Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Rewriting the future

Raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools

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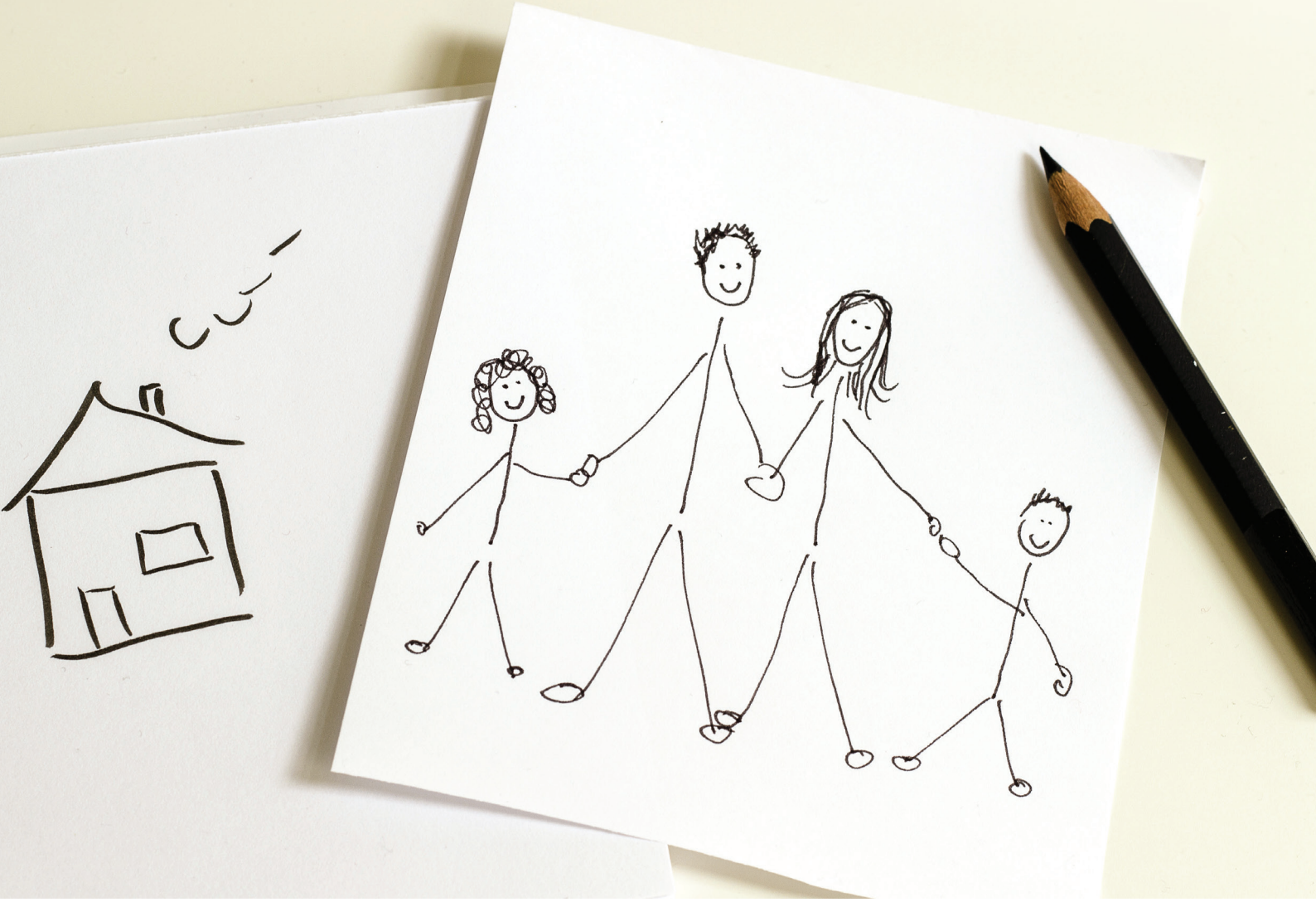

Rewriting the future

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 describes the Welsh Government's programme and its four key themes to tackle the link between poverty and educational underachievement in schools.

Action required

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

Further information

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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

Building Resilient Communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan (2013); *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* (2013); *Youth engagement and progression framework: Implementation plan* (2013)

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Ministerial foreword

No child in Wales should be disadvantaged by poverty and inequality; that is why I have made tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment my top priority.

Education and skills are key to improving life chances but the stark fact is that children's educational outcomes are more likely to be determined by their home background than by their personal characteristics. A child from a poor family is likely to start school with a poorer vocabulary than a child from a better off family and that detrimental impact of poverty then continues to grow throughout the school years. The cumulative effects can mean that the same child is less than half as likely to get five good GCSEs including English or Welsh First Language and Mathematics than a child from a well off family; less likely to go on to further or higher education; more likely to not be in education, employment or training; and those who are in employment are likely to have lower earnings.

The factors that underlie this are many and complex but some children succeed despite the odds and some schools make a significant contribution to helping them do so. Where there is thoughtful and active leadership; where children are supported to overcome the barriers they face; where families are engaged in their children's education; where we set high expectations and encourage high aspirations; this is where we see children succeeding despite the odds. I do not underestimate the challenge, but these schools show what can be done and we need to learn from them.

Through Hwb, we are developing online networks of professional practice to facilitate collaboration at all levels. By July 2014, all schools in Wales will have their own Hwb+ learning platform and from September 2014, we will begin rolling out authenticated access to the platform for parents/carers and governors.

These actions will drive improved attainment for all learners but if we are to tackle the inequalities in our system we need to do more to accelerate improvement for learners from deprived backgrounds. My ambition then, is to eradicate inequalities in learner outcomes so that all learners, regardless of their background have high aspirations and an equal chance of achieving those aspirations.

That is why I have launched the School Challenge Cymru programme to invest additional support and resource into some of our most challenged secondary schools and their cluster primaries. However, inequality on the basis of deprivation is a problem that needs to be tackled in **every** school so it will be essential that learning is shared with and between schools throughout the country.

This document sets out how we will tackle the problem together and achieve my ambition.

Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills

Introduction

Our vision is to have high expectations for all learners, regardless of their socio-economic background, and ensure that they have an equal chance of achieving those expectations.

The impacts of poverty and disadvantage are many and complex.

We know that the impacts are there before children even begin school. We also know that schools can be significant in mitigating the impact, especially when they work with parents/carers, families and the wider community.

Rewriting the future sets out what schools, working with their parents/carers, can do to break down the barriers faced by children from deprived backgrounds by acting as the central locus for interventions and support.

> We recognise the critical importance of developing strong partnerships with pre- and post-compulsory education. We recognise the importance of seamless transition from home or childcare settings into Foundation Phase education; progression from school to school and on into further and higher education and the world of work; and of support for parents/carers and families.

We also recognise the central and pivotal role that schools have in breaking the link between deprivation and educational attainment; that is why the commitments focus specifically and deliberately on the urgent actions that **schools** need to take and on the actions that Welsh Government and consortia need to take to support schools in their endeavours.

The attainment of all learners in Wales needs to improve, but *Rewriting the future* focuses on improving educational outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals at a faster rate to ensure a reduction in the 'gap' in attainment, that currently exists. This document is about tackling the fact that the attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds in Wales is **far too low** and progress to improve outcomes is **far too slow**.

Rewriting the future links to and builds on the work outlined in *Building Resilient Communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan*; *Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan*; and the *Youth engagement and progression framework*, amongst others. It also supports the work and ambition of our Schools Challenge Cymru programme. It draws together current work, identifies where we need to do more and what we will do to deliver a cohesive, comprehensive approach to this agenda. It will also deliver significant improvements in outcomes for children and young people from deprived backgrounds.

Our objectives are to:

- mitigate the impact of deprivation in the early years so that learners are 'school ready' and have well-developed early language skills
- engage families effectively in children's learning and school life
- make all schools 'community schools'
- better equip the school workforce to understand and overcome the challenges faced by learners from deprived backgrounds
- ensure that learners from deprived backgrounds access the highest quality learning and teaching
- provide high-quality digital learning experiences for learners to ensure they are equipped with skills to excel in the third millennium
- engender high aspirations amongst learners from deprived backgrounds
- raise expectations for learners from deprived backgrounds and ensure they meet those expectations.

Building Resilient Communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan sets out a number of targets in relation to poverty and educational attainment.

