



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Rewriting the Future 2015: A Year On



Summary report



Audience

Primary, secondary and special schools in Wales; Welsh local authorities and regional education consortia; unions; third sector organisations that have an interest in deprivation and attainment; and members of the public.

Overview

This document summarises the Welsh Government's programme and its four key themes to tackle the link between poverty and educational underachievement in schools. It summarises what has been done under the programme from June 2014 – May 2015 and what is planned for June 2015 – May 2016. Our plans for 2015-16 have been informed by consultation with stakeholders, including through the consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy.

Action required

For use in developing interventions to raise the attainment of learners living in poverty.

Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at: www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Related documents

- [Rewriting the Future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools \(2014\)](#)
- [Building Resilient Communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan \(2013\)](#)
- [Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan \(2013\)](#)
- [Revised Child Poverty Strategy for Wales \(2015\)](#)

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Welcome

Children and young people growing up in poverty aren't doing as well as they could at school. Neither are children who are growing up in care. This isn't what we want in Wales. We want all children to do well and reach their potential, whatever their background.

The Welsh Government wants to change this.

This programme is called '**Rewriting the Future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools**'. This helps learners aged 3-16 from a deprived background do better in school.

Poverty – not having enough money for food, clothing or a safe place to live. It is also about not having the same opportunities as everyone else.

Learners from deprived backgrounds – Children and young people aged 3-16 who are growing up in poverty or in care because they haven't had the same advantages in life as other pupils.

This booklet tells you about:

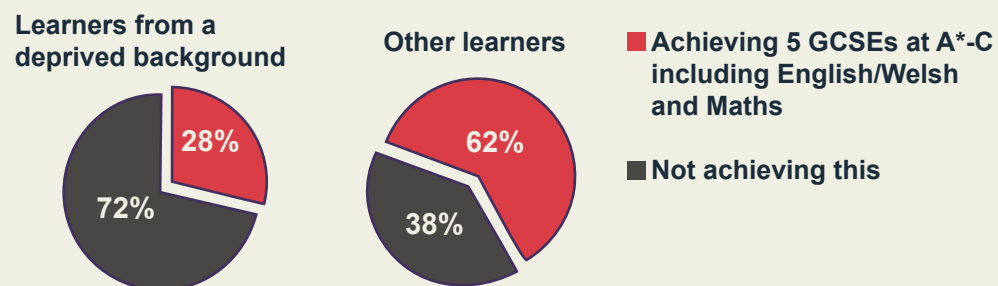
- the programme;
- what we've done between June 2014-May 2015; and
- what we want to do next.

Why is this important?

Some children and young people from deprived backgrounds do well in education but others don't. When we compare learners from deprived backgrounds with their better off classmates there's a gap in the results and grades they get. We call this an **attainment gap**.

There are attainment gaps in all stages of school life but as children get older, the gaps get bigger.

In 2014 only 28% of learners from deprived backgrounds got 5 GCSEs at A*-C including English/Welsh and Maths, compared with 62% of better off learners.



This means fewer young people from deprived backgrounds go on to college, university or well-paid jobs.

We want to reduce this gap and support all schools to help all learners do better no matter what their background.

Some schools are already doing a good job of reducing the gaps. Living in poverty or being in care doesn't stop their pupils from doing well. Other schools need some support so they can learn how to do things better. There are important things for the Welsh Government to do to help schools make a difference.

It isn't just about the gap!

In Wales we want all children and young people to fulfil their potential.

Family and community engagement

What families do at home makes a big difference to how well pupils do at school. Schools can help here. They can encourage families to support their child's learning. Community groups and other organisations around a school can also play an important part. This is what we mean when we use the term 'engagement'.

Families – Families come in all shapes and sizes. When we talk about families, we mean parents, carers, and also grandparents, aunts, uncles or older brothers and sisters – even good family friends. We are talking about the people that the learner trusts and spends time with who could help them to do well at school.

We would like schools to:

- have a plan and activities to help all families get involved their child's learning;
- review how well they're doing at getting families to support learning;
- work with other services, community groups, and organisations that help families, including Communities First; and
- give extra support to learners who don't get support at home for their school work.

What the Welsh Government is doing to help

Last year – June 2014-May 2015

- we created a new [Family and Community Engagement toolkit](#) for schools;
- we ran the [Education Begins At Home](#) campaign to show families the simple things they can do to help their children do better at school;
- we funded 38 projects worth £2.5 million under the Communities First – Pupil Deprivation Grant matched fund. This gives schools more funding to work with community groups; and
- we published a list of projects run by charities and businesses that schools can work with. This is called [Interventions that really work: third and private sector resources for schools tackling deprivation](#).



