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Abstract

The persistent link between deprivation and educational achievement in Wales is a heavily-evidenced and complex issue (BERA, 2010; Ainscow, M. et al., 2012; Crehan, 2016; Egan, 2017). This report begins by discussing the ways in which poverty exists in Wales and how it impacts the educational attainment of certain groups of pupils. It then explores the ways that this effect might be minimised, outlining two broad positions: functionalist and socially critical (JRF, 2007). Decisions about how the Pupil Deprivation Grant is spent are then discussed, along with how schools address disadvantage in ways that may or may not be directly funded through this source. The report finds that the more commonly used 'functionalist' interventions are not alone enough to address the attainment gap between more and less disadvantaged pupils in Welsh schools, and instead argues that both functionalist and socially critical interventions must be used. To end, a series of provisional recommendations are made as to how an individual secondary school in the South Wales Valleys might better serve its most disadvantaged pupils.

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Introduction

In recent years educational policy, educational research and school leadership in Wales have become increasingly focused on the effect of disadvantage on educational achievement. This has led to the use of national benchmarking groups, based on the number of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (e-FSM) who are on roll, which allow schools to compare their attainment with those of other schools with a similar level of e-FSM. It has also led to the use of e-FSM as a tool for accountability and performance management, as well as a mechanism for distributing funding for schools via the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) which aims to close the relative achievement gap between e-FSM pupils and their peers who are not eligible for Free School Meals (n-FSM). In turn, a large amount has been published in recent years about the most effective ways to reduce the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap in schools. However, despite appearances, not all literature and school approaches are aligned. Firstly, there are differing opinions about why the attainment gap exists in the first place and about how it should be addressed. Secondly, some schools view 'disadvantage' more widely than income-based labels or choose to pool PDG funds with others, meaning that its impact is felt more broadly (WG, 2017). These debates are important, as whilst educational standards in Wales are improving, the attainment gap is not closing fast enough (Egan, 2017). This report aims to explore why this might be the case and what is in the power of individual schools in Wales to do about it.

Literature Review

Poverty in Wales

'By poverty, we mean a long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) which are taken for granted by others...'

WG, 2011: 6

According to the latest data 710,000 people in Wales live in poverty including 185,000 children, which is roughly one in four (JRF, 2018). This poverty rate is higher than that for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, despite Welsh poverty rates being largely in decline in keeping with UK-wide figures (see Figure 1). The above definition for poverty is the one used in this report, along with the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales's key indicator of child poverty (relative) which is the percentage of children living in households below 60% of the median UK household income after housing costs are deducted (AHC). However whilst poverty defined in this way – according to household income – is the most widespread and therefore arguably most useful definition for poverty that we have (Egan, 2014), it does not necessarily paint the most nuanced picture: overall rates risk blurring big variations between different demographics, localities and poverty indicators.

In 1999 the UK Government pledged to eliminate child poverty by 2020, and in the twelve years that followed significant progress was made with almost 800,000 children

across the UK being lifted out of income poverty (Save the Children, 2012). However progress since 2011-12 has been less consistent, with families and children bearing the brunt of more recent global-economic and policy changes and relative child poverty increasing steadily (IFS, 2011): in Wales, poverty is currently highest among families with children (see Figure 2); nearly half on lone parents live in poverty (JRF, 2018); and the number of children in relative poverty who have one or two working parents has also been increasing, to the extent that it is now estimated to be more than half (End Child Poverty Network Cymru, 2009). Moreover this trend does not appear to be slowing: central forecasts imply that rates of relative child poverty will further rise to reach, in 2020-21, the highest level since 1999 (IFS, 2011).

Figure 1: Proportion of people living in relative income poverty (AHC), by England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (JRF, 2018: 3)

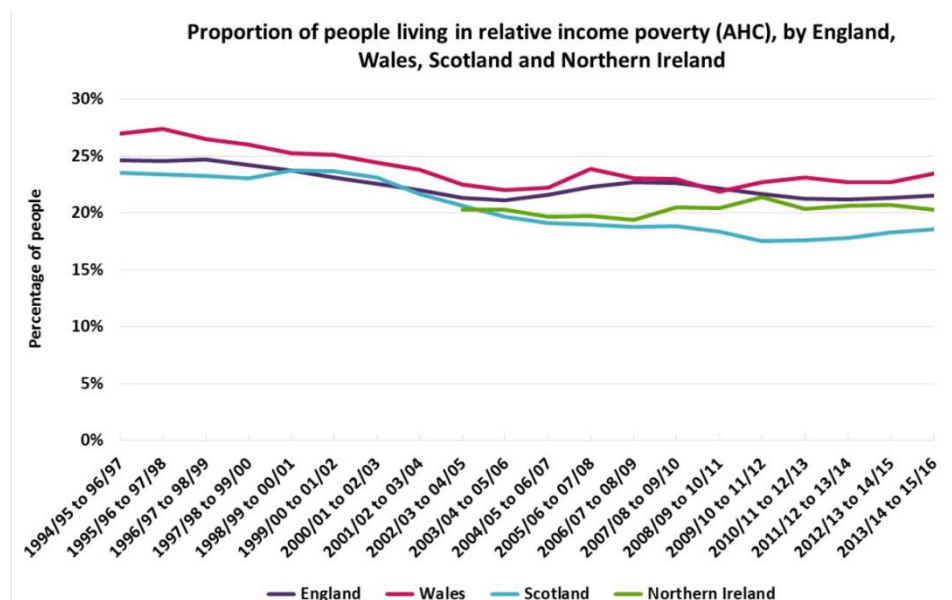
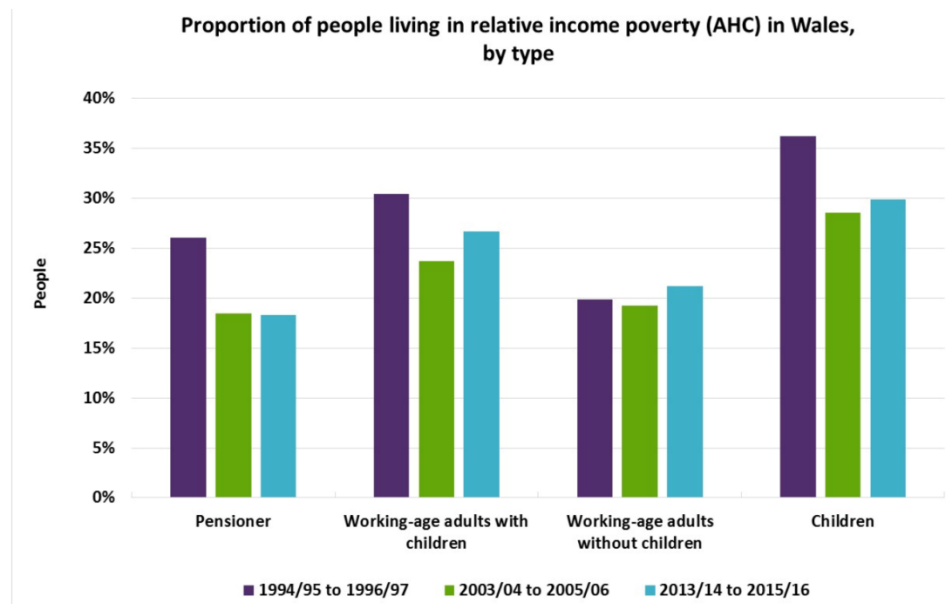


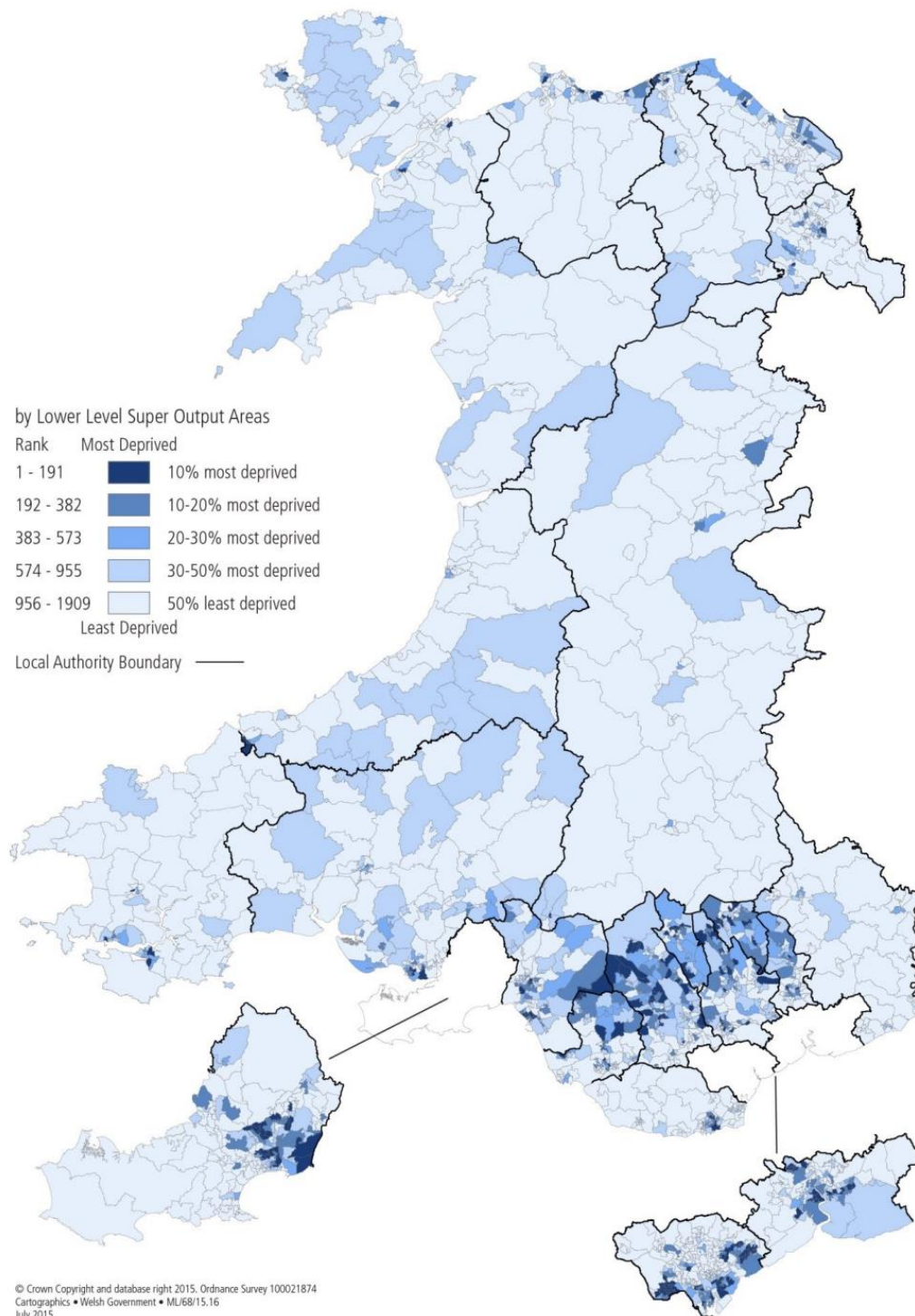
Figure 2: Proportion of people living in relative income poverty (AHC) in Wales (JRF, 2018: 4)



According to Professor David Egan (2014), it is possible to think of deprivation in Wales as a tripartite structure: one third of the most deprived live in post-industrial areas of Wales such as the South Wales Valleys; one third live in urban areas such as inner-city Cardiff; and one third live in rural areas and are much more dispersed. The reason for this distinction is that deprivation comes in different forms, with some fairly stark differences occurring between different types of locality. This is broadly illustrated by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (see Figure 3) which identifies small areas where there are the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation, including income, employment, health, education, access to services, community safety, physical environment and housing. The large disparities of deprivation even within local authority areas illustrates the importance of schools having a detailed idea of the particular types of deprivation in their locality.