- To narrow the attainment gap at the end of Foundation Phase by 10 per cent by 2017[1].
- To raise attainment by 15-year-olds eligible for free school meals of the Level 2 inclusive of English/Welsh First Language and Mathematics to 37 per cent by 2017[2].
- To reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training aged 16 to 18 to nine per cent by 2017. At the end of 2012, the figure was 10.2 per cent.
- To reduce the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training aged 19 to 24 in Wales relative to the UK as a whole by 2017.

The Minister for Education and Skills has already requested that officials revisit the target for Foundation Phase with a view to strengthening it and increasing the challenge for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM). We will do this following publication of the 2014 results.

[1] The Foundation Phase indicator measures progress in three measures at the end of the Foundation Phase (age 7). In 2012 the difference between learners eligible for free school meals and those that weren't was 18 percentage points.

[2] The Key Stage 4 indicator, known as Level 2 inclusive (L2 inc), is the achievement of five GCSEs at A*to C including English or Welsh First Language and Mathematics. In 2012 23.4 per cent of learners eligible for free school meals achieved Level 2 inclusive.

The target for performance of 15-year-olds is challenging in light of current performance (25.8 per cent of eFSM learners achieved the Level 2 inclusive in summer 2013). It still sets our ambition for this group of learners lower than current performance on a comparative measure for eFSM learners in England.

It is even more challenging in light of the targets set by regional school improvement consortia; each one of which has a clear priority to accelerate the improvement of performance for eFSM learners. However, local targets for improvement do not add up to the overall improvement required to reach our modest national ambition; we must find a way to accelerate our ambition and achievement.

Overview of *Rewriting the future*

This document is set out in six main sections.

Section 1 sets out **why deprivation matters** and describes the landscape in Wales in terms of who and where our deprived learners are, their current performance and the linked challenges they face.

Sections 2 to 5 provides an overview of the evidence base for each of the four themes for action, describing what we are already doing and what else we need to do.

Section 6 sets out the commitments the Welsh Government is making in relation to each theme, and the actions that we want schools, local authorities and consortia to take forward.

What will Welsh Government do next?

Our next step will be to publish a detailed timeline for delivery of our commitments in June 2014 and set out how we will measure progress and impact.

We will publish an annual update setting out the progress we have made and any new commitments to help achieve our ambition. The first annual update will be published in June 2015.

What should schools do next?

Firstly, they should take the time to read the rest of this document. Then, as a school in the first instance they should consider how they might implement the following before considering how to approach the actions set out later in this document. All schools should:

- place **tackling the underachievement of learners from deprived backgrounds at the heart of school development planning**, thinking about how to use resources and how to develop the workforce to meet the challenge
- use the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit[3] to support planning. The presentation by Robbie Coleman helps to explain how the toolkit can help schools http://learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/deprivation-and-attainment-what-can-really-make-a-difference/?skip=1&lang=en

[3] Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, 2013.

- plan effectively for the use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) in the context of taking a whole-school approach to tackling disadvantage. The PDG should be targeted at learners from deprived backgrounds and interventions and programmes should be sustainable and have an impact in both the short- and long-term
- set the **highest expectations** for **all** learners and be clear with learners that they can achieve high outcomes and realise their ambitions. Ensure learners know how they are progressing, their targets and what they need to do to achieve those targets. Use effective tracking to monitor progress against targets and provide feedback
- **teach children to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.** This has been shown to result in between seven and nine months' additional progress. It is particularly effective for lower achieving learners and those from deprived backgrounds. The Welsh Government has published resource materials on the Learning Wales website to support schools to use metacognition in the classroom http://learning.wales.gov.uk/learningpacks/pisa/introduction-to-metacognition/?lang=en
- consider how Hwb+ may be used to support learning in school and at home for all learners.

Primary schools should also:

- **establish provision for, and promote take-up, of free breakfast, particularly for learners from deprived backgrounds**. Hungry children have lower concentration and are more likely to display poor behaviour. Universal breakfast provision has been found to disproportionately improve dietary behaviours of children from lower socio-economic status schools and families[4]. Free breakfast in primary schools is intended to help improve the health and concentration of children to assist in raising the standards of learning and attainment, by providing children with a healthy start to the school day. All primary schools that request it should receive funding to provide all learners of primary school age registered in maintained primary schools in Wales with a free, healthy breakfast at school each day.

Non-maintained settings and primary schools should:

- **plan for effective transition**. Poor transition can damage progress and confidence.
  - Work in partnership with parents/carers, families, early years settings, Flying Start and other schools to plan transition between settings/schools into Foundation Phase, and onto Key Stage 2.
  - Form good links and monitor the ongoing progress of learners.

[4] Moore, G. F. et al (2014) 'Impacts of the Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative on socio-economic inequalities in breakfast consumption among 9–11-year-old schoolchildren in Wales', Public Health Nutrition.

Secondary schools should also:

- **plan for effective transition.** Poor transition can damage progress and confidence.
  - Work in partnership with parents/carers, families, colleges and employers to carefully consider transition at each stage of the learner's journey.
  - Key features of good transition from primary schools to secondary schools include:
    - sharing information about achievement and specific needs
    - joint curriculum planning across Key Stages 2 and 3
    - visits to the secondary school in Year 6 or earlier
    - visits by Year 7 tutor and core subject teachers to Key Stage 2 to meet children and teachers
    - joint moderation of standards in cluster groups of primary/secondary schools at the end of Key Stage 2.

  Retaining links with past learners can also provide schools with a ready source of mentors and role models to help inspire future cohorts.

What should local authorities and their consortia do next?

As a local authority, working in partnership through your regional consortium, you should reflect on your plans and targets, the performance of learners from deprived backgrounds and how the approaches described in this document might be usefully implemented to accelerate progress within specific schools and across your region.

Adopt a **multi-agency** approach to pool expertise with other agencies that addresses health, domestic and social welfare concerns of learners and their families. In areas where Team around the Family and Families First are delivered, we would expect local authorities and consortia to ensure that schools are a part of this. In other areas local authorities and consortia should support schools to adopt the same kind of multi-agency approach with families. Schools that serve Community First cluster areas should also be expected to work with the Community First team. Estyn's report, *Working together to tackle the impact of poverty on educational achievement* makes recommendations for schools and local authorities.

http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/296942.1/working-together-to-tackle-the-impact-of-poverty-on-educational-achievement-december-2013/?navmap=30,163

Defining poverty and deprivation

Deprivation and poverty are defined in many different ways; generally deprivation is seen as a wider concept than poverty. Poverty means a lack of money. Deprivation refers to wider problems caused by a lack of resources and opportunities.

Eligibility for free school meals is used as a proxy for poverty in schools and we refer in this document to learners eligible for free school meals, **eFSM**, and those who are not, **nFSM**. Area deprivation is measured using the 'Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation' or WIMD, which is a relative measure of concentrations of deprivation at the small area level. It uses eight different types of deprivation.

FSM is better at identifying individuals who are in poverty, while WIMD is better at identifying areas where there is a concentration of deprivation.

For the purposes of ***Rewriting the future*** we refer to learners from deprived backgrounds although we rely primarily on eFSM as our proxy measure to identify those learners.

Defining attainment

***Rewriting the future* refers to attainment using a number of common measures which are defined below.**

Level 2 inclusive (L2 inc) refers to the achievement of a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A*to C including English or Welsh First Language and Mathematics.

Core Subject Indicator (CSI) refers to the achievement of the expected level in each of English or Welsh First Language, Mathematics and science at the end of a key stage.

Expected levels are measured against teacher assessments which measure progress and expected attainment at each key stage.

The expected level at the end of:

- Foundation Phase is Foundation Phase Outcome 5
- Key Stage 2 is National Curriculum Level 4
- Key Stage 3 is National Curriculum Level 5.

1. Why deprivation matters

The effect of poverty can be seen before children even start school; in the difference in educational outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals and those who are not through each key stage; in the proportion of learners who go onto further and higher education; and in the proportion who are not in education, training or employment.

Deprivation matters because:

- by **age five** children from more disadvantaged backgrounds will be **over a year behind** in their **vocabulary** compared with their peers from less disadvantaged backgrounds
- eFSM learners in primary school in Wales are **four times more likely** to be **persistently absent** and **three times more likely** to be **absent without authority** than their nFSM peers
- at the **end of primary** school in Wales **three out of 10** children from deprived backgrounds **fail** to achieve the expected levels compared with only one out of 10 of their more affluent peers
- eFSM learners in secondary school in Wales are **four times more likely** to be persistently **absent** and **four times more likely** to be **absent without authority** than their nFSM peers
- by the end of secondary school in Wales **only one in four** eFSM 15-year-olds achieve the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh First Language and Mathematics compared with six out of 10 of their more affluent peers
- an eFSM learner in Wales is **twice as likely** to have a **special educational need (SEN)** and SEN learners are **three times less likely** to achieve the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh First Language and Mathematics
- learners in Wales that live in the most deprived areas are over **five times** more likely to become **NEET (not in employment, education or training)** than learners living in the least deprived areas and those who are eFSM are almost **three times** more likely to be NEET
- entry rates to higher education (HE) for 18-year-olds from areas with the lowest levels of past HE participation (considered the 'most disadvantaged') are around one third of the level seen among students from areas with the highest levels of past participation.