In the next year – June 2015-May 2016

- we will launch and promote the Family and Community Engagement toolkit;
- we will continue the Education Begins At Home PR campaign;
- we will look at how schools are using Family Liaison Officers;
- we will encourage schools to use their Pupil Deprivation Grant to help parents improve their reading, maths and IT skills;
- we will continue to fund on-going Communities First – Pupil Deprivation Grant matched fund projects; and
- we will work with Estyn (schools inspections) to make clear how they inspect schools on involving families and communities.

Early years (0 to 7)

It works best if we can close attainment gaps while children are young. This gives learners from deprived backgrounds the best chance of doing well later on. Families, playgroups and education settings can do a lot to give the right support.

We would like education settings to:

- use all the information they have to spot which learners need extra support. Learners might need help with their literacy, numeracy, learning or behavioural skills. Education settings should put that support in place and track how they are getting on;
- work with nurseries, Flying Start centres, Communities First and Families First, health services and social services to support learners from deprived backgrounds;
- help young children to be 'ready to learn', especially by developing their early language skills;
- think of creative learning opportunities outside school, including digital learning experiences; and
- give learners the support and skills they need to move on to Key Stage 2.

i Ready to learn – Children tend to settle more quickly in school if they:

- have enough language to express themselves and ask questions (early language skills);
- can listen to and follow instructions;
- can get along with other children, sharing and taking turns;
- go to the toilet and get dressed by themselves;
- cope with being away from their parents/carers;
- are interested in stories, songs and rhymes, drawing and making things;
- have some familiarity with letters and numbers;
- are curious about the world, with a desire to learn.

Not all children starting school will be able to do all of these things. Teachers are skilled at helping children progress at their own rate.

What the Welsh Government is doing to help

Last year – June 2014-May 2015

- we launched the Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant that gives extra support for 3-4 year-olds from deprived backgrounds;
- we reported on the best ways to help very young children develop their speech, language and communication skills; and
- we set out how to support children attending Flying Start Centres to make sure they settle well in school.

In the next year – June 2015-May 2016

- we will continue to provide the Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant and check if it's making a difference;
- we will promote the best ways for staff to support children from deprived backgrounds in the early years;
- we will promote the best ways to support early language development;
- we will launch a new way of measuring how well young children are developing and learning in the Foundation Phase; and
- we will support everyone to work with families so children are ready to learn when they start school.

Quality learning and teaching

The most important thing for learners from deprived backgrounds is that they have good teachers. We already know a lot about the teaching approaches that work best. If we could put this into practice all over Wales we could really reduce the attainment gaps.

We would like schools to:

- make sure all teachers have the skills they need to support learners from deprived backgrounds. In particular they need to be able to use metacognition, quality feedback and peer tutoring approaches in the classroom;
- have a whole school plan to improve how learners from deprived backgrounds get on and review it;
- get their most skilled and talented teachers to work with learners from deprived backgrounds, and use teaching assistants and support staff effectively;
- use information to quickly spot which learners need extra support. Learners might need help with their literacy, numeracy, learning or behavioural skills,
- put support in place and check how it's working; and
- use the Hwb+ in learning and teaching.

Metacognition – teaching pupils strategies to set goals and monitor and evaluate their own learning (“learning to learn”).

Quality feedback – gives specific information back to the learner on how they can improve to meet their learning goals.

Peer tutoring – involves learners working in pairs or small groups and taking on responsibility for aspects of teaching and evaluating their success. Pupils learn better when they have to explain things to others.

Hwb+ programme – the all-Wales digital learning platform for schools.

What the Welsh Government is doing to help

Last year – June 2014-May 2015

- we have more than doubled the Pupil Deprivation Grant from £450 to £918 for each learner from a deprived background. This grant helps schools to provide the support that these learners need. We have also reviewed the effect the grant is having and improved our grant guidance;
- we created a new law about School Development Plans. Schools must show how they are going to help learners from deprived backgrounds to do better at school;
- we set out how schools should develop professional skills and classroom practice;
- we promoted the best ways of supporting learners from deprived backgrounds, including through case studies; and
- we rolled out Hwb+ across all schools in Wales.

In the next year – June 2015-May 2016

- we will increase the amount of the Pupil Deprivation Grant to £1050 for each learner from a deprived background;
- we will continue to promote the best ways for teachers and schools to support learners from deprived backgrounds;
- we will help schools to check how they are using their Pupil Deprivation Grant, and celebrate good practice;
- we will provide guidance on how to develop and deploy staff effectively for tackling the impacts of deprivation; and
- we will support schools to use Hwb+.

Expectations and aspirations

All children and young people should have goals they want to reach. Learners from deprived backgrounds achieve more when their teachers and family expect them to do well, and when they believe in themselves. They need support to do this.