Figure 3: An overview of deprivation levels across Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2014: 12)

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation



Lastly, when discussing child poverty in education settings in England and Wales, eligibility for Free School Meals (e-FSM) is the widely used proxy for socio-economic disadvantage. Currently parents or children in receipt of certain benefits are deemed eligible to apply for Free School Meals for their children (see Figure 4), however this criteria for entitlement does not necessarily capture all children living in poverty: only 18% of the pupil population in Wales are e-FSM compared with around 25% of those living in relative poverty, and it is possible that a large proportion of e-FSM children are not in the lowest income households (Taylor, 2018). Nonetheless, as Halse and Ledger have shown (2007), e-FSM children are more likely than their n-FSM counterparts to live in single-parent households, have more siblings, have a parent/carer who is long-term unemployed, live in rented accommodation, and have parent(s) or carer(s) who are relatively less qualified. This fact, along with its growing importance and use as a measure, and in light of the advantage of e-FSM eligibility criteria having remained relatively similar over time, makes it a meaningful indicator by which to consider trends in the outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged children.

Figure 4: Parents and children in receipt of the following benefits are deemed eligible to apply for Free School Meals for their children

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

The link between poverty and educational achievement

E-FSM can therefore be used to help interrogate the strong link between disadvantage and low educational attainment in Wales. This link can be seen both between schools (see Figure 5) and within them, and remains persistent: despite educational attainment figures for Wales showing that the gap between the proportion of e-FSM and n-FSM 11-year-olds achieving Level 4 or above in all core subjects (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science) decreasing by 14 percentage points since 2005 (see Figure 6), the gap between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A*-C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics (Level 2+) has remained broadly the same since 2007 (see Figure 7). These figures fit with the accepted pattern of the current effect of disadvantage on educational outcomes: in general, the gap between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils is understood to present itself very early on in a child's life, to reduce in early years' education, widen slightly through the Primary years and widen substantially in the Secondary years, to the extent that in some localities 90% of e-FSM pupils leave school without Level 2+ (Egan, 2014).

Figure 5: As in many countries, in Wales there is a strong link between disadvantage and academic performance (Egan, 2007: 4)

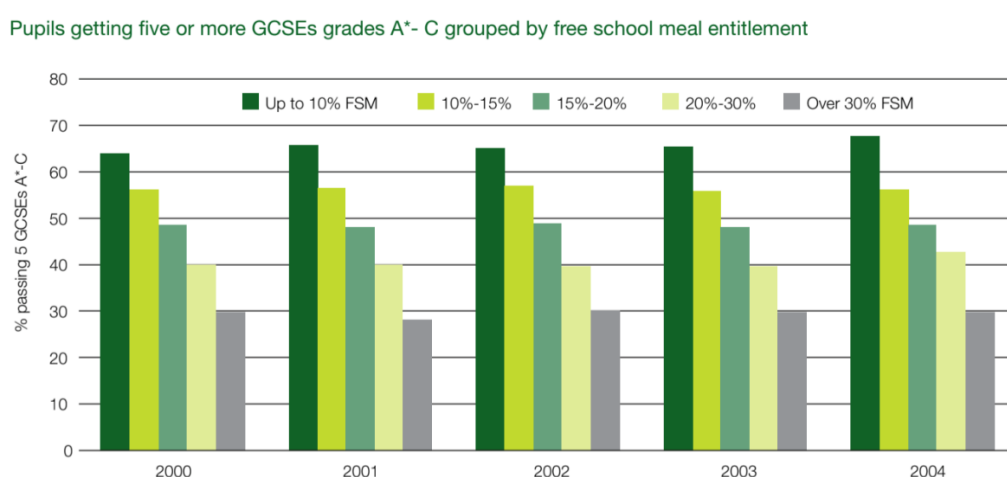


Figure 6: Educational attainment in Wales Key Stage 2 by whether e-FSM (JRF, 2018: 26)

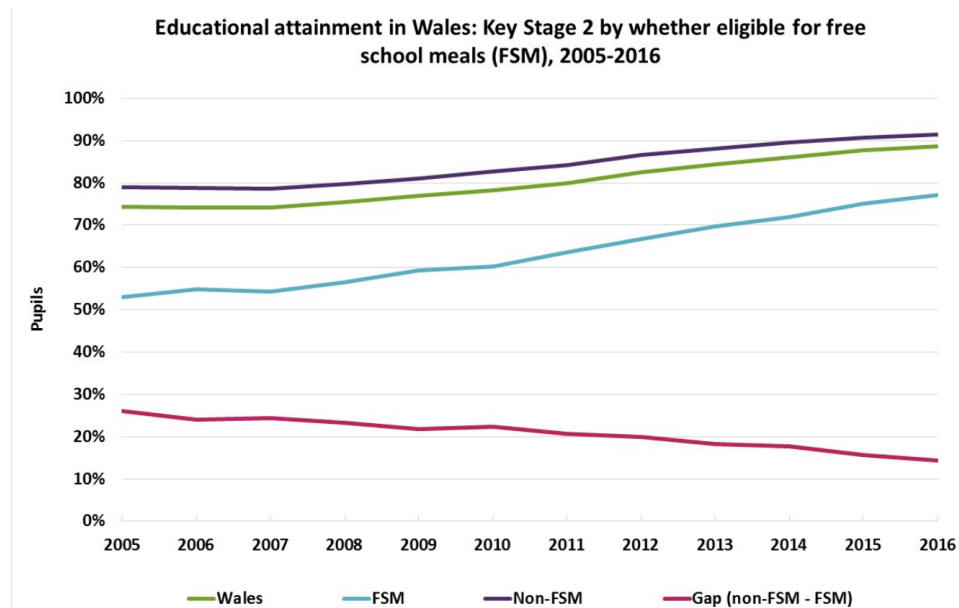
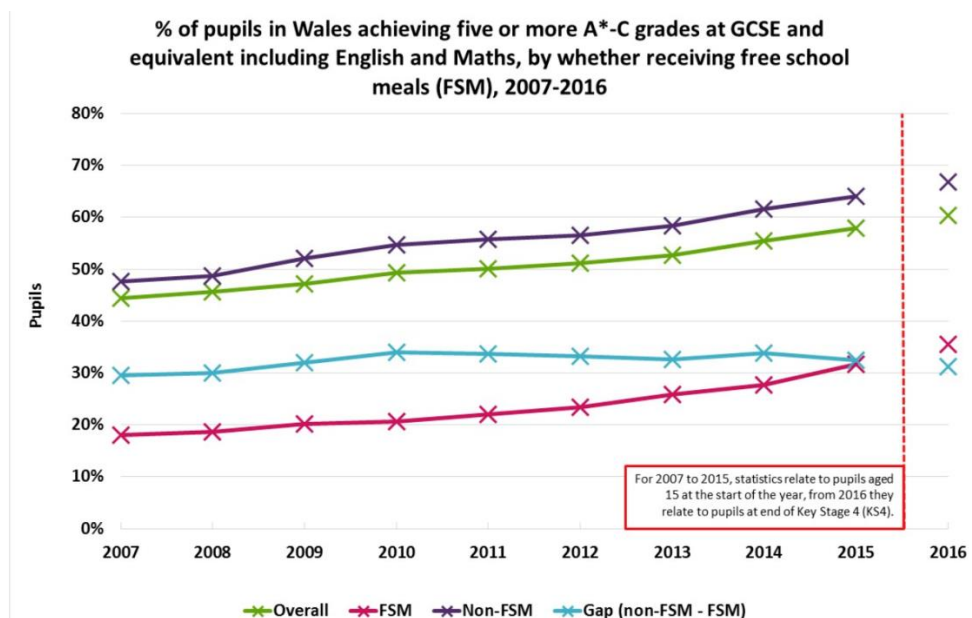


Figure 7: % of pupils in Wales achieving Level 2+ by whether e-FSM (JRF, 2018: 27)



Ultimately, then, overall poverty rates have fallen gradually in Wales over the last 20 years whilst rising slightly among families since 2003-06. The education system, meanwhile, has been fairly successful in reducing the attainment gap between e-FSM and n-FSM children at age 11, whilst the gap at GCSE remains substantial, increasing the likelihood that these young people will enter unemployment in adulthood. By all accounts levels of child poverty still remain unacceptably high and are not likely to decrease in the coming years; if schools are to reduce their FSM gap, it must be achieved with this fact in mind. However schools must also take careful note of the particular type of poverty faced by their local area as examples of best practice from different localities are a response to multidimensional contextual factors rather than an e-FSM rate alone (Kerr, K. et al., 2014).

Approaches towards closing the gap between the educational achievement of e-FSM and n-FSM pupils

The fact that deprivation has a negative effect on educational achievement is a widely recognised truth (BERA, 2010; Ainscow, M. et al., 2012; Jerrim, J. and Shure, N., 2016), and the effect of disadvantage on educational outcomes remains a top priority of the current administration: as Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams stated in 2017, '[o]ur national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence' (WG, 2017: 2). However there is debate around the best approach to achieve this mission, as whilst the arguments for improving overall educational standards largely depend on evidence around how most children learn best, arguments for improving the equality of

an education system depend on the accepted theory of why that gap exists in the first place, and those theories do not always align. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has distinguished between two broad positions: functionalist and socially critical (JRF, 2007).

The functionalist position

For the functionalist, the link between disadvantage and lower educational outcomes exists because the benefits of education do not materialise for poorer pupils; globalisation and resulting forms of social exclusion lead to risk factors that are linked to, and compound, poor educational attainment. Such risk factors might include issues such as maternal depression, violent neighbourhoods or negative peer group socialising, whilst factors such as role models and parents' educational qualifications also impact the lived experience and educational achievement of those young people (JRF, 2007). This position holds that educational inequality will be reduced as child poverty is reduced, and secure and stable home environments and increased educational support on the part of parents will lead to young people's educational success. Mentoring programmes and other strategies and approaches by schools therefore can make a difference, albeit within the constraints that poverty exerts on those schools (JRF, 2007; BERA, 2010; Ainscow, M., 2012).