In the longer term levels of education impact on earnings; someone with a degree will earn on average 85 per cent more than someone with only GCSEs, while those with no qualifications will earn, on average, 20 per cent less than someone with GCSEs. Ultimately lower educational attainment is linked with reduced life expectancy and increased likelihood of engagement in criminal activity[5].

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[5] Feinstein L, Budge, D, Vorhaus, J and Duckworth, K: *The social and personal benefits of learning,* Institute of Education, London University (2008).

The impact of deprivation on educational attainment is neither a new phenomenon nor one unique to Wales, but we do not have to look far from home to see that the impact is greater and progress to tackle it slower in Wales than elsewhere.

- eFSM learners in England are around 50 per cent more likely to achieve the Level 2 inclusive than eFSM learners in Wales at age 15.
- The North East of England region is the most socio-economically comparable to Wales. Here, eFSM learners are over a third more likely to achieve Level 2 inclusive than their peers in Wales.
- In every region in England the rate of improvement for the performance of eFSM learners has been significantly faster than in Wales.

Figure 1: Comparisons in attainment

	Wales			England			North East England		
	Eligible for FSM	Not Eligible for FSM	Gap	Eligible for FSM	Not Eligible for FSM	Gap	Eligible for FSM	Not Eligible for FSM	Gap
L2 incl E/W & M									
2009	20.1	52.0	-31.9	26.6	54.3	-27.7	21.2	53.0	-31.8
2010	20.7	54.6	-34.0	31.2	58.8	-27.6	26.9	57.8	-30.9
2011	22.0	55.7	-33.8	34.6	62.0	-27.4	30.4	62.5	-32.1
2012	23.4	56.6	-33.2	36.3	62.6	-26.3	32.9	64.2	-31.3
2013	25.8	58.5	-32.7	37.9	64.6	-26.7	34.6	65.1	-30.5
Progress	+5.7	+6.5		+11.3	+10.3		+13.4	+12.1	

The figures above underline why it is important to accelerate the improvement in attainment for eFSM learners. Regardless of the 'gap' the fact is that the attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds in Wales is far too low and the progress made to improve outcomes elsewhere has been substantially faster than in Wales.

Deprivation matters; the attainment of eFSM learners in Wales is far too low and progress to improve outcomes is far too slow.

Who and where are our deprived learners?

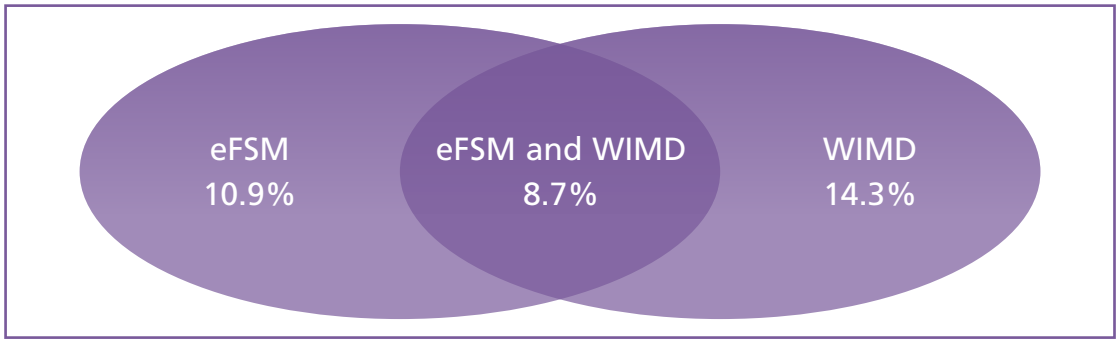
200,000 children in Wales live in households in relative poverty[6]. Of these, over 90,000 live in severe poverty[7], with household incomes of less than £12,200 a year. Around one-fifth of learners in Wales are eligible for free school meals and almost a quarter of learners live in the 20 most deprived wards in Wales according to WIMD.

[6] Measured as below 60 per cent of UK median income after housing costs have been deducted Welsh Government Statistics, *Households Below Average Income*, June 2013.

[7] Save the Children, *Child Poverty Snapshots: the local picture in Wales*, 2012.

Almost nine per cent of learners in Wales are eligible for FSM and also live in the most deprived areas of Wales.

Figure 2: Eligibility for free school meals and residency in deprived wards



There are a slightly higher proportion of eFSM learners in primary schools than in secondary schools. This does not necessarily mean that there are fewer learners from deprived backgrounds in secondary schools, nor does it necessarily reflect the influence of 'stigma'. A study undertaken for Welsh Government by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) found that the main reasons for not taking up free school meals were food choice, what friends did and queues[8].

Individual learners' eligibility for free school meals is not fixed and can vary throughout their school life. Evidence from other countries suggests that in each year around five to seven per cent of learners change from eFSM to nFSM or vice versa.

Performance of learner groups who have been eFSM for between one and four years was substantially lower than the nFSM group. Those who had been eFSM for five years or more had by far the lowest performance.

Figure 3: Years eligible for free school meals and achievement of Level 2 inclusive

Years eFSM	Proportion of the eFSM cohort	%age achieving Level 2 inc
1 year	3.8	35.0
2 year	4.6	35.8
3 year	4.9	43.8
4 year	5.9	34.1
5 years or more	80.8	22.9

There are nearly 31,000 eFSM learners in secondary school in Wales (18 per cent).

Almost every school has some eFSM learners but the distribution across schools is not even; the majority of eFSM learners are concentrated in a relatively small proportion of schools.

[8] *Free school meals case studies report*, Welsh Government information document no: 100/2013.

The following figures show the distribution of eFSM learners across primary and secondary schools. Over half of all eFSM learners are taught in just over one third of our secondary schools. Just over one fifth of secondary schools have very small proportions of eFSM learners.

Nearly half of all primary eFSM learners are taught in a quarter of all primary schools.

