic pedagogy to ensure classroom practitioners are confident in their classrooms and can deliver a tailored curriculum to support minority ethnic pupils' attainment. The challenge is to ensure all services are innovative and forward-thinking in the way they help teaching professionals to meet the needs of all minority ethnic pupils.

Collaborative working

Local Authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services are ideally positioned to work with each other. They should foster the sharing of good practice, professional expertise and teaching support at a local level

⁴ Data on pupil numbers is supplied by Welsh Government and taken from local authorities' funding applications.

in school settings. They also have an important role to play in facilitating the engagement of parents and carers with the education of their children. When families are engaged in a meaningful way, their children tend to perform better in school. Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services should also seek to support each other through collaboration with neighbouring services.

In Wales, the school improvement programme is driven through four regional consortia working on behalf of local authorities. From April 2014, the four regional consortia will adopt and embody one national model for school improvement: the National Model for Regional Working⁵. This provides local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services with a geographical footprint on which to collaborate. As structures and processes for collaboration are developed, local authorities should consider how to build more capacity and achieve greater efficiency in the delivery of targeted services for better minority ethnic learner outcomes.

Accountability

The resources directed towards improving minority ethnic achievement in Wales have been vital in supporting the education of minority ethnic pupils. Minority ethnic pupils should benefit from local authorities' own core funded provision, and from additional and targeted grant funding such as the School Effectiveness Grant and, where relevant, Pupil Deprivation Grant. They also benefit from the full range of education initiatives such as the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and overall school improvement programmes. Considering the comprehensive nature of these funding schemes and programmes, the attainment levels of minority ethnic learners could still be higher. Further room for improvement gives added impetus to the case for increasing the impact of available funding on minority ethnic achievement in Wales.

Working with Ethnic Minority Achievement Services, the Welsh Government has introduced a stronger outcome-focused service delivery system. A plan is also in place to help Traveller Education Services develop the same outcomes-reporting discipline. This increased focus on outcomes emphasises the need to set objectives at the beginning of the funding period, reinforcing a positive impact on learner outcomes upon delivery. A much greater emphasis is placed on the robust and rigorous analysis of data and other information, including Estyn inspection reports, to determine service priorities. Implementation is regularly reviewed to ensure progress towards the goal of improving learner outcomes. The impact of the strategies employed in delivering the service objectives is then evaluated to inform the implementation of working practices proven to raise attainment levels.

⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/national-model-for-regional-working/?lang=en>

Other considerations

School improvement is based on effective support strategies, interventions and challenges that improve teaching and learning, effectively aiding pupil attainment and progress. This model of school improvement will be evident in the delivery of Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services that add value. To this end, regional consortia are responsible for supporting and challenging schools and local authorities in their efforts to:

- improve learner outcomes,
- ensure the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning, and
- support and empower key figures to better lead their schools.

The actual beneficiaries of this approach will be minority ethnic learners, for whom we have high expectations and aspirations.

The national model is a collaboration between Welsh Government, regional consortia, local authorities and schools. As such, it is an opportunity to create a shared understanding of minority ethnic achievement in the context of wider school improvement. The Welsh Government has set out this policy framework to guide the development of minority ethnic achievement. However, it is the responsibility of Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services to collaborate at a regional level in developing and delivering sustainable service models to support minority ethnic achievement.

As the national model is rolled out, our long-term intention is that consortia will challenge Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and Traveller Education Services to deliver excellent services that meet the needs of minority ethnic pupils. As this is for the future, we will engage in discussions with consortia regarding this function at the appropriate time.

Further support

To support the services in their endeavours to achieve better outcomes for their learners, the Welsh Government has committed to take forward:

- a research study to determine the best way to support the wider engagement of Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- the compilation of a 'toolkit' of capacity-building strategies to equip class teachers with the resources to support minority ethnic achievement; and
- the development of a new, fit-for-purpose assessment tool to review pupils' EAL *and/or* WAL needs as appropriate.

We will continue to facilitate the sharing of good practice and professional support through all relevant Welsh education forums.

Conclusion

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the well-being and educational attainment of minority ethnic pupils. We will support all pupils to achieve their potential regardless of their background. This means we must continue to build on progress in meeting the education needs of minority ethnic learners so that we secure improved outcomes that effectively address inequalities in educational attainment. The Welsh Government will hold services to account for delivering improved learner outcomes; we will continue to challenge services to be innovative and creative in how they deliver services that target support where it is required. Services will need to evidence how they are building capacity in a way which embeds learning more widely to enable classroom practitioners to play their part in supporting their minority ethnic pupils to achieve.

By building on the school improvement programme and maximising the impact of the targeted funding, we will rise to the challenge of ensuring minority ethnic educational attainment is in line with the high aspirations we have for *all* learners.