A number of organisations have published advice on reducing the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes in schools with a broadly functionalist approach (WCEE 2014; Estyn, 2011, Estyn 2012; Estyn 2013). The flagship agenda for the Welsh Assembly to reduce this impact - the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) - is one such

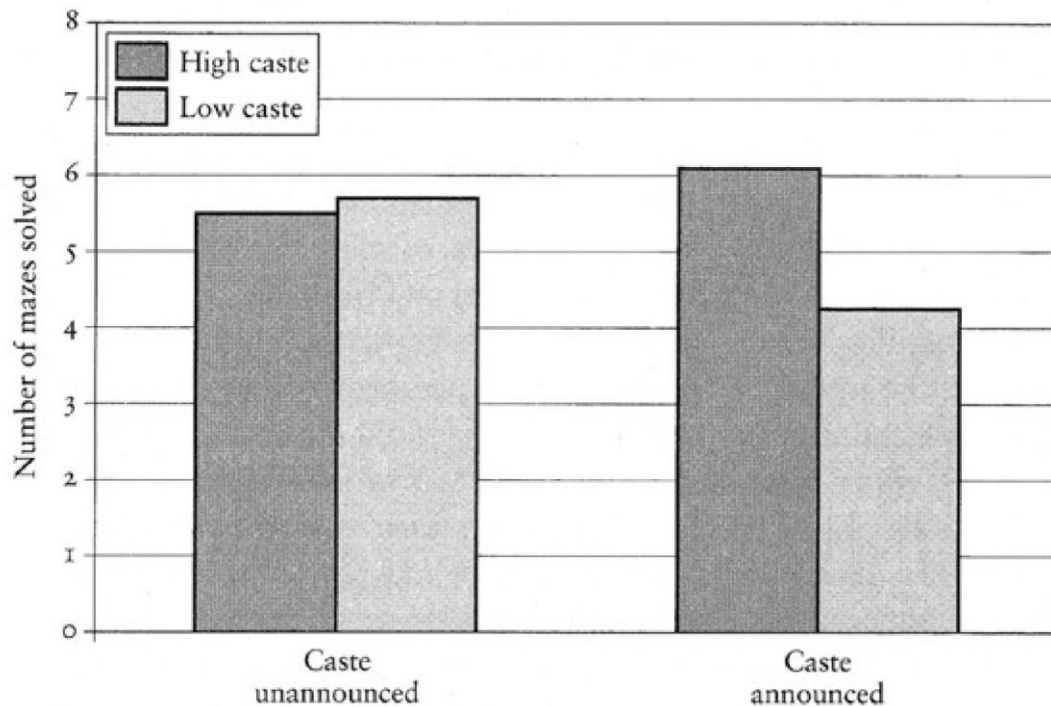
strategy, aiming to support e-FSM pupils and Looked After Children (LAC) to overcome the additional barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. Recommended interventions to implement using the grant include those outlined in the Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*, a meta-analysis of international educational research which ranks intervention types based on their effectiveness on raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Other suggestions from the Welsh Government, the Welsh Centre for Equity in Education or Estyn, meanwhile, include strategic interventions such as using data effectively and having a consistent whole-school approach as well as focusing on disadvantaged pupils' wider needs such as their social and emotional skills.

The socially critical position

The socially critical position, meanwhile, holds that education in its current form reflects unequal distributions of power and resources; privileged groups within society sustain a whole range of social structures (including the educational system) to maintain their positions of privilege and determine educational provision and achievement unequally (Dorling, D., 2014; Reay, D., 2017). This can be done at a policy level as well as at a school and classroom level. In *Miseducation: inequality, education and the working classes*, for example, Diane Reay argues that the extent to which educational success is increasingly dependent on parental investments such as private tuition and enriching cultural activities means that 'most working-class children and young people experience education as failure' (2017: 176). In addition, in *The Spirit Level* Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett show how certain stereotypes of inferiority – for example those relating to gender, race or class – result in the abilities of people of

those groups diminishing, especially when that group association is made public or when the assessment is said to be a measure of ability (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: In a study conducted in India, pupils of a lower caste performed significantly worse when asked to announce their caste identity before completing the assessment (Wilkinson, R., and Pickett, K., 2009: 114)



In this position, reducing educational inequity therefore means moving away from policy interventions such as educational choice, which privileges those with the resources and networks to be able to make a more advantageous choice (Siraj, I. et al., 2014; Ball, 2010), as well as challenging existing power structures to enable democratic development in the running of classrooms and schools (Fielding, M., 2001; Reay, D, 2017). Schools should not, for example, ‘impose professional views of what is “needed” on the communities they serve’ but rather ‘there should be community consultation and participation that reflect the communities’ actual needs’ (JRF, 2007: 55-56; Ball, 2010). It also means challenging fixed ideas of intelligence and false narratives of equality of

opportunity and meritocracy in trans-Atlantic education systems: as disadvantaged pupils enter school behind their more affluent peers especially in areas such as literacy, frequent assessments and setting and streaming of these children according to their ability simply serves to secure their lower educational outcomes and increasingly fixed ideas of their own intelligence (Ball, 2010; Khan, 2011; Crehan, 2016; Reay, 2017).

The Overlap?

The general consensus in the literature is that schools account for around 30% of achievement differences between pupils, and that although more effective schools tend to improve the attainments of all pupils, they do not remove overall patterns of difference related to pupils' backgrounds (Harris and Bennett, 2000 in Ball, 2010: 3; Egan, 2014). This fact would reinforce both a functionalist and a socially critical position on why educational inequity is so pervasive: it could be that the disadvantage that pupils face in the other 70% of their lives are inhibiting the difference that schools can really make, as the functionalists would have it, or that schools themselves simply serve to conserve existing inequalities, as the socially critical position would. For the JRF most policy initiatives to reduce education inequity in the UK focus on small, individual-level factors with a functionalist explanation of those factors, whilst very few have addressed larger structures and none appear to be socially critical. The result is a 'piecemeal' collection of interventions that 'have so far had only very partial impacts in breaking the link between poverty and poor educational attainment' (JRF, 2007: xii). Indeed whilst the emphasis that PDG has placed on the e-FSM attainment gap in both schools and government is noteworthy, and much of the advice listed above valuable, the PDG is now in its fifth year and the small effect that it appears to have had on the attainment

gap in this time (see Figure 7) calls into question whether it alone is enough (WG, 2017; BERA, 2010; Ainscow, M. et al., 2012; Ball, 2010; Egan, 2007).

The JRF therefore recommends addressing both individual-level and structural-level factors simultaneously and with an overarching vision if any difference is to be made, meaning a combination of policy-level and school-level approaches which tackle the presenting ‘problems’ of poverty and education (from a functionalist perspective) whilst also working towards breaking down underlying inequalities so that the problems are not subsequently reproduced in other forms (the socially critical one). Though compelling, creating change of this size is not in the remit of single schools. Luckily, Egan (2014) has presented a slightly more useful blueprint for addressing educational inequity for schools in Wales which can be interpreted as taking elements from both the functionalist and socially critical perspectives. For him, schools should work on the following four areas:

1. High quality teaching and learning (functionalist): Is the school using evidence-based teaching and learning strategies and interventions which are known to be effective with disadvantaged pupils, for example those listed in the Sutton Trust-EEF *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* such as high-quality feedback, metacognition and peer-to-peer tutoring?
2. Wellbeing (functionalist): Is the school supporting the wellbeing of its disadvantaged pupils, for example through the development of resilience, aspiration, social capital, attendance, behaviour for learning, self-esteem and

self-efficacy?

3. Leadership (socially critical): Do all school leaders, including head teachers and classroom practitioners, create a truly inclusive environment for all pupils, including a critical approach to the potential for reinforcing stereotypes and capping pupils' potential through the use of setting?
4. The school within the community (socially critical): Does the school have truly strong links with parents, families and communities, through listening to and serving those stakeholders as well as supporting them to have lasting impact on the running of the school?

In the remaining report this blueprint will be used to assess the effectiveness of an individual school's efforts to reduce the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes, the sections of which will be structured according to the four areas listed above.

Methodology

The findings of this report were generated through reviews of primary and secondary literature available online as well as information gathered through six interviews conducted at the school discussed. Nonetheless they are limited by the evidence available at the school: financial and impact information was gathered from

the School Improvement Plan 2016-17, whereas reviews of current practice tend to focus on information available during the academic year 2017-18.

In accordance with BERA guidelines (2011), both the names of the pupils and the school in which the research took place will remain anonymous.

Findings

The nature of socio-economic disadvantage in School X and how this impacts on educational achievement

School X is a coeducational, English medium secondary school that serves just over 700 pupils of the age range 11-18. It is situated in the Local Authority area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), the second most populated county in Wales after Cardiff (see Appendix 1) and one of Wales's most deprived: one in three pupils attending School X live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales and one in four (178 pupils) are e-FSM (see Appendix 4.1 and 4.2). The school's catchment area includes Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) from the 10% most to the 50% least deprived in the country, which are together most deprived in the areas of education, health and community safety (see Appendix 2). In the community surrounding these pupils a quarter of households are living in poverty, with weekly income lower and unemployment higher than the national averages, and more than one in three inhabitants over the age of 16 hold no formal qualifications (see Appendix 3), a particularly noteworthy statistic given that it is common for former pupils to also have children attending the school. School X has

recently shown a relatively sharp increase in the number of ethnic minority pupils on roll, many of whom are refugees and require substantial EAL support (see Appendix 4.4 and 4.5). It has simultaneously shown gradual decreases in its overall number of pupils as well as in the proportion of those pupils who are e-FSM since 2014 (see Appendix 6.2).

Regarding standards, it is possible to compare the school performance data with that of similar schools based on levels of e-FSM, deprivation and additional needs, also known as its 'family' of schools, which is the more commonly used performance comparison by Estyn and local authorities (Estyn, 2014). School X has shown consistent improvement in the attainment of its pupils in both Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) since 2013 (see Appendix 4.6), particularly in the proportion of pupils to achieve Level 2+, which rose significantly above the family average for the first time in 2016 (see Appendix 4.7). These improvements led to the school moving 'up' from support category Amber to support category Yellow in 2016 (see Appendix 4.8). The school's e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap has closed substantially since 2015 in KS3 core and KS4 Level 2 indicators, now placing it well below the family averages for both (see Appendix 4.9). However KS4 Level 2+ attainment dropped below the family averages for both n-FSM and e-FSM pupils in 2017, resulting with an attainment gap which has remained broadly consistent since 2014 and is now below the national average but still large at 26.2% (see Appendix 4.10). This suggests that the strategies that School X have in place to reduce the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap in KS3 are effective and that, though the school struggled to maintain its high Level 2 performance rates following the 2017 changes, it is also effective at reducing the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap for most Level 2 qualifications. School X's main area for improvement is in Level 2 English and

Mathematics for all pupils, however the larger attainment gap in Level 2+ indicates that e-FSM pupils are less likely to achieve Level 2 English and Mathematics than their n-FSM peers.

Strategies the school is using to address the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap

1. High quality teaching and learning

When compared to their peers, disadvantaged pupils are less likely to achieve their potential and more likely to have significant difficulties in basic literacy and numeracy (WG, 2015; WCEE, 2014). Schools are therefore advised to focus on these areas with all disadvantaged pupils (Estyn, 2011) by implementing whole-school and whole-cluster literacy and numeracy strategies (Estyn, 2011; WG, 2017) or through appointing highly skilled teachers to deliver early interventions (WCEE, 2014; WG, 2017; Egan, 2012). The specific form that these interventions should take is rarely specified in the literature, with Estyn recommending a focus on providing mentoring, help with basic skills and homework and learning skills (Estyn, 2011; Estyn, 2012; WG, 2014), and many pointing to the Sutton Trust-EEF's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* (WCEE, 2014) (see Appendix 5 for the full list). Nonetheless there is agreement that these interventions should involve joint planning, monitoring and evaluation (WG, 2015), which means that all teachers must know their e-FSM pupils (Ofsted, 2012 in WCEE, 2014) and data must be used effectively to track their progress (Ainscow, M., 2012; Estyn, 2011; Estyn, 2012; Estyn, 2013).