Figure 4: Distribution of eFSM learners in primary schools

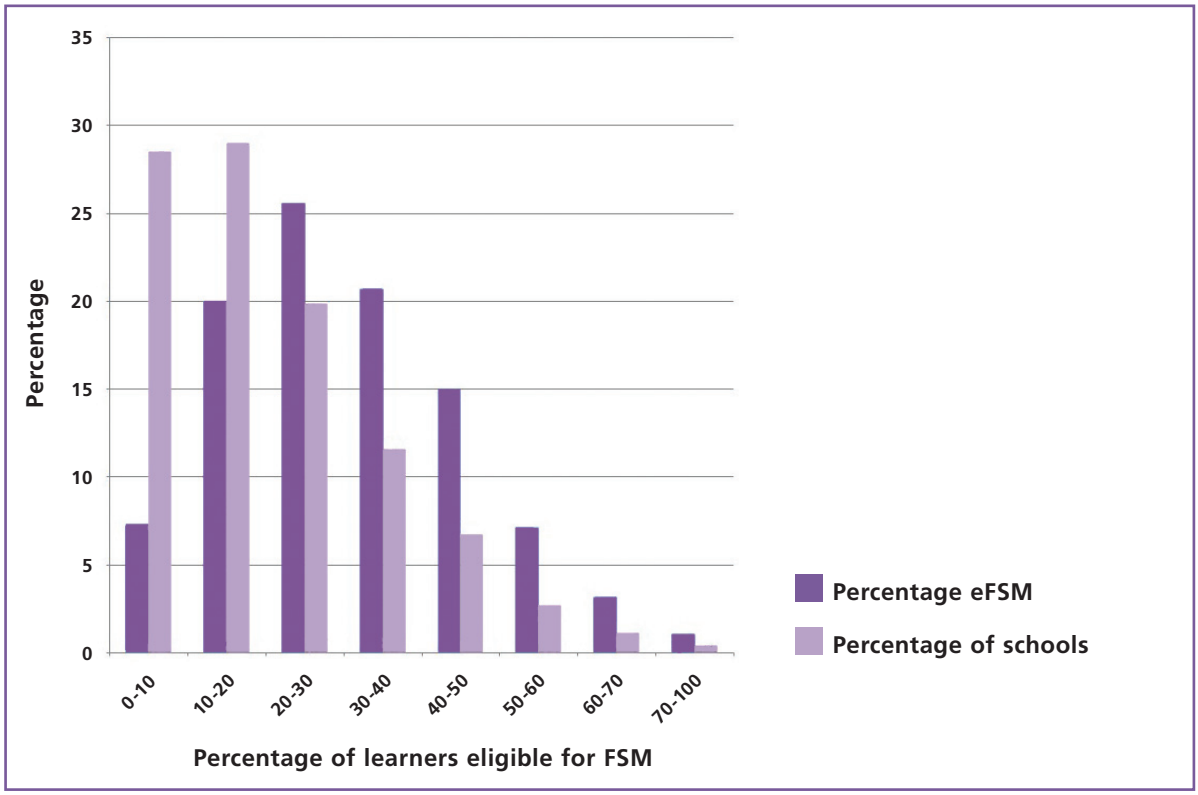
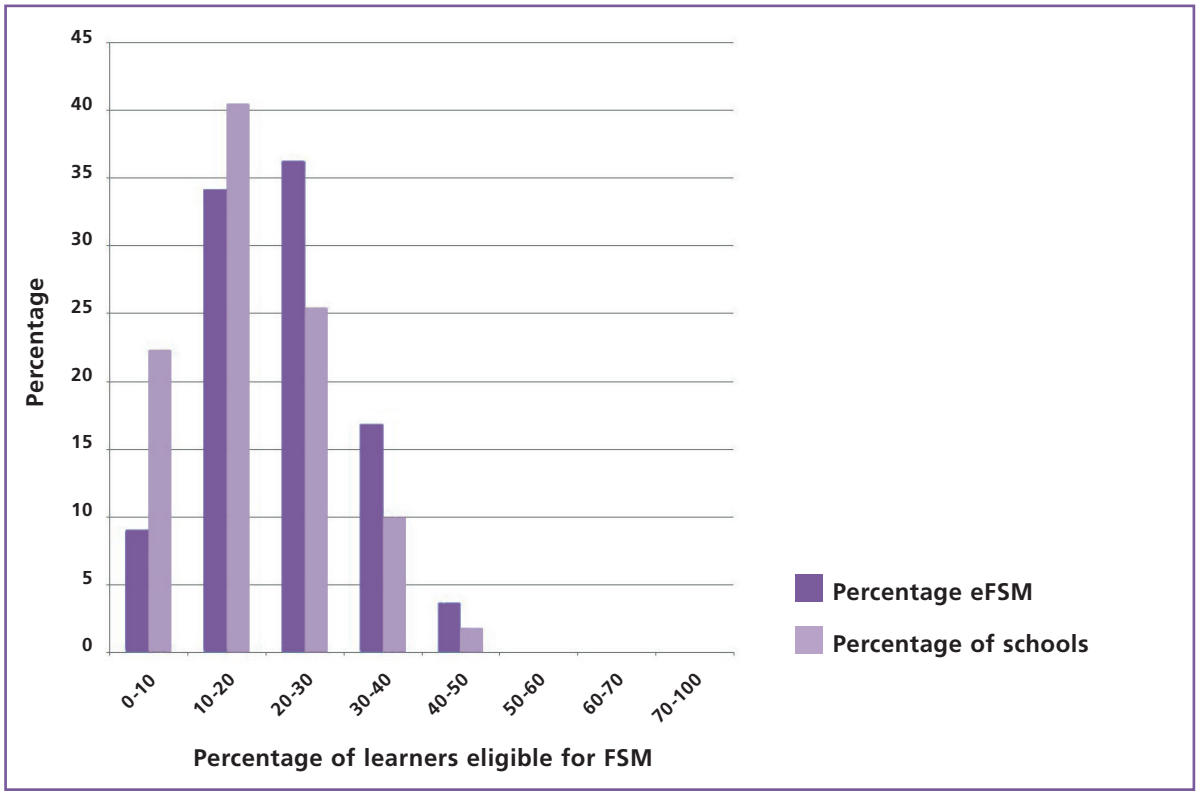


Figure 5: Distribution of eFSM learners in secondary schools



In recognising the difference in attainment between eFSM and nFSM learners, it is important to retain a focus on the underachievement of eFSM learners more generally. Performance of eFSM learners varies; some schools with high eFSM do better than others and eFSM learners in some schools with very low eFSM do not gain good outcomes for those learners. The following figures show the proportion of eFSM learners achieving Level 2 inclusive by secondary school. The bar represents performance in an individual school (proportion of eFSM learners achieving the Level 2 inclusive) and the dot shows the overall proportion of eFSM in the school. Each figure shows schools within a free school meal range with the highest eFSM school to the left and the lowest to the right. In each group there is considerable variation in the proportion of eFSM learners who achieved the Level 2 inclusive. In some schools **no** eFSM learners achieved this benchmark.

Figure 6: Level 2 inclusive performance of eFSM learners 2013 (schools with >=25% FSM)

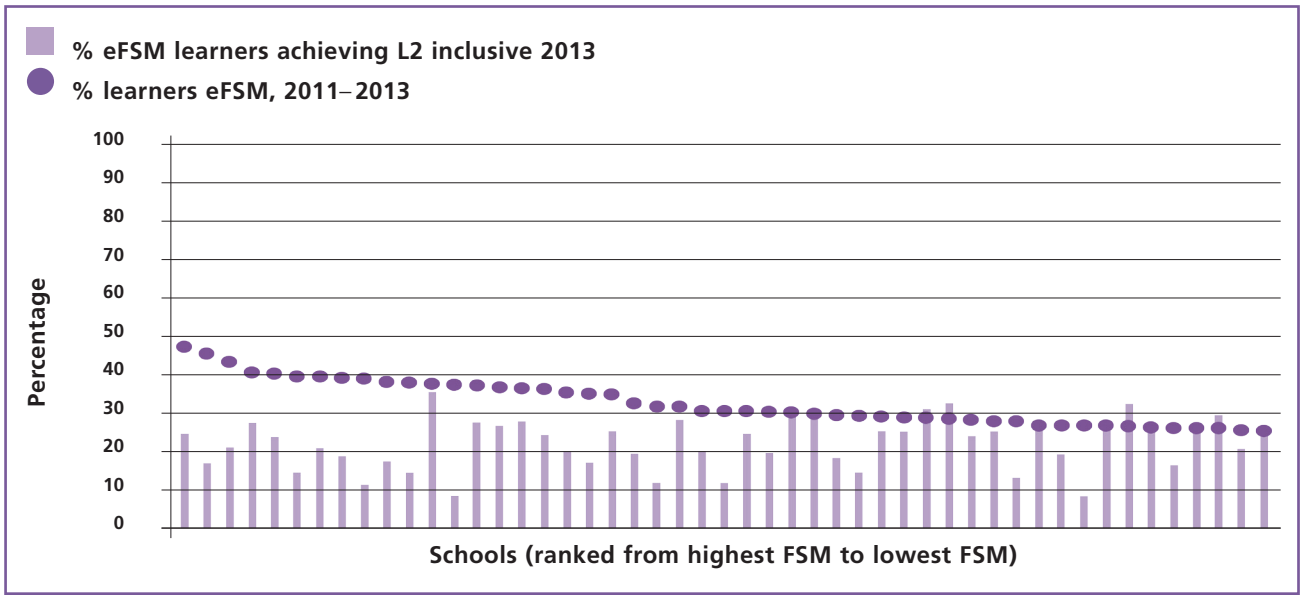


Figure 7: Level 2 inclusive performance of eFSM learners 2013 (schools with >15% and <=25% FSM)