We would like schools to:

- expect all learners to achieve, no matter what background they have;
- set clear, challenging targets for all learners that include long-term and short-term goals;
- make sure learners understand what they need to do to reach these targets, and teach them to plan and check their own learning;
- use the Pupil Deprivation Grant to help learners from deprived backgrounds;
- work with businesses, arts and culture organisations to help learners' broaden their horizons;
- help learners make informed decisions about future careers; and
- when learners move on to college, university or employment, invite them back to be role models.

What the Welsh Government is doing to help

Last year – June 2014-May 2015

- we challenged the **four regional education consortia** to aim higher for learners from deprived backgrounds;
- we challenged schools to aim higher too, including through the **school categorisation process**;
- we set up the **Schools Challenge Cymru programme**;
- we published a guide on how the Pupil Deprivation Grant can support [arts and culture in education](#);
- we launched the [Seren](#): Supporting Wales' Brightest programme; and
- we worked to reduce the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are NEET (not in education, employment or training). We have done this through the [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) and the [Youth Guarantee](#).



Expectations and aspirations

In the next year - June 2015-May 2016

- we will continue to challenge schools, governors and education consortia to aim higher for learners from deprived backgrounds;
- we will continue to run the Schools Challenge Cymru programme;
- we will publish findings of a review into More Able and Talented (MAT) provision across Wales and work to improve what is on offer for MAT learners in Wales;
- we will promote the summer schools that young people from deprived backgrounds can go to, to open their minds to the possibility of going to university;
- we will continue to embed the principles of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and delivery of the Youth Guarantee; and
- we will promote the benefits of arts and culture in education, particularly for learners from deprived backgrounds.

i **Four regional education consortia** – these help and encourage schools to provide an excellent education for their pupils.

i **School categorisation** – is a way of working out which schools in Wales need extra help and support. One of the things we look at is whether pupils from deprived backgrounds are doing well at the school.

i **Schools Challenge Cymru programme** – in 40 secondary schools there are intensive efforts underway to support learners from deprived backgrounds to do well at school and raise their aspirations for their future.



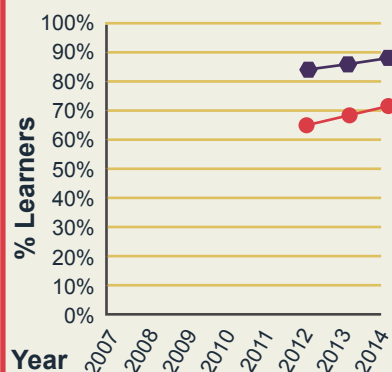
How are we doing?

The graphs below show how the attainment gaps in Wales have been changing over time.

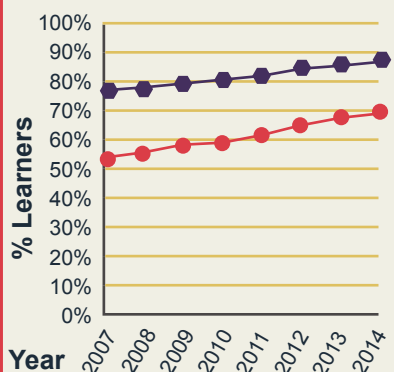
—●— Learners from deprived backgrounds

—●— Other learners

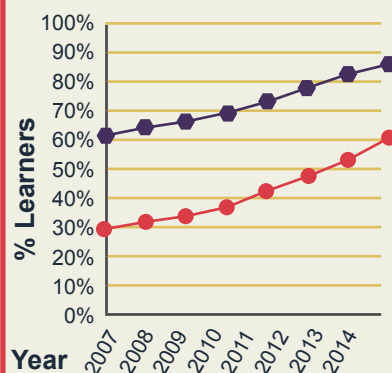
% learners reaching the benchmark level at the end of the Foundation Phase (age 7)



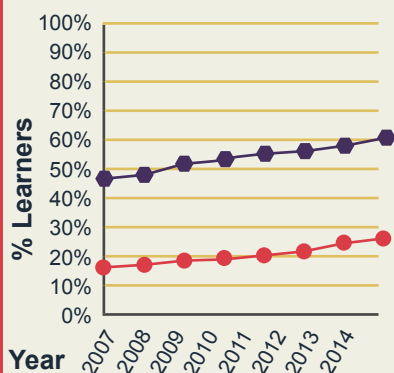
% learners reaching the benchmark level at the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11)



% learners reaching the benchmark level at the end of Key Stage 3 (age 14)



% learners getting 5 GCSEs at A*-C including English/Welsh and Maths (age 16)



The good news is that all learners in Wales are doing better, including learners from deprived backgrounds. Most attainment gaps have shrunk slightly

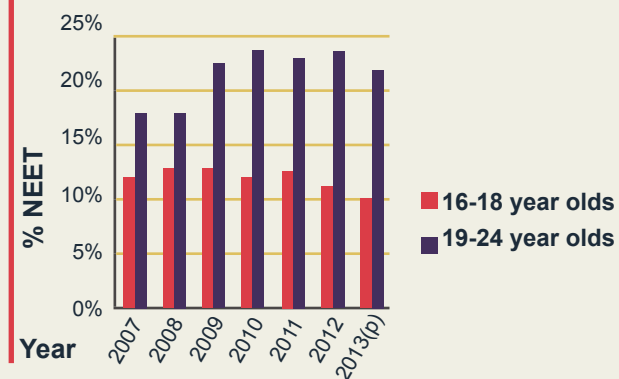


Huw Lewis is the Minister for Education and Skills in Wales. He believes the attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds is still far too low. Our progress on closing the gaps is far too slow, especially for GCSEs.