Literacy and numeracy are strong priorities in School X, with the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) increasingly embedded into teaching and learning routines and cluster INSETs hosted on literacy strategies and numeracy strategies in 2016 and 2017 respectively. School X's 2015-16 self-evaluation, however, noted that 64.4% of their Year 7 intake were below their chronological reading age whilst 50% were at or above their chronological numeracy age. In turn, just over 15% of the PDG grant in 2016-17 was spent on an additional full time NQT (Teach First) English teacher to reduce class sizes in English as well as provide small group intervention sessions to e-FSM pupils in KS3 to reduce these gaps, including the use of the Accelerated Reader Programme. According to the Sutton Trust-EEF *Toolkit*, small group tuition of this kind is estimated to have moderate impact on pupil attainment, and indeed the substantially reduced e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap in KS3 in 2017 (see Figure 4.9) suggests that these interventions were successful. In KS4, meanwhile, 18% of the PDG grant was spent on English and Mathematics after-school tutoring with professional tutors for 40 e-FSM pupils in Year 11, an intervention type estimated to have moderate impact on attainment. Whilst data regarding last year's KS4 after-school tutoring was unavailable, this year's lists show that 32 pupils received mathematics tutoring of which 8 were e-FSM, and 21 received English tutoring of which 4 were e-FSM (after January), all chosen as they are 'Key Marginal' (they have the potential to achieve C grades in both subjects). Limited evidence makes it impossible to say whether similar figures were true of last year, or whether the funding for this tuition is coming out of PDG grant funding this year, but if both are the case then significant concerns could be raised regarding the fact that n-FSM pupils are the primary recipients of interventions ring-fenced for e-FSM pupils. No noteworthy reduction has been made to the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap at Level 2+ in the past three years (see Figure 4.10).

2. Wellbeing

Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to have a poor attendance record (Estyn, 2012; WCEE, 2014), more likely experience frequent behavioural difficulties (WG, 2015), and at least three times more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers (WCEE, 2014). Because of this, schools are frequently advised to include a focus on developing wellbeing in their efforts to address the effects of disadvantage (Egan, 2012; WCEE, 2014), including improving attendance, punctuality and behaviour (Estyn, 2012; WCEE, 2014) but also the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged pupils (Estyn, 2012). Attendance is presented as paramount here as without being in school these pupils will not be able to benefit from interventions at all, and indeed despite the attendance of e-FSM pupils having improved more quickly than the attendance of other pupils since 2014, attendance remains a strong focus for the Welsh Government with Estyn warning that '[s]chools will not succeed in narrowing the performance gap until [the attendance gap] improves' (WG, 2017b: 29).

School X's wellbeing work is centred around an inclusion and vocational education programme which in 2016-17 received the remaining 65% of PDG grant funding, equating to just over £120,000. Three members of staff – the assistant head teacher responsible for wellbeing and attendance, the SENCO, and a newly appointed behaviour management and inclusion officer - are closely involved with the running of the programme, as well as numerous extra-school professionals associated with the local authority. Within the remit of the programme are attendance and exclusion rates, behaviour support provision, vocational course provision, additional learning needs

(ALN) provision and external provision including Speech and Language, counselling, educational psychology, occupational therapy and careers advice. Particular focus is paid to attendance school-wide with weekly updates for form classes and regular attendance competitions with accompanying prizes in the form of trips or technology. This has had a substantial impact especially in the case of fixed-term exclusions, which have been reduced by 90% in six years (see Appendix 6.1). Meanwhile the e-FSM/n-FSM attendance gap, at 2.81%, is the best for this School X's family in RCT (see Appendix 6.2). Regular pastoral and behavioural support is currently offered to around 38 pupils of whom 12 (31%) are e-FSM, with behaviour interventions (32% e-FSM) provided by the behaviour management and inclusion officer who is trained as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) and to deliver The Thrive Approach to develop resilient and confident pupils. Behaviour interventions and social and emotional learning of this kind are shown to have moderate impact according to the Sutton Trust-EEF *Toolkit*.

3. Leadership

Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be allocated to low groups than similarly attaining n-FSM pupils, are more likely to experience a poorer quality of teaching than their more advantaged peers (WCEE, 2014), and are less likely to believe that they have any control over events that affect them: more than one in four of these children believes that 'people like them don't succeed in life' (WG, 2015). According to Egan (2012) this exemplifies the need for a strong moral purpose to leadership in schools, which means encouraging teachers and pupils to create a fair, welcoming and inclusive working environment in which assumptions about and held by particular pupils are

actively challenged and the participation of all pupils in making decisions about their learning is actively encouraged (Ainscow, M., 2012; Ball, 2010; Estyn, 2007; Estyn, 2012). According to the Sutton Trust-EEF *Toolkit*, ability grouping has a negative effect on pupils' learning, whilst meta-cognition, self-regulation and feedback have the highest potential impact of any intervention. Pupils, then, must have a sense of ownership over their learning and belief in their ability to improve which is reinforced through tangible targets and mixed-ability setting. A commitment to ensuring that the school is truly inclusive, meanwhile, must be continually reinforced by all staff.

Although pupils are put into mixed form groups from Year 7, as of 2017-18 pupils in School X are grouped by ability in every subject which has resulted in 58% of e-FSM pupils in Years 8-11 being in the bottom two of, on average, five mathematics sets, which bear a close resemblance to the sets that they are in for every subject. This structural decision works against an inclusive ethos and narrowing of the gap. Regarding ownership over their learning, the proportion of School Council members who are e-FSM is 12%, reducing the input that these pupils can have on the running of their school, and a lack of student homework diaries potentially limits the extent to which pupils can plan and monitor their own learning. Meanwhile the responsibility for creating an inclusive school is not embedded into school staffing structures: the planning, monitoring and evaluation of interventions are completed by different staff than those who are responsible for tracking and reporting on the progress of e-FSM pupils, whilst although all teachers are made aware of who their e-FSM pupils are through an innovative system which capitalises e-FSM pupils' names on the school registration system, at no point are they systematically asked to consider the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap in their own classes. A requirement for departments to enter pupil

data collectively, however, does potentially minimise the possibility of unconscious bias having an effect on teacher-assessed pupil attainment.

4. The school within the community

The parents of disadvantaged pupils are more likely to have a negative perception of school and are less likely to be involved in their children's education than those of their more advantaged peers (Estyn, 2012; WG, 2015). Some literature takes a functionalist attitude towards these problems, advising schools to invest in programmes to develop parenting skills (WCEE, 2014; JRF, 2006) and to offer out-of-hours learning opportunities for disadvantaged pupils that complement the curriculum (Estyn, 2011; WCEE, 2014). The more socially critical literature, however, asserts that it is schools, not parents, that need to change, encouraging holistic and collaborative action that includes schools, parents and the community (Egan, 2012; BERA, 2010; Egan, 2017; Ainscow, M., 2012; Kerr, K. et al., 2014). By collaborating with parents and communities in this way, family learning can be developed (WCEE, 2014; Egan, 2007; Estyn, 2013) and the high and moderate impact of early years and parental involvement interventions shown in the Sutton Trust-EEF *Toolkit* respectively can be slowly embedded into community structures.

Although School X does not spend any of its PDG grant on community engagement, it has recently invested in a new sportshall, swimming pool and internet café which are open to the public and used frequently. It also has close links with local schools, including a high school with whom it shares a sixth form, and its feeder primaries who are collaborated with to ensure smooth transition. In addition, as well as

a cross-subject parents' evening for all year groups, School X invites parents into school to attend a 'first impressions' parents' evening for Year 7 in their first Autumn term as well as additional 'support their child' parents' evenings with advice and guidance about revision and exam preparation. However School X has no existing system whereby the opinions and ideas of parents and the local community are regularly sought. Therefore in light of the aforementioned relative lack of formal qualifications held by those in the community surrounding school X (see Appendix 3.3), and the relatively high proportion of pupils whose parents also attended the school, parental involvement, which is assessed as having moderate impact according to the Sutton Trust-EEF *Toolkit*, is not a current strength of School X and an area in which there is the potential for large gains.

Conclusions

Some correlation can be said to exist between national child poverty rates and the attainment gap between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils, however as much as poverty rates change, the attainment gap at Level 2+ remains broadly consistent, suggesting that these pupils do not underachieve purely due to material deprivation. For functionalists, the explanation resides in the fact that education is unfamiliar and under-valued amongst the cultures in which these pupils grow up. The socially critical perspectives, however, argue instead that the education system is set up to disadvantage these pupils and more systematic change is needed. For a single school, functionalist solutions are more actionable, and yet the socially critical perspective remains relevant: schools must

interrogate the extent to which they present an establishment which is there to be used by the most disadvantaged of pupils, rather than something to be inflicted upon them.

The strategies that School X have in place to reduce the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap in KS3 and KS4 Level 2 are effective but the larger attainment gap in Level 2+ indicates that e-FSM pupils are less likely to achieve Level 2 English and Mathematics than their n-FSM peers. PDG-funded interventions for Literacy in KS3 are already entirely directed towards e-FSM pupils, however the same cannot be said of KS3 Numeracy interventions or KS4 Mathematics and English tutoring opportunities, which may or may not be funded by PDG grant money. In light of the difference in e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gaps between KS3 and KS4, and between Level 2 and Level 2+, School X should carefully consider whether there should be more of a focus on e-FSM pupils for these academic interventions. This is particularly pertinent given the Welsh Government stipulations that PDG funding is used for individualised programmes or whole-school strategies which disproportionately benefit eFSM and LAC pupils (2015): School X currently falls short in both its academic interventions and otherwise widely successful inclusion and vocational education programme.

Secondly, current management structures mean that the responsibility for creating a truly inclusive school environment, and of closing the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap, is neither the responsibility of specific staff nor all staff in School X. In addition, e-FSM pupils are currently underrepresented in the top half of ability sets and on the School Council, and School X does not currently provide its pupils with homework diaries, despite the possibility that such provision may help pupils to plan and monitor their own learning, especially those pupils with limited access to

technology either on their own or at home. Similarly, parents and the local community are also limited in the input they can currently have to improve the work of the school, despite the fact that developing the community aspect of education provision probably has ‘the greatest potential’ of any intervention area for schools (Egan, 2017: 18).

Ultimately, we value what we measure, and if the e-FSM/n-FSM attainment gap is as deeply socially ingrained as some of the above literature argues then it is not surprising that significant progress has not been made in the five years since the PDG was introduced; the inclusivity of a system will need to change long before it is reflected in attainment figures. But what if, in the short term, instead of English results we measured self-efficacy, and instead of Mathematics results we measured self-regulation? If that could be our focus for 20 years, we might just be able to solve the attainment gap without even thinking about it after that.

Recommendations for School X

1. Continue to integrate the PDG plan into the school development plan and ensure that an up-to-date version of this is published online, along with the theoretical rationale and impact evaluation of each intervention (WG, 2015).
2. Launch a whole-cluster approach to tackle the effect of deprivation on educational attainment, including a cluster INSET in the model of the Literacy and Numeracy INSETs from 2016 and 2017 respectively (WG, 2017).