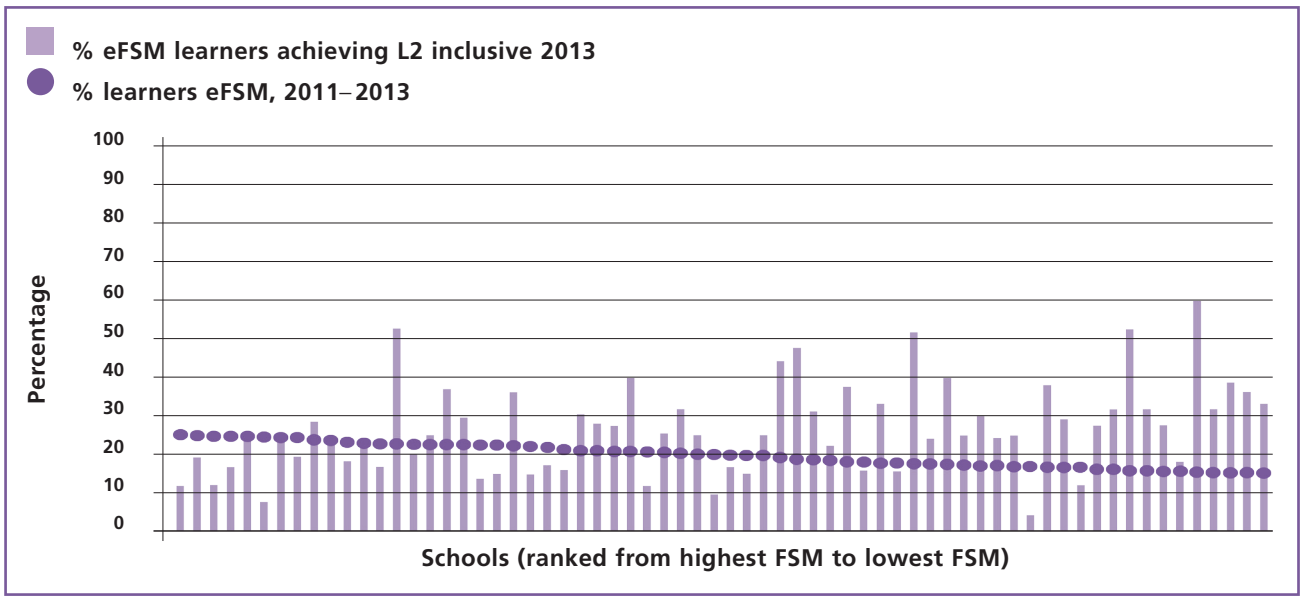


Figure 8: Level 2 inclusive performance of eFSM learners 2013 (schools with >=10% and <=15% FSM)

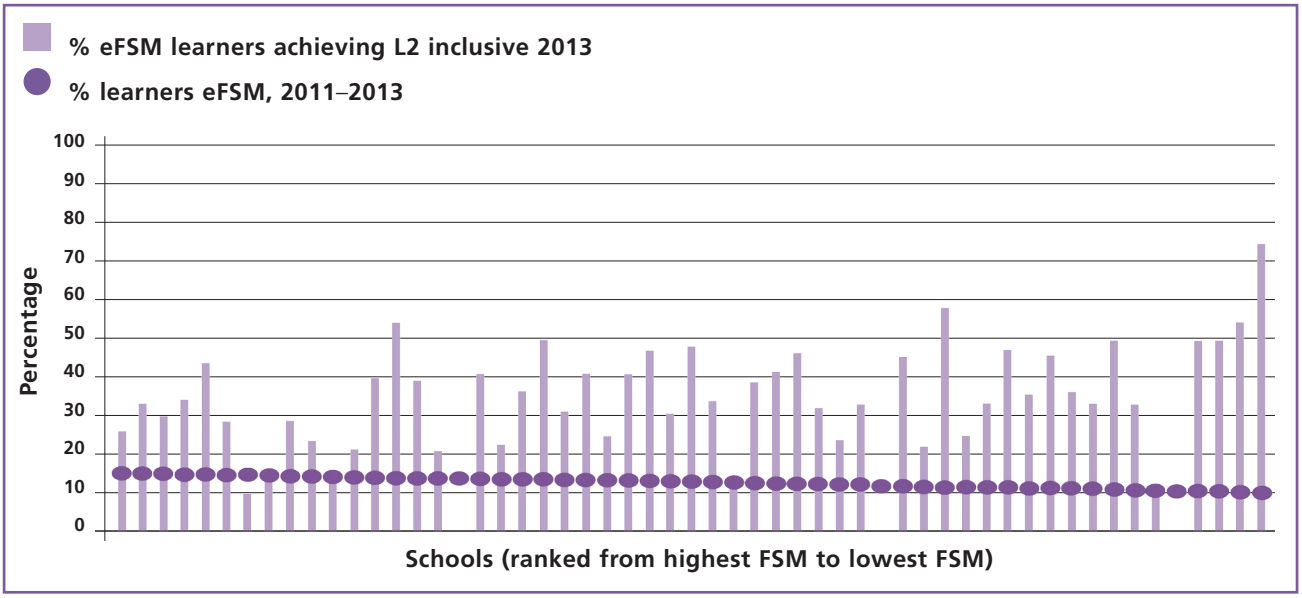
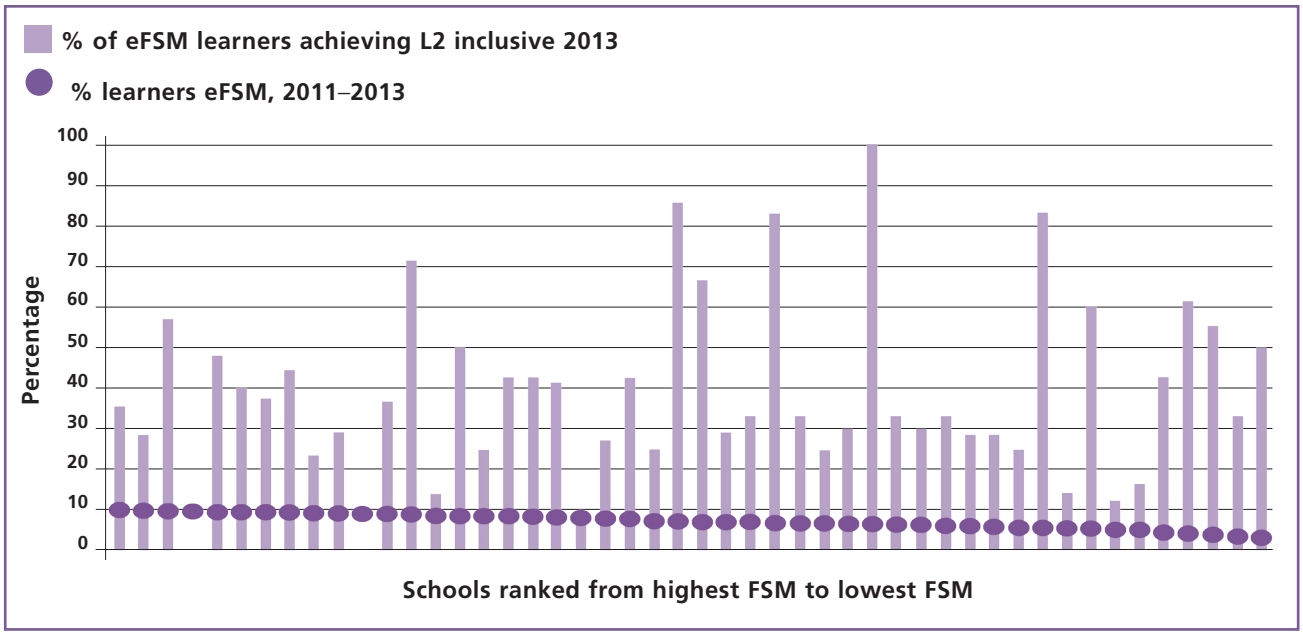


Figure 9: Level 2 inclusive performance of eFSM learners 2013 (schools with <=10% FSM)



Underperformance of eFSM learners is not just an issue for schools with high overall eFSM. All schools need to identify eFSM learners and support them to achieve.

Wales is seeking to improve its overall performance. Wales' performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in reading, mathematics and science was significantly below the OECD average and that of other UK nations in the 2012 survey[9]. Wales had a greater proportion of learners scoring in the lower levels on the PISA scale and fewer scoring in the higher levels, but learners reported higher than average confidence in their ability. This may reflect that learners do not always have, or are not sufficiently aware of, stretching targets or that feedback is not making them sufficiently aware of how they need to improve and what they should be able to achieve.