We also track the number of young people who have left school and are NEET.

The 2008-2009 economic recession had a big impact on 19-24 year olds. It left more of them without a job and ending up NEET. It had less impact on 16-18 year olds, and the number of these NEETs is on a downward trend.

% young people in Wales not in education, employment or training (NEET)



All areas of learners' lives

It's not just their exam results. Learners' well-being is also important. We use attendance records and records of exclusions (suspensions and expulsions) as indicators for this.

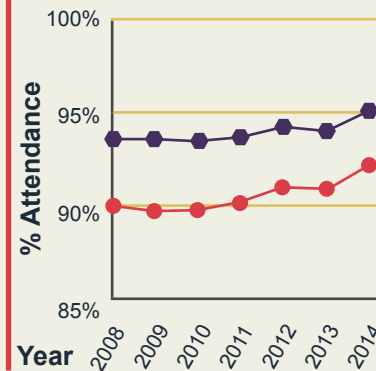
The good news is that attendance of all learners is going up and the number of exclusions is going down.

Learners from deprived backgrounds tend to have worse attendance records. But, this attendance gap has been shrinking a little.

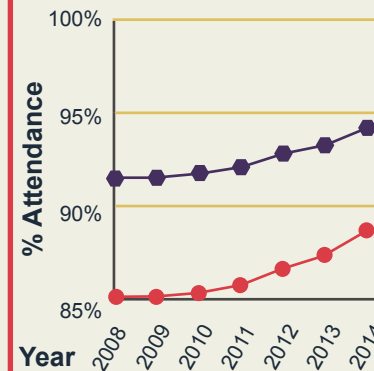
—●— Learners from deprived backgrounds

—●— Other learners

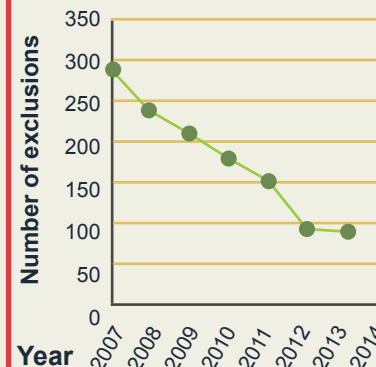
% attendance at primary school



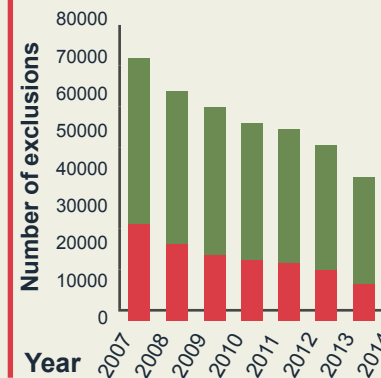
% attendance at secondary school



Number of permanent exclusions (all learners)



Number of permanent exclusions (all learners)



■ Days lost from fixed term exclusions 5 days or less - all learners

■ Days lost from fixed term exclusions more than 5 days - all learners

We are also interested to see how schools and the four regional consortia are changing.

Estyn will be providing us with the information we need.

We will report back on this in June 2016.

Where you can find out more

You can get more information on this programme here:

- <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/?lang=en>

Our [Child Poverty Strategy](#) and [Tackling Poverty Action Plan](#) sets out the important role educational attainment plays in delivering better outcomes for children and young people living in poverty.

There is more information on how deprivation affects children and young people, and what schools can do to help at:

- Learning Wales: www.learning.wales.gov.uk/deprivation
- Estyn: www.estyn.gov.uk/english/best-practice/tackling-deprivation-and-raising-standards
- The Sutton Trust / Education Endowment Foundation: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit>

Parents and learners can find out more about what is going on in their school from:

- the headteacher and governing body. A summary of the School Development Plan (SDP) is included in the Governors' Annual Report
- [My local school](#) website - gives information about every school in Wales
- the Local Authority.

Schools can get more support and guidance from:

- the [Pupil Deprivation Grant](#) guidance
- their regional consortium challenge advisor or closing the gap coordinator.

You can also contact us in Welsh Government at the address inside the front cover.