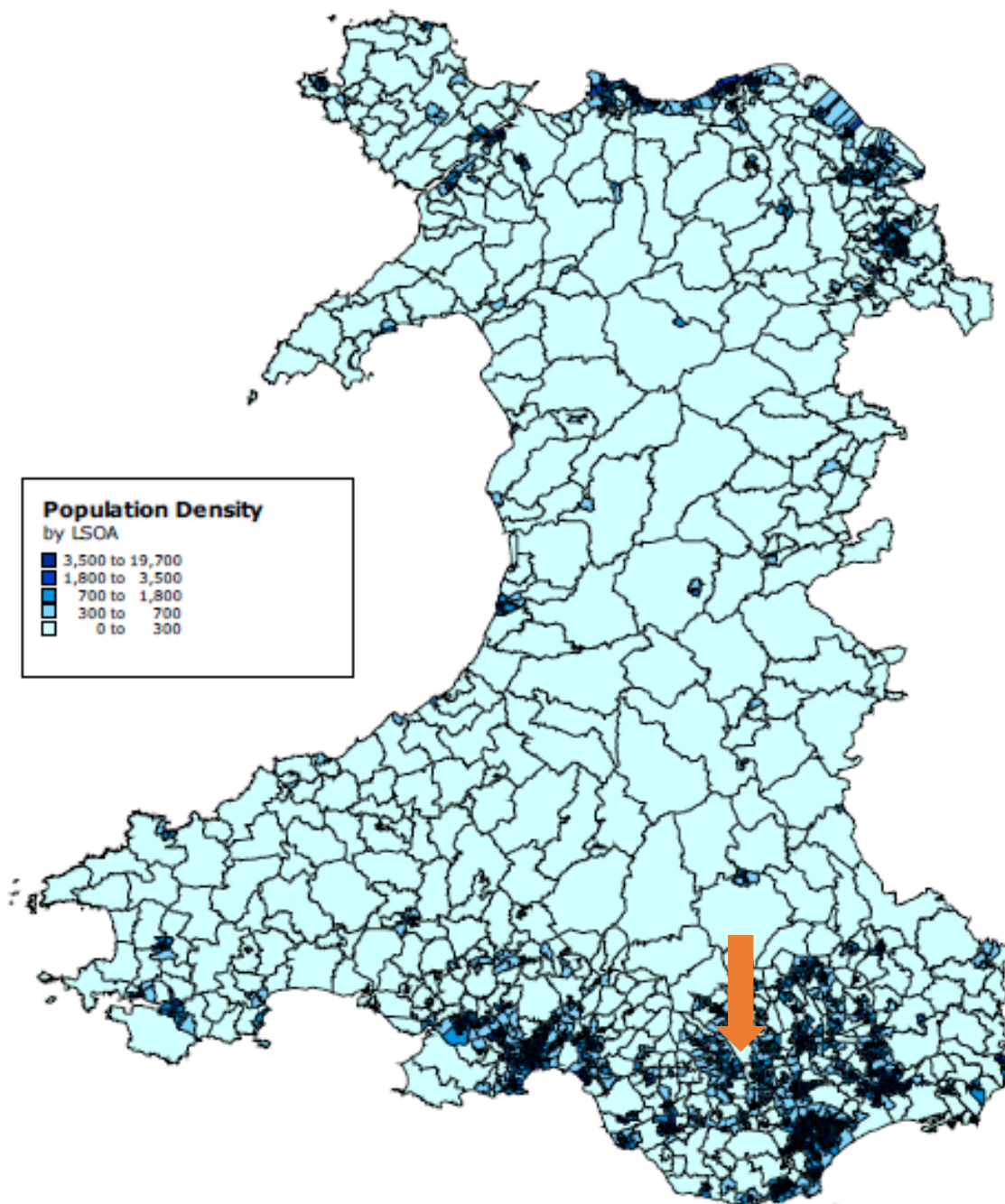
3. Consider placing more of a focus on e-FSM pupils for academic interventions. If necessary, as it is likely that the Welsh Government will shortly move towards a 'progress added' performance measure for schools, consider artificially raising e-FSM pupils' target grades by one sub-level so that they are more likely to qualify for these interventions, which would also ensure that high-achieving e-FSM pupils are also benefitting from the PDG grant.
4. Consider how a greater proportion of e-FSM and LAC pupils could benefit from the existence of the inclusion and vocational education programme.
5. Consider ensuring that those staff who analyse e-FSM data also plan and analyse the impact of interventions, and that class teachers monitor and address the gap in their own classes as part of regular 'data drops'.
6. Consider teaching mixed-ability classes in KS3 and within classes who are studying towards the same tier exam in KS4.
7. Consider introducing quotas to ensure that all groups are represented on the Council, and training pupils as researchers who can gather data and put forward recommendations for change to share with their fellow pupils, the staff and the governing body of the school (Fielding, M., 2001).
8. Consider providing all pupils with homework diaries to help them plan and monitor their learning.

9. Do more to build links with parents and the wider community, for example by collaborating in the incoming development of children's zones in Wales (Egan, 2017) or the recently-opened library on the local social housing estate.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of estimated population density in Wales in 2005 (Gweni: The Council of the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales, 2008), the Local Authority area of Rhondda Cynon Taf indicated with an orange arrow (my addition)

Chart 5b. Population density
for small areas in Wales (2005 estimates)



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Appendix 2: Table showing the eight Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in School X's catchment area, the deprivation of each colour coordinated, and averages found (data from Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2014)

Rank of LSOA, where 1 is the Most Deprived LSOA, and 1909 is the Least Deprived LSOA.											
LSOA Name (Eng)	Local Authority Name (Eng)	WIMD 2014 (r)	Income (r)	Employment	Health	Education	Access to Services		Community Safety	Physical Environment	
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	2	5
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	3	3	2	3	2	5	5	3	4	5
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	2	2	2	1	1	4	4	4	4	2
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	2	5	1
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	2	2	1	1	1	4	4	2	4	5
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	5	5	5	2	4	5	5	1	2	2
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	4	4
	Rhonda Cynon Taf	5	5	5	5	3	5	2	4	1	2
		3.5		3.25	2.75	2.25	4.75	3.125		3.25	3.25
Key											
50% least deprived		5									
30-50% most deprived		4									
20-30% most deprived		3									
10-20% most deprived		2									
10% most deprived		1									
Deprivation type											
Income	relative poverty										
Employment	unemployment										
Health	long-term illness, death rates, low birth rates, cancer incidence										
Education	skills, 1/3 adults 2/3 pupils										
Access to services	material and social deprivation in terms of travel times										
Community safety	crime, fire & safety										
Physical environment	air quality, flood & waste										
Housing	overcrowding and central heating										

Appendix 3: Profile of community

3.1: Table showing that the proportion of households in poverty in the school's catchment area is 25.8% (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

Variable	Measure	Rhondda Cynon Taf 026 ⁱ	Rhondda Cynon Taf (Unitary Authority) ⁱ	Wales ⁱ
Percentage of Households Below 60% of the Median Income; (after housing costs) (Households) ¹ ⁱ	%	25.8	..	..
Percentage of Households Below 60% of the ... housing costs); 95% Confidence Interval Lower Limit (Households) ¹ ⁱ	%	19.8	..	..
Percentage of Households Below 60% of the ... housing costs); 95% Confidence Interval Upper Limit (Households) ¹ ⁱ	%	32.9	..	..

Last Updated: 10 November 2010
Source: Office for National Statistics

3.2 Table showing that the percentage of workless households in Rhondda Cynon Taf is 3.9% higher than the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

Workless Households (Jan-Dec 2016)			
	Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	Wales	Great Britain
Number Of Workless Households	17,200	171,700	3,043,300
Percentage Of Households That Are Workless	21.7	17.8	15.1
Number Of Children In Workless Households	#	72,600	1,353,400
Percentage Of Children Who Are In Households That Are Workless	#	13.9	11.4

Source: ONS annual population survey - households by combined economic activity status
Sample size too small for reliable estimate ([see definitions](#))
Notes: Only includes those households that have at least one person aged 16 to 64.
Children refers to all children aged under 16.

3.3: Graph showing that 26.1% of inhabitants in School X's catchment area hold a qualification at A-Level or above whilst 37.2% hold no formal qualifications based on 2011 Census data (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

	count	%
All usual residents aged 16 and over	3,004	100.0
No qualifications	1,118	37.2
Level 1 qualifications	443	14.7
Level 2 qualifications	435	14.5
Apprenticeship	98	3.3
Level 3 qualifications	286	9.5
Level 4 qualifications and above	500	16.6
Other qualifications	124	4.1
Schoolchildren and full-time students: Age 16 to 17	70	2.3
Schoolchildren and full-time students: Age 18 and over	133	4.4
Full-time students: Age 18 to 74: Economically active: In employment	55	1.8
Full-time students: Age 18 to 74: Economically active: Unemployed	14	0.5
Full-time students: Age 18 to 74: Economically inactive	63	2.1

3.4 Table showing that the unemployment rate for Rhondda Cynon Taf is 0.7% higher than the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

Employment and unemployment (Oct 2016-Sep 2017)				
	Rhondda, Cynon, Taff (Numbers)	Rhondda, Cynon, Taff (%)	Wales (%)	Great Britain (%)
All People				
Economically Active†	112,100	74.6	75.7	78.1
In Employment†	105,000	69.8	71.9	74.5
Employees†	96,100	63.8	61.9	63.6
Self Employed†	8,700	5.8	9.4	10.6
Unemployed (Model-Based)§	6,100	5.5	4.8	4.5

3.5 Table showing that the average weekly WGe for the area is 6% lower than national average based on April 200 –March 2008 data (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

Variable	Trend	Measure	Rhondda Cynon Taf 026	Rhondda Cynon Taf (Unitary Authority)	Wales
Average Weekly Household Total Income Estimate (Households) ^{2 1}	Trend Data	£	510	..	540

3.6 Table showing the number of lone parent households with dependent children in School X's catchment area, of which almost 40% are workless based on 2011 Census data (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

	count	%
All lone parent households with dependent children	119	100.0
Lone parent in part-time employment: Total	43	36.1
Lone parent in full-time employment: Total	30	25.2
Lone parent not in employment: Total	46	38.7
Male lone parent: Total	16	13.4
In part-time employment	3	2.5
In full-time employment	8	6.7
Not in employment	5	4.2
Female lone parent: Total	103	86.6
In part-time employment	40	33.6
In full-time employment	22	18.5
Not in employment	41	34.5

In order to protect against disclosure of personal information, records have been swapped between different geographic areas. Some counts will be affected, particularly small counts at the lowest geographies

Source: ONS - 2011 Census (KS107EW)

Appendix 4: Profile of school

4.1: Extract taken from School X's most recent Estyn report (2014) stating that approximately 33% of pupils in School X live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales

Around 27% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above the national average of 17.7% for secondary schools in Wales. Around 33% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

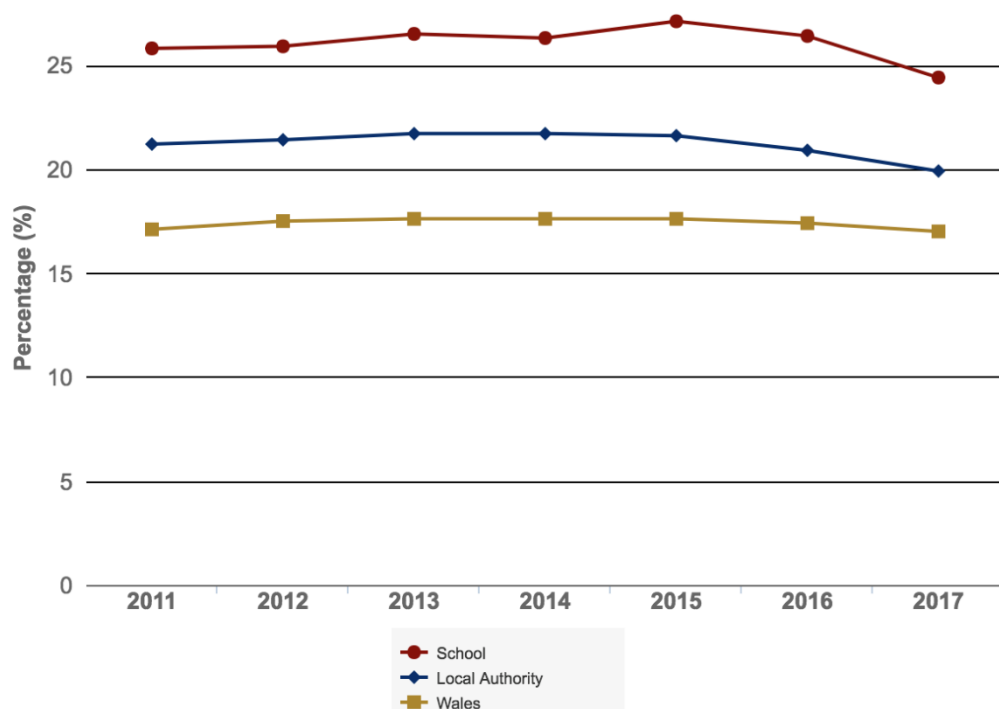
4.2: Graph showing that the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (e-FSM) in School X – 24.4% in 2017 – is well above the national average of 17% (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

Free school meals (FSM) - 3 year average (Secondary only)

Pupils of statutory school age (ages 5-15) known to be eligible for free school meals.