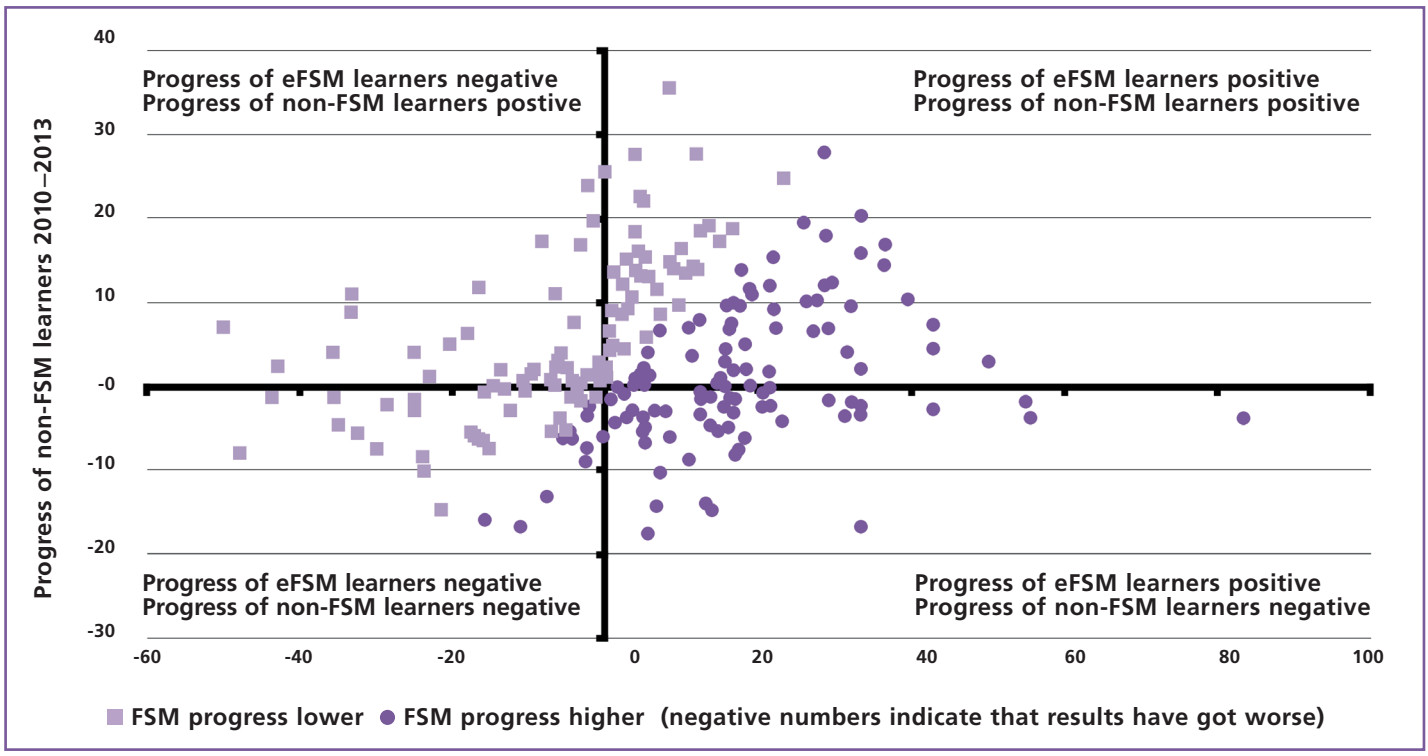
We need all learners in all schools to improve; we need eFSM learners to improve at a faster rate than their nFSM counterparts.

Figure 10 shows progress (Level 2 inclusive) over three years for all secondary schools in Wales. Each circle and square represents a school. The horizontal axis represents progress of eFSM learners between 2001 and 2013; the vertical axis shows progress of nFSM learners, represented as percentage points change over time. Schools are represented as circles where eFSM learners made more progress than their nFSM peers (or where they made less negative progress) and squares where nFSM learners improved more than eFSM.

Both eFSM and nFSM learners made positive progress in the schools represented in the top right-hand quadrant; those noted as circles saw faster improvement for eFSM learners.

There is considerable variation between schools in terms of progress for both groups; to achieve our ambition we need all schools to be 'circles' and in the top-right hand quadrant.

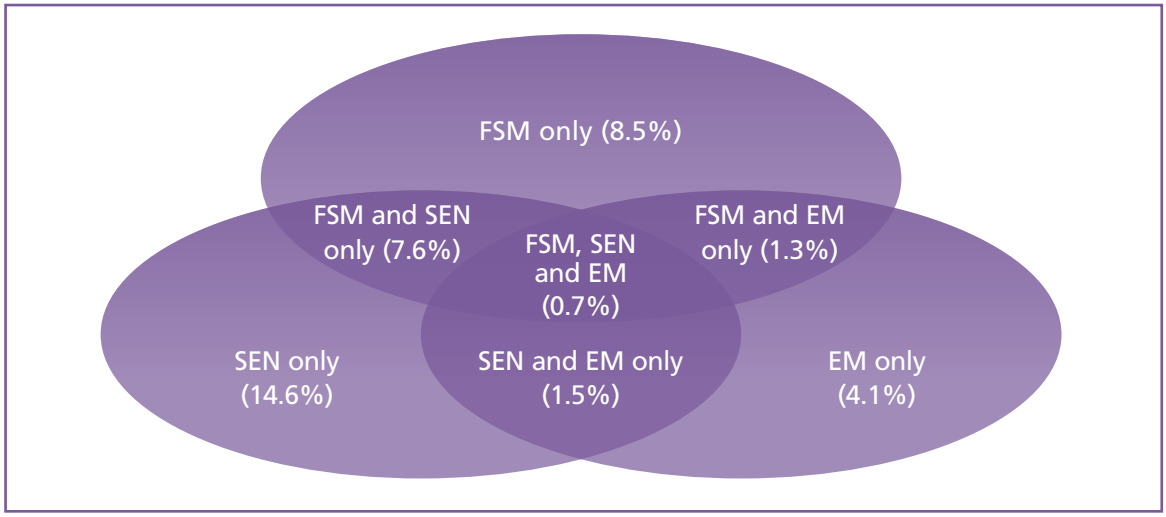
Figure 10: Progress of learners by FSM entitlement, L2 inclusive, 2010–2013 (all schools)



9 National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in Wales: PISA 2012 National Report*, 2012.

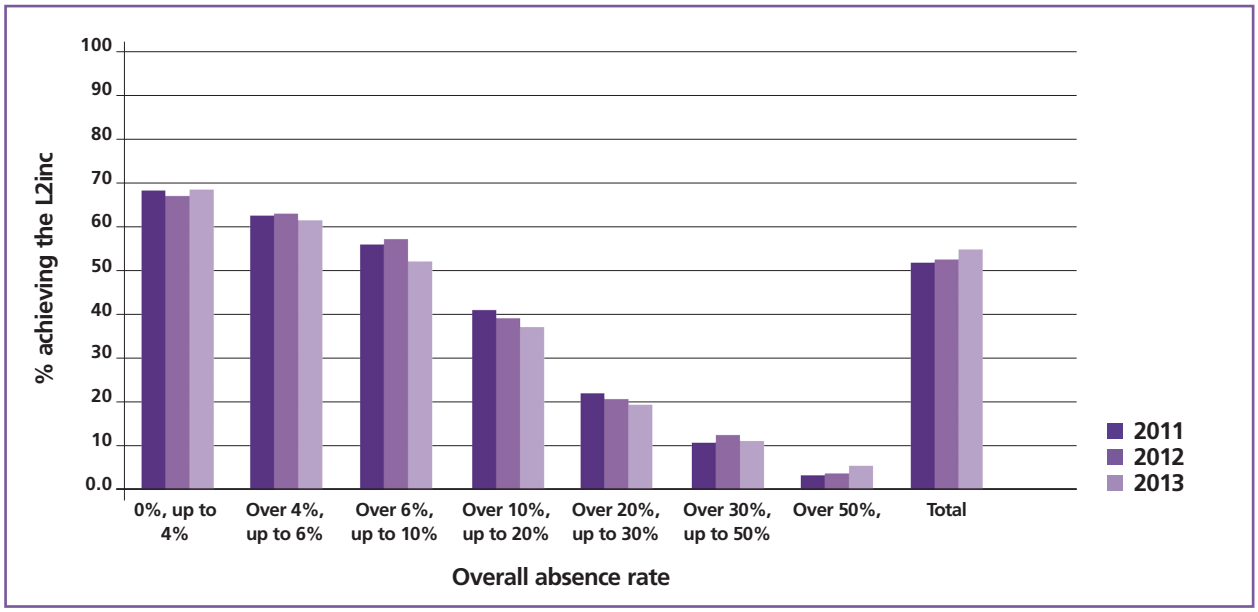
The link between poverty and educational attainment is complex and is influenced by a range of factors. eFSM learners often have overlapping characteristics. The proportion of eFSM learners in Wales varies by ethnic group and a large proportion receive some form of special educational needs (SEN) provision.

Figure 11: Free school meals, special educational needs and ethnic minorities



There is a strong correlation between eFSM and attendance and between attendance and educational attainment; an eFSM learner is likely to have lower attendance and the lower the attendance the lower the achievement.