Table

Chart



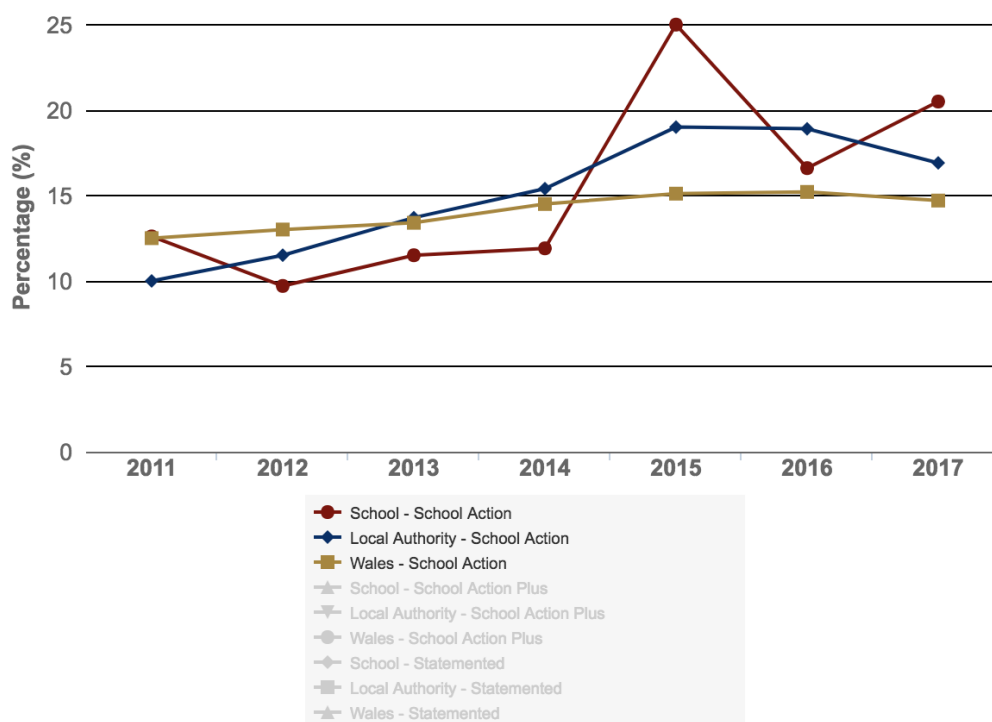
4.3: Graph showing that the school community includes a School Action proportion above the national average at 20.5% (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Secondary only)

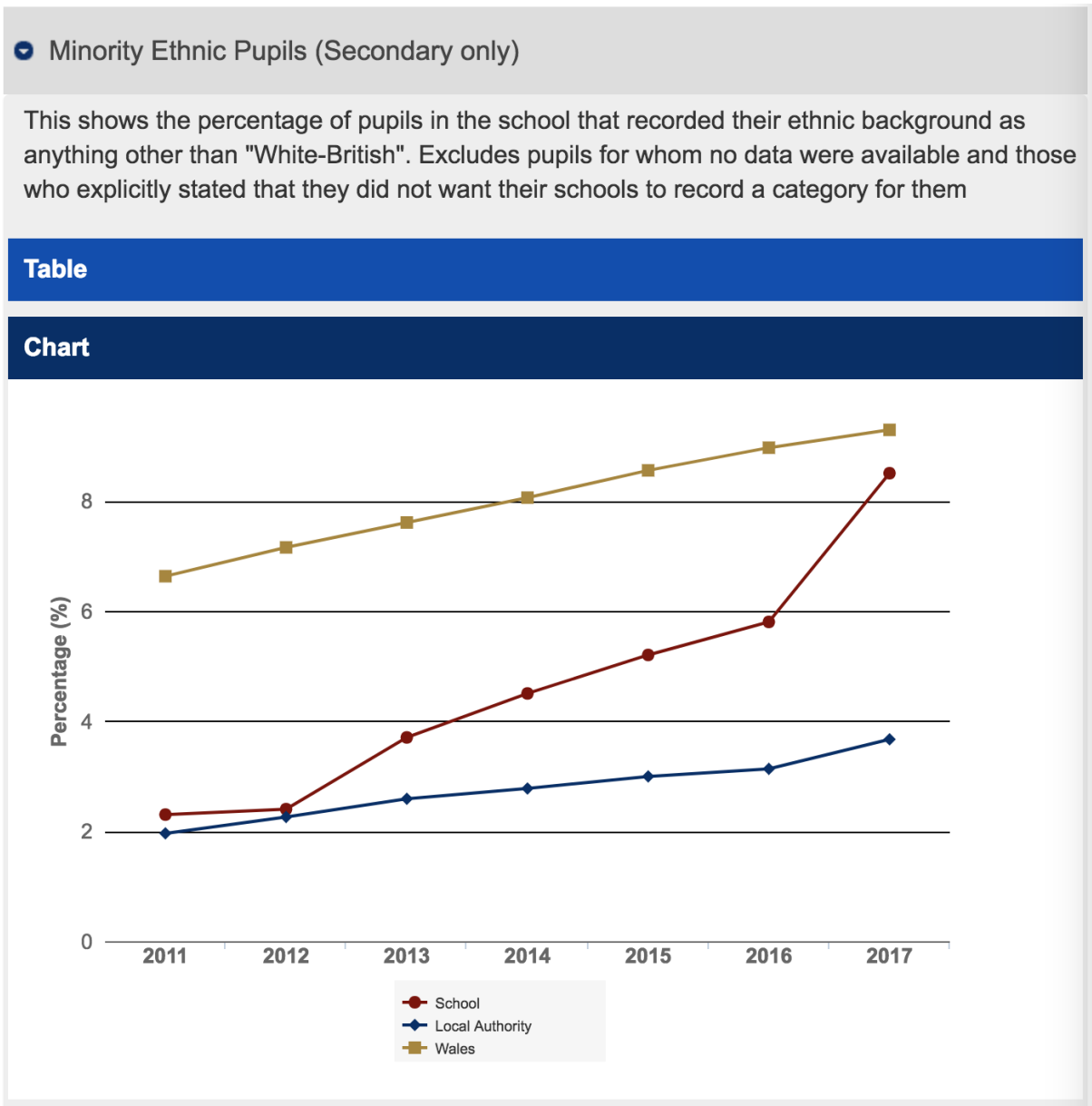
A child has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which requires special educational provision to be made for him or her. A learning difficulty means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of the same age or that the child has a disability that needs different educational facilities from those that the school generally provides for children.

Table

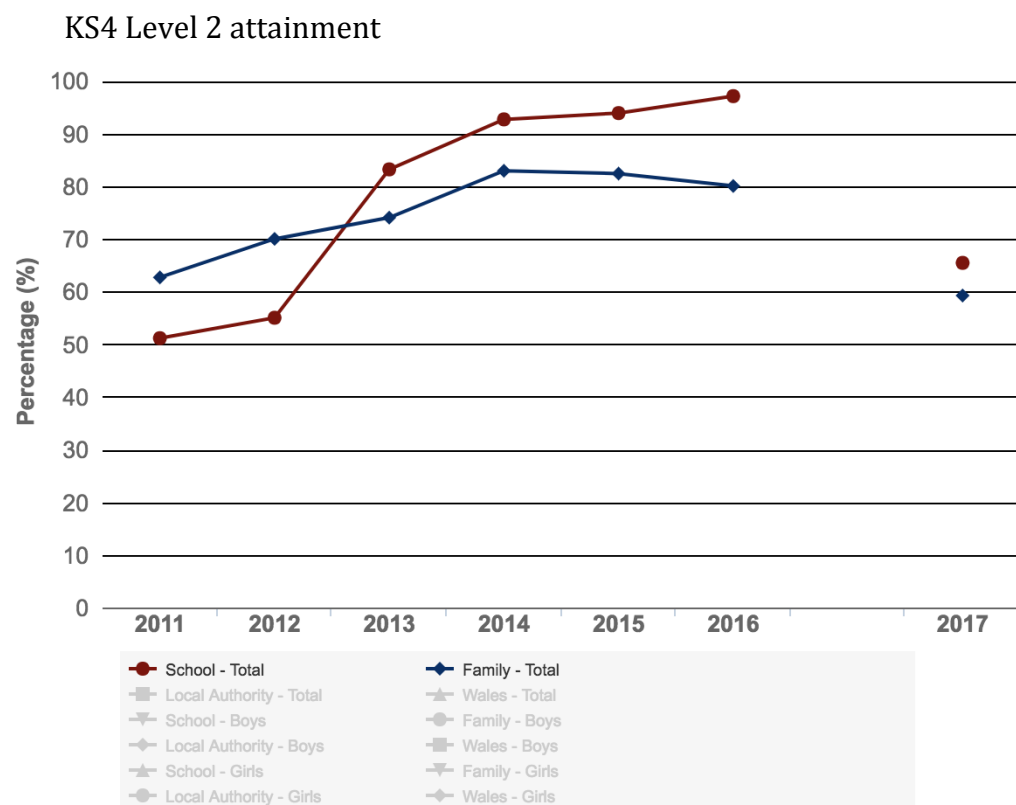
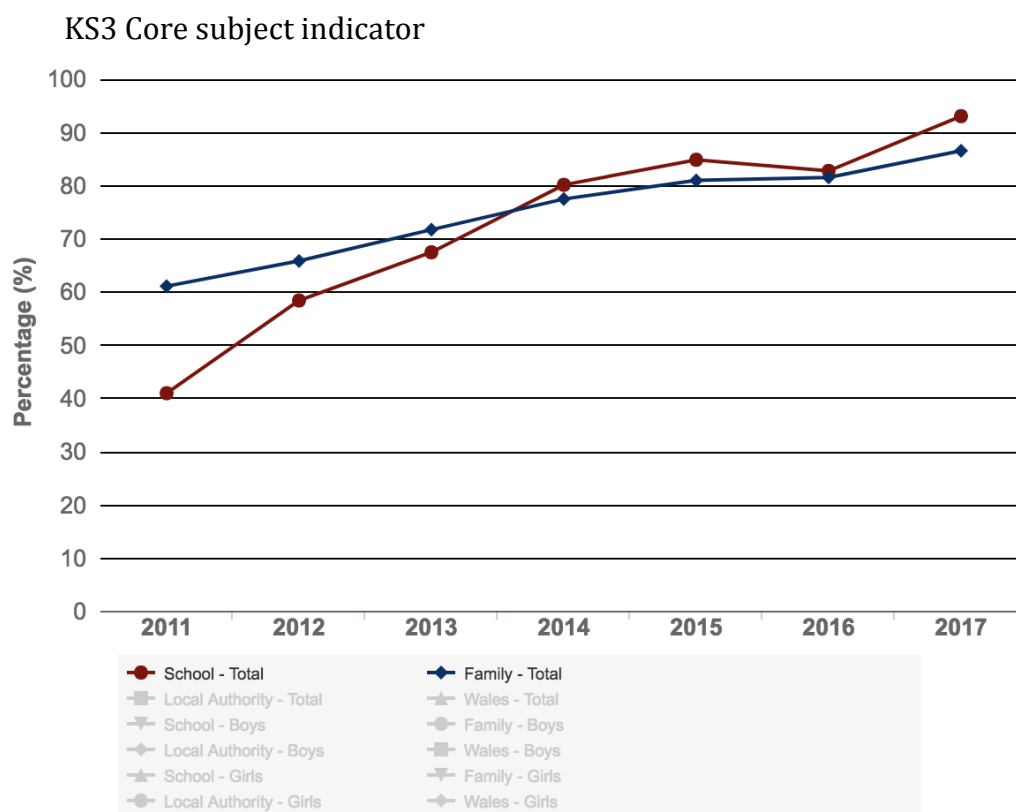
Chart