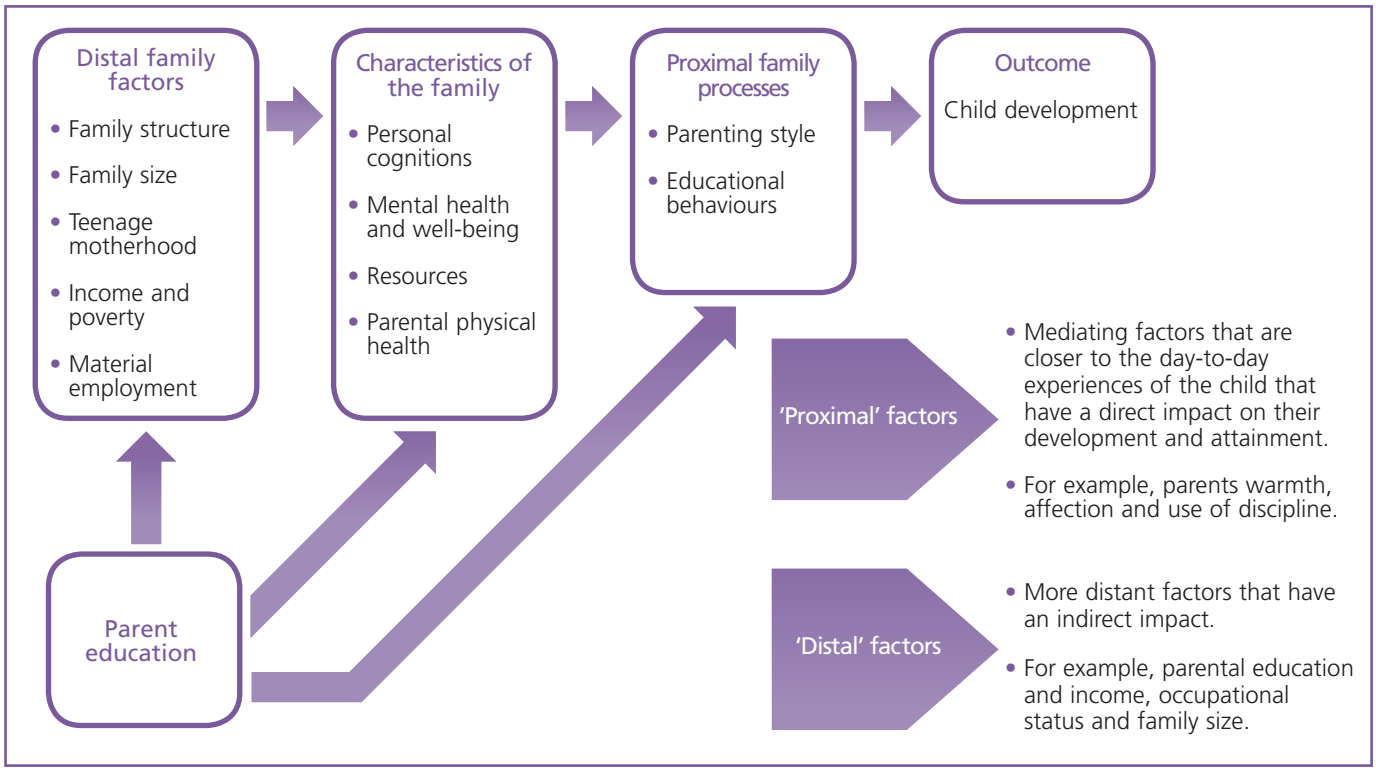
Figure 12: Percentage of learners achieving Level 2 inclusive by overall absence rates, 2011/2013



Evidence also shows that family characteristics and the home environment of children who experience deprivation have a strong and persistent effect on their life chances through their influence on children's opportunities for learning.

Feinstein et al.'s[10] widely established framework for analysing the impact of deprivation on attainment shows the importance of, and interactions between, key socio-economic and demographic factors. Figure 13 shows the framework, which is focussed on the family context.

Figure 13: Model for the mediating effects of parent education on child development



How can we expect schools to tackle such a complex issue?

The school's role is important for three reasons.

- Evidence shows that the relative under-achievement of learners from deprived backgrounds and their peers increases as children move through the education system.
- Research evidence shows that effective school level practice can and does reduce this underachievement over time when targeted at specific learner groups.
- The school is well placed to engage and support families and communities.

The evidence points at a need to tackle the issue from a number of angles; no one strategy or intervention will work but by working across a number of themes we can make a difference. Sections 2 to 5 set out the evidence underpinning our choice of four themes for action, what we are already doing and what else we need to do.

[10] Feinstein, L., Duckworth, K. and Sabates, R. (2004). *A model of the inter-generational effects of parental education*.

2. Family and community engagement

What happens outside school plays a significant part in how well children perform when they are in school.

Family and community provide the context within which children and schools operate. Their influence on outcomes can be significant. Schools need to find innovative ways to engage with families and their communities, and step in to mitigate the impact where learners are not well supported.

Parental involvement has a positive and significant effect on children's overall academic performance. Two recent particularly robust studies from the USA suggest that increasing parental involvement in primary and secondary schools has on average two to three months positive impact on learners' progress[11].

There is a close relationship between parental engagement in reading-related activities and learners' academic performance. Children whose parents/carers regularly read to them during the first year of primary school perform better than those who read to them only once or twice a month or less[12].

There is also a link between socio-economic status and the amount of parental engagement. In general more educated parents/carers read with their children more often. Estyn reports that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have parents/carers who are not involved in their children's education and who have a negative perception and experience of schooling. Many schools in disadvantaged communities find that engaging parents/carers is one of the biggest challenges they face. This is exacerbated when parents/carers have poor literacy or English/Welsh language skills. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on Poverty and Ethnicity in Wales (October 2013) showed that English language skills influence parents'/carers ability to help their children to flourish in school. Parents/carers who have low literacy are more likely to see learning as a school-only activity and do not recognise the importance of modelling reading at home[13].

The evidence about how to increase involvement to improve attainment however is much less conclusive. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged families[14].

Community engagement has a positive influence on learning outcomes. Schools that reach out and actively engage the community in the life of the school and the school in the life of the community have a positive impact on educational outcomes. This can be through contextualising learning; improving adult basic skills; supporting parents/carers to understand what their children are learning in school and how to help them; and providing positive role models.

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11 Higgins et al (2013). The Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

12 OECD PISA in Focus 2011/10 (November).

13 Fitzgerald, J., Spiegel, D. L., & Cunningham, J. W. (1991). The relationship between parental literacy levels and perceptions of emergent literacy. Journal of Reading Behaviour, 23, 191–213.

14 Higgins et al (2013). The Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

Schools that reach out and effectively engage families in children's learning and the life of the school and which place themselves at the centre of their communities will see improved outcomes for learners, particularly those from deprived communities.

What are we doing now?

There is a considerable amount of excellent work already in place in communities to support families. Where schools have good connections with other agencies and programmes and where school leadership has a clear vision of how to work with families and communities we see some excellent practice. For example, the Lifelong Intergenerational Furthering Education (LIFE) programme in Swansea, uses iPads to engage families, and has been rolled out to schools in areas of deprivation with great effect.

Strengthening community focus is a requirement for headteachers within the **National Leadership Standards**. Headteachers are expected to ensure that the school plays a central role in the community and create and maintain an effective partnership with parents, guardians and carers to support and improve learners' achievement and personal development.

The **Communities First** programme is targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, focussing on reducing inequalities in education, economy and health. The **Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Matched Fund** encourages schools in deprived areas to work together with their communities on joint initiatives to raise the attainment of poorer learners. The grant funds projects that aim to promote family learning in the early years, support young people to do well at school; and support families to be engaged in their children's education.

A number of programmes provide access to support for parents/carers and the wider family to develop their skills. The **Family Learning Programme (FLP)** grant to local authorities provides support through a structured programme of workshops and courses, at which parents/carers can develop their learning alongside their children. The FLP grant is principally targeted towards areas of greatest need in local communities, including Communities First areas and areas with schools with a high proportion of free school meals. Adult learning is supported through directly funded **Adult Community Learning (ACL)** programmes delivered by local authorities and further education institutions. **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** provision supports individuals to develop their English language skills which may be crucial to help parents/carers for whom English is not their first language engage with and support their children's learning.

Welsh Government has a vision for a citizen model of accessible, seamless service delivered in the community by skilled people working together to ensure better matching of provision to individual needs. Effective multi-agency systems and support are promoted through **Families First** which places a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention for families, particularly those living in poverty. A fundamental element of the programme is the **Team Around the Family (TAF)** model which encourages an early intervention approach. As part of the broader support for disadvantaged families with complex needs, **Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS)** is a statutory service to provide targeted support through multi-agency teams of highly skilled professionals, using evidence-based interventions and techniques with children and families where there is some level of risk or welfare concern for the child.