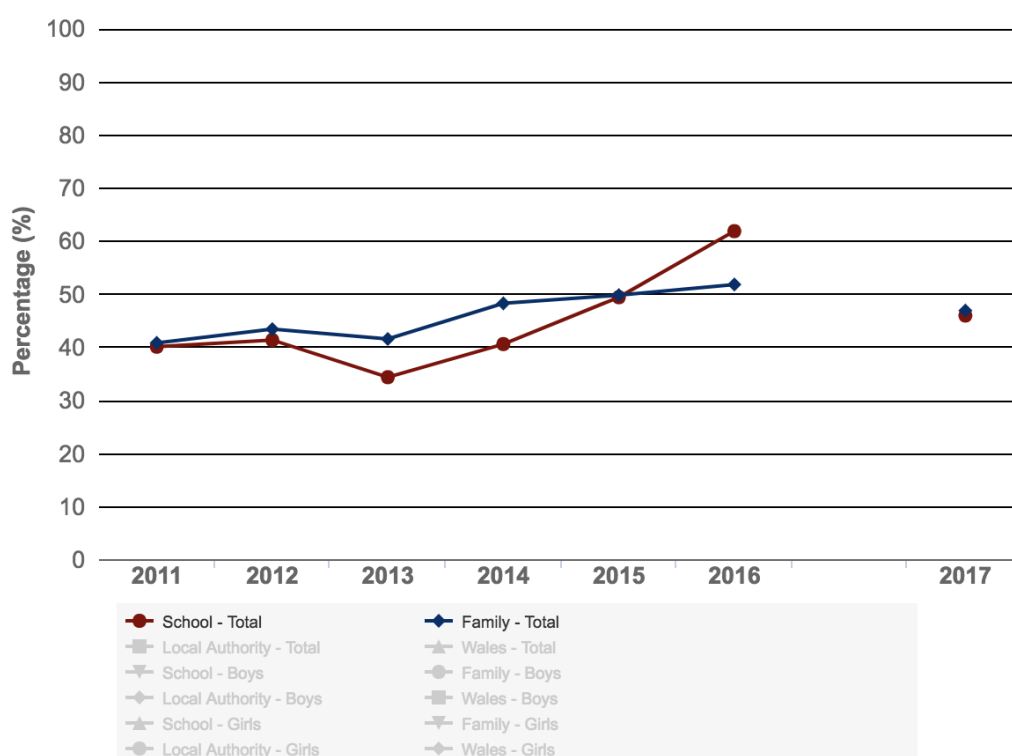
4.4: Graph showing that the proportion of ethnic minority pupils in School X is 8.5%, substantially higher than the local area average but below the national average (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)



4.6: Graphs showing that the proportion of School X pupils who reached the expected KS3 level and the Level 2 threshold at KS4 in 2017 were both 6.2% above the family averages (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

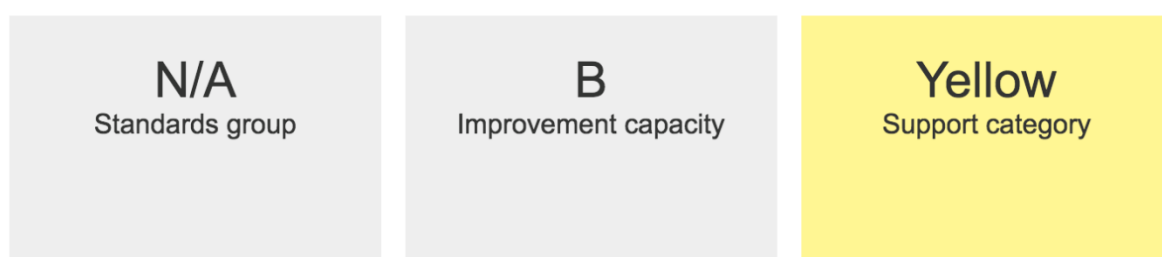


4.7: Graph showing that the proportions of KS4 pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics in 2017 was 0.9% below the family average (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)



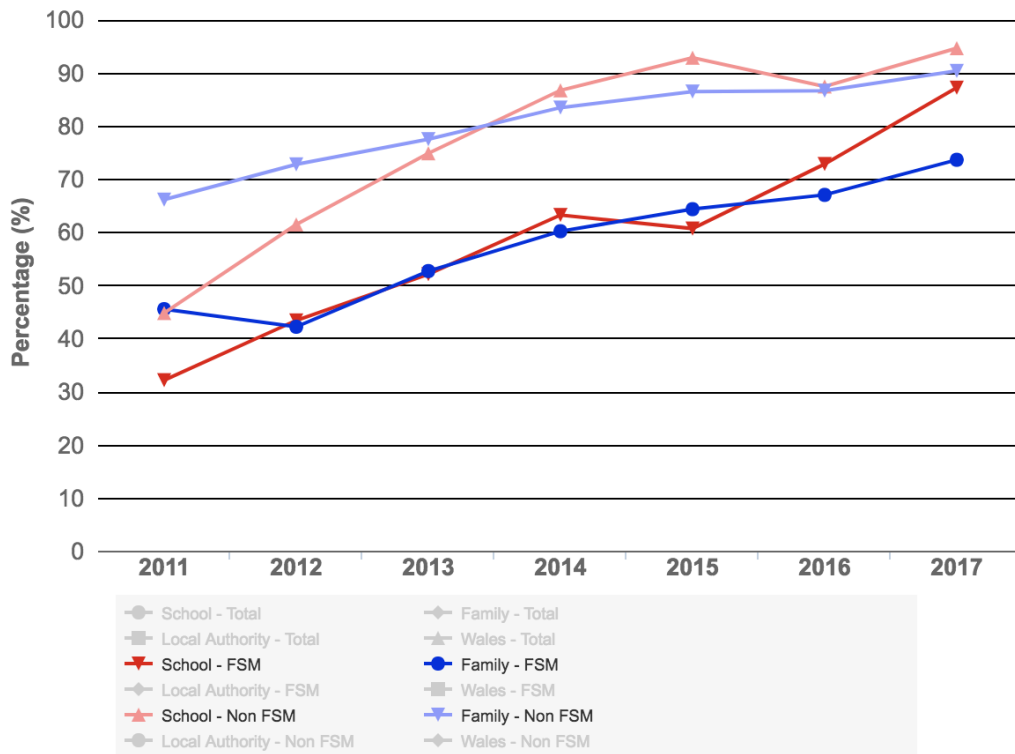
4.8: Screenshot showing that the school has been categorised in the National School Categorisation System as being improvement capacity B and support category Yellow (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

Please select a year to view: **2017** ⚙

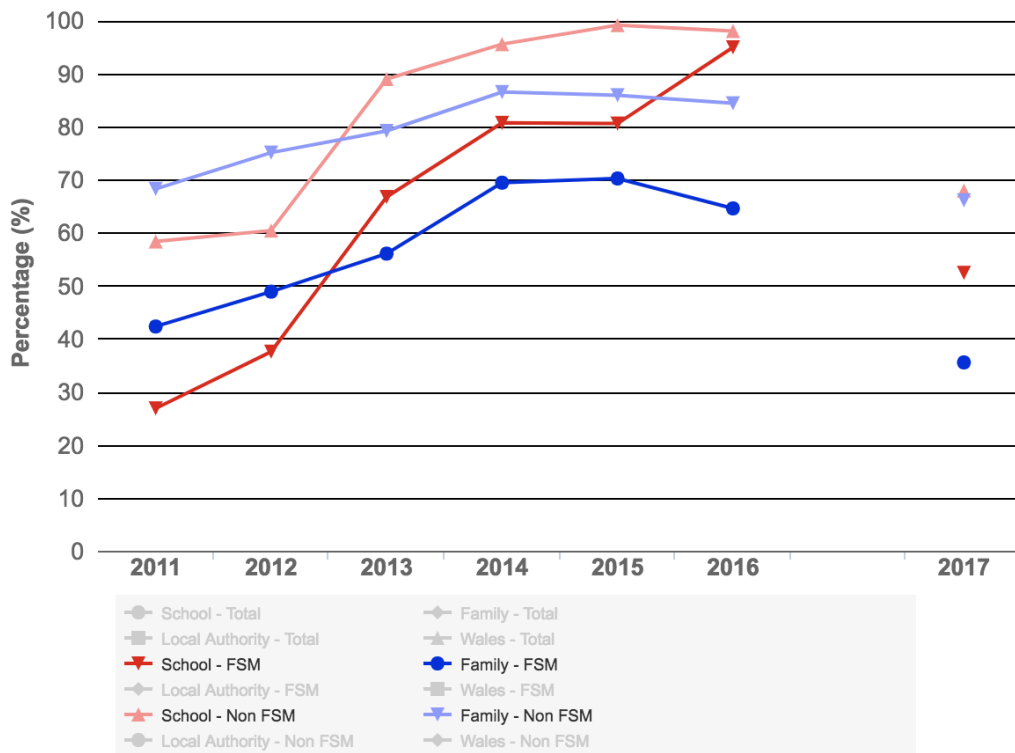


4.9: Graph showing that 2017 data indicated a 9.4% smaller core subject indicator attainment gap between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils than the national average in KS3, and a 15% smaller Level 2 attainment gap between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils than the family average in KS4 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)

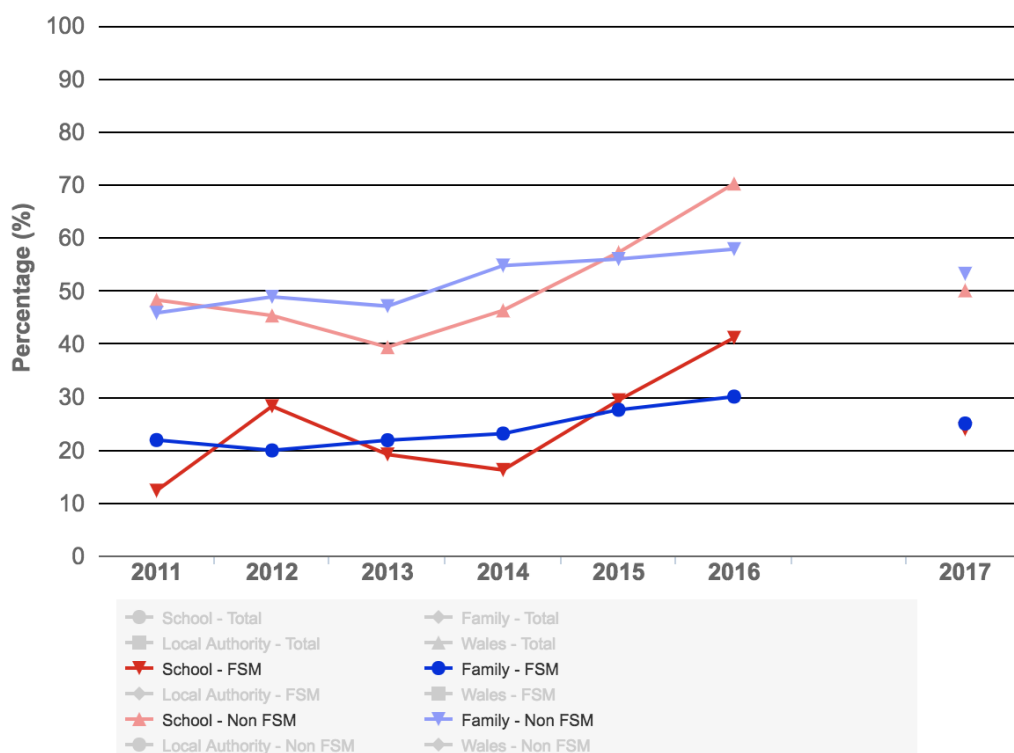
KS3 Core subject indicator



KS4 Level 2 attainment



4.10: Graph showing that the attainment gap between e-FSM and n-FSM KS4 pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics in 2017 was 2% below the family average, though it should be noted that the school achieved below the family averages on both measures (Welsh Assembly Government, 2018)



Appendix 5: Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* (WCEE, 2014)

High Potential Impact Approaches

Approach	Estimated impact	Learning Gain over a year (potential months gain in learning over a year)	Estimated Cost based on a class of 30 pupils	Available evidence base
Early years intervention	High	6	very high	extensive
Feedback	High	8	low	moderate
Meta-cognition and self-regulation	High	8	low	extensive
Peer tutoring	High	6	low	extensive

Moderate Potential Impact Approaches

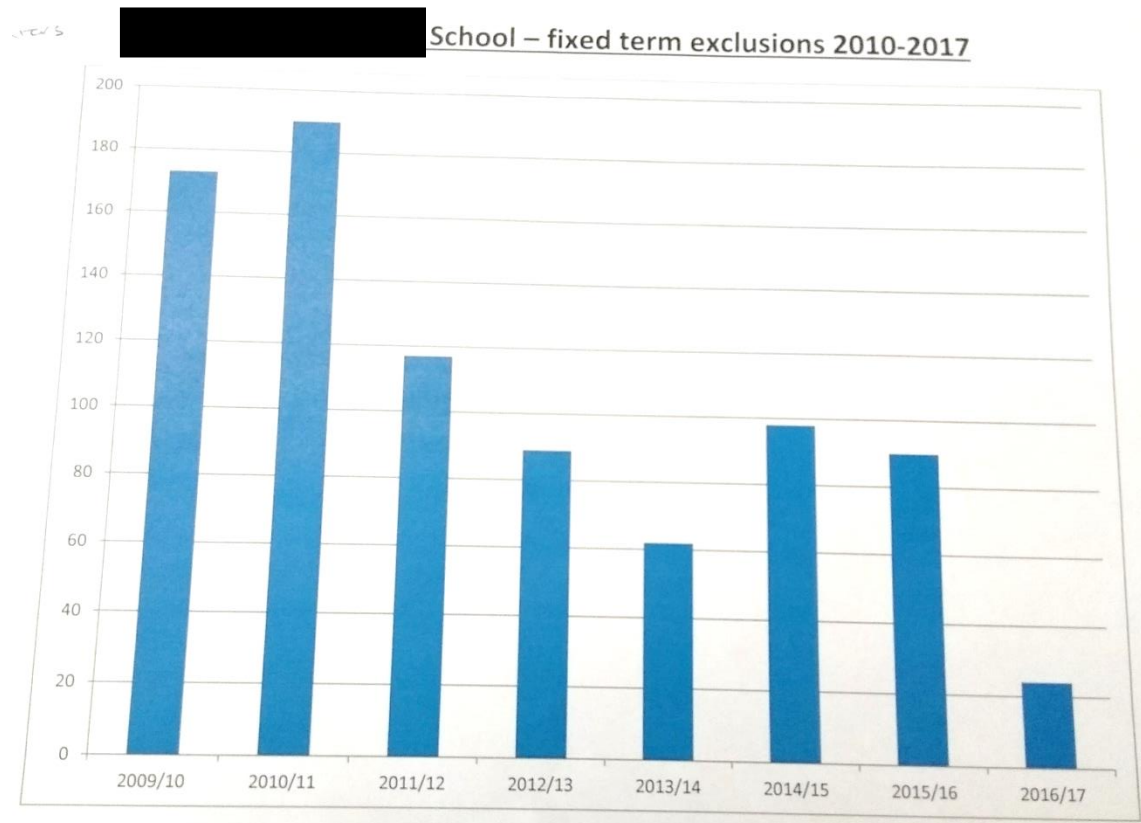
Approach	Estimated impact	Learning Gain over a year (potential months gain in learning over a year)	Estimated Cost based on a class of 30 pupils	Available evidence base
Behaviour interventions	Moderate	4	very high	extensive
Collaborative learning	Moderate	5	very low	extensive
Digital technology	Moderate	4	high	extensive
Homework (Secondary)	Moderate	5	very low	moderate
Mastery learning	Moderate	5	low	Moderate
One to one tuition	Moderate	5	high	extensive
Outdoor adventure learning	Moderate	3	moderate	limited
Parental involvement	Moderate	3	moderate	moderate
Phonics	Moderate	4	very low	Extensive
Small group tuition	Moderate	4	moderate	limited
Social and emotional learning	Moderate	4	very low	extensive
Sports participation	Moderate	2	moderate	moderate
Summer schools	Moderate	3	moderate	limited

Low, Very Low and Negative Potential Impact Approaches

Approach	Estimated impact	Learning Gain over a year (potential months gain in learning over a year)	Estimated Cost based on a class of 30 pupils	Available evidence base
Ability grouping	Negative	-1	very low	moderate
After school programmes	Low	2	high	limited
Arts participation	Low	2	Low	moderate
Aspiration interventions	Very low	0	moderate	very limited
Block scheduling	Very low	0	very low	limited
Extended school time	Low	2	moderate	limited
Homework (Primary)	Low	1	very low	moderate
Individualised instruction	Low	2	low	moderate
Learning styles	Low	2	very low	moderate
Mentoring	Low	1	moderate	moderate
Performance pay	Low	0	moderate	very limited
Physical environment	Very low	0	low	very limited
Reducing class size	Low	3	very high	moderate
Repeating a year	Negative	-4	very high	extensive evidence
School uniform	Very low	0	very low	very limited
Teaching assistants	Very low	0	high	limited

Appendix 6: Evidence of impact of interventions in School X

6.1: Graph showing that fixed term exclusions in School X were reduced by 90% over 6 years



6.2 Local Authority data breakdown for School X, showing an e-FSM/n-FSM attendance gap of 2.81% which places it in the third quartile for School X's family of schools

Wellbeing - Education Framework - Secondary School

School Name: [REDACTED]

Estab No: [REDACTED]

please select

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	RCT Average 2016/17
Number On School Roll (Y7-13)	816	755	729	728
% pupils eligible for FSM (Y7-13)	27.79%	24.07%	21.17%	16.64%
FSM Grouping	4	4	4	

Category	Capacity For Improvement (A-B)	Support Category Colour (Red/Amber/Yellow/Green)
Standards Group (1-4)	A	Yellow

PLASC	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
% of Pupils At Risk	BESD* 0.00%	Whole School 21.32%	BESD 14.57%
School Action	0.00%	5.64%	29.63%
School Action Plus	0.00%	0.98%	3.70%
Statement		27.94%	21.32%
Total SEN			24.01%

Vulnerability Profile	Red	Amber	Green	White
Year 7	21	35	49	32
Year 8	18	24	47	28
Year 9	15	28	39	23
Year 10	14	21	62	53
Year 11	12	26	45	30

Exclusions	Permanent Exclusions	5 days or fewer	More than 5 days	Pupils Repeatedly Excluded	Average Days Lost	Incidents per 1000 pupils
Year						
2014/15	2	84	14	19	4.02	120.1
2015/16	1	84	6	19	3.09	119.21
2016/17	0	27	3	7	3.12	41.15

School Transfers	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17			
In		In		In		
Out		Out		Out		
Within County Transfers	35	8	31	6	22	3

Managed Moves	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17			
In		In		In		
Out		Out		Out		
Managed Moves	0	0	1	2	0	0

EHE De-registration	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
---------------------	---------	---------	---------

Behaviour Incidents	Incidents of Bullying % of School Population	Use of Time Out % of School Population	Incidents of Positive Handling % of School Population	Incidents of Exclusion Related to Bullying
2014/15	0.25%	0.00%	0.00%	2
2015/16	2.91%	68.74%	0.00%	22
2016/17	1.95%	36.64%	0.00%	12

ASSESSMENT									
Core Subject Indicator (Key Stage 3)									
Year	Number of Pupils	% CSI Achieved	% CSI SEN Achieved	% CSI eFSM Achieved	eFSM / Non FSM Gap				
2014/15	144	84.72%	64.91%	60.61%	-32.12%				
2015/16	115	88.70%	40.74%	72.70%	-14.69%				
2016/17	141	92.91%	86.11%	90.00%	4.25%				
Level 2 (fine both English (or Welsh 1st Lang) and Mathematics) (Key Stage 4)									
Year	Number of Pupils	% L2+ Achieved	% L2+ SEN Achieved	% L2+ eFSM Achieved	FSM / Non FSM Gap				
2014/15	146	49.32%	6.09%	29.27%	-27.81%				
2015/16	136	62	17.80%	41.00%	-29.08%				
2016/17	133	45.86%	5.26%	23.81%	-26.19%				

YEPS	Total Red	% Red Engaged	Total Amber	% Amber Engaged	Total Green	% Green Engaged	Total White	% White Engaged
2014/15	33	55.92%	73	67.59%	135	57.20%	126	50.81%
2015/16	53	66.04%	121	51.24%	274	53.28%	196	48.87%
2016/17	45	75.00%	98	75.97%	186	79.83%	135	71.05%

Attendance									
	2014/15	eFSM/Non FSM Gap	Quartile	2015/16	eFSM/Non FSM Gap	Quartile	2016/17	eFSM/Non FSM Gap	Quartile
Attendance	93.02%	-3.45%	3	92.10%	-5.20%	4	93.32%	-2.81%	3
Target	93.00%			93.50%			93.60%		

Healthy Schools	IRIS	Staff Based (Head Count)	% On Short Term Sick Leave	% On Long Term Sick Leave
Phase Achieved Jan 2017	Year	Year	Number of Staff	Leave
2	0	2014/15	104	63.46%
		2015/16	93	56.99%
		2016/17	82	46.34%
				7.32%

Assessing Wellbeing - For Self Evaluation at School Level (School Use Only)				
Summary Scorecard	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
1 Exclusions				
2 Incidents of Behaviour				
3 Attendance				

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