From September 2014 there will also be funding for outcomes-based projects for Family Support and Childcare and Play organisations through the **Children and Families Organisation Grant (CFOG)**.

What do we need to do?

No one single approach to engagement will work for all schools; each school needs to know and understand the community and families it serves and the strategies that will work for them.

Schools often find it difficult to identify their potential partners at a local level and there is little guidance on what excellent engagement looks like, the benefits it can bring or highlighting the very best practice already in place across Wales.

Welsh Government has not clearly articulated expectations for schools in this regard, set out how they might achieve those expectations or defined how success will be measured, monitored and celebrated. We need to address this in a policy statement supported by practical guidance.

Some parents/carers do not understand their role in their children's education; we need to address this through a communications strategy that targets parents/carers and families and empowers them to take an active role. Willing families will seek out good engagement from their schools.

Third sector organisations have a significant role to play in this area through application of properly evaluated evidence-based approaches such as Save the Children's Families, and Schools Together (FAST) programme, or Achievement for All's 3 As programme. We need to find ways to better harness the power of the third sector and support schools to make well-informed choices about the programmes and organisations they engage with.

Schools need to feel confident about what works, the flexibilities they have to be creative in their approaches to engagement and about options for funding activities.

Finally we need to fully exploit the potential of technology to support this agenda.

3. Early years (0 to 7)

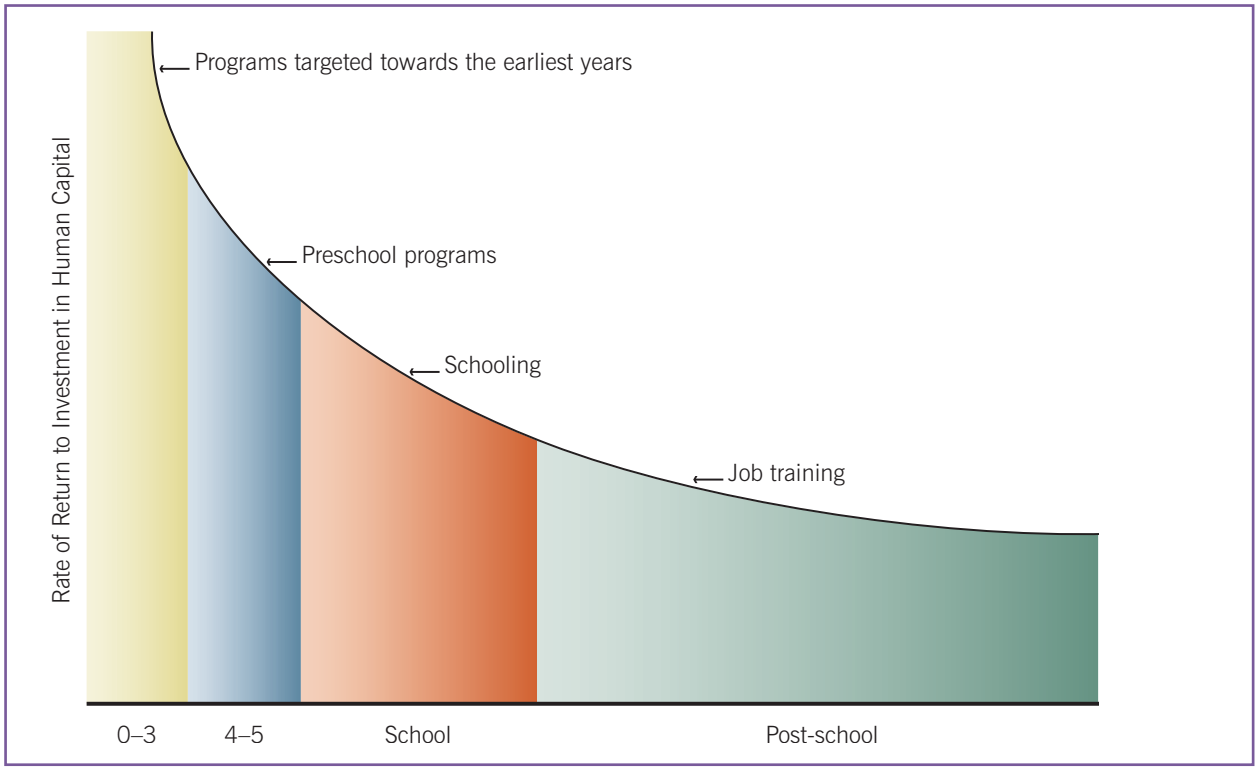
By the time children reach the age of seven we want them to have the right foundations for good health, be actively engaged in learning and be equipped with the skills to reach their full potential.

Three-year-olds with good vocabulary from families with low incomes lose ground between three and five while low achievers from families with high incomes improve more quickly than other children starting from a similar baseline. Effective early education improves outcomes and there is international evidence that those children who attend high-quality early education for a year or more do better than those who do not, irrespective of family income.

Drawing on evidence from home and abroad, the view that there are long lasting and positive effects from good early years' programmes is well supported. Early action can bring cost effective benefits, not only by improving health outcomes and educational attainment, but also by reducing the knock-on costs of expensive health, social care, criminal justice and welfare support.

Figure 14 illustrates how intervention programmes that support disadvantaged children early in life are potentially much more cost-effective than those targeted at underperforming adolescents or adults. This is partly because early programmes have a longer time to show their positive benefits, but also because early support can prevent the need for catch-up programmes once a child starts school.

Figure 14: Return on investment over time



Source: J Heckman (2008) Return on Investment: Cost vs. Benefits, University of Chicago

The link between high-quality early education and care and positive child outcomes appears to be especially strong for children from disadvantaged families, with effects for these children being larger and longer lasting.

Children from deprived backgrounds are at a disadvantage compared with their non-deprived peers from the outset. The performance of the non-deprived group accelerates faster than the deprived group as they progress through school; the disadvantage that they start with is not mitigated by their time in school.

It is important to recognise that early investment and support needs to continue from one stage of learning and development to the next so that the early benefits are built upon and the cumulative impact of deprivation is mitigated.

Schools must take a central role in coordinating and planning early interventions within their own community, in partnership with nursery schools, early years and Flying Start settings and ensure effective transition both into and out of the Foundation Phase.

What are we doing now?

The Welsh Government has made a considerable investment in supporting the early years. *Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan* (July 2013) sets out the direction of travel for the next 10 years. It brings together priorities, policies and programmes that impact on or influence children and their families in the early years. The plan focuses on:

- children's health and well-being
- supporting families and parents/carers
- high-quality early education and childcare
- effective primary education
- raising standards.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's flagship Early Years programme. It aims to address children's developmental inequalities through early intervention and provides a path towards improving the life chances of children in some of our most disadvantaged communities. This multi-disciplinary programme provides a 'universal' set of entitlements which all children under the age of four, and their families within targeted geographical areas can access. The entitlements offer a range of support that provide a quality early years provision for the child and a range of support for parents/carers to build skills and resilience including access to parenting programmes and support for early language development. Multi-agency working and Team Around the Family approaches are core elements of Flying Start.

The **Foundation Phase** is the statutory curriculum for children aged three to seven years in Wales. It is based on the principle that early years provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. At the centre of the statutory curriculum framework lies the holistic development of children and their skills across the curriculum, building on their previous learning experiences, knowledge and skills. Areas of Learning within the Foundation Phase curriculum are currently being reviewed.

Teachers are supported to embed literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum through the **National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)**. The LNF is a curriculum planning tool, originally focused on development of literacy and numeracy skills for children from the age of five. It is now being expanded to support early skills development for three and four-year-olds. The focus on 'stage not age' will continue to underpin the Foundation Phase philosophy although all schools should aim for children to reach expected outcomes by the age of seven.

Positive messages about children's early language development are promoted through programmes such as **Pori Drwy Stori** and **Bookstart**. These encourage parents/carers to support their children's literacy and numeracy by providing bilingual books and resources for use in the classroom and at home.

What do we need to do?

While the Foundation Phase is held in high regard by parents/carers and education practitioners, early evaluation evidence suggests the need to examine how the Foundation Phase is being implemented across Wales. A major independent research study has already been commissioned by the Welsh Government investigating the effectiveness of the Foundation Phase and will report later in 2014. In the meantime, a stocktake of the Foundation Phase has been undertaken.

Local authorities are already required to ensure that necessary transition arrangements are made when a Flying Start child moves in and out of a Flying Start area and when a child moves from Flying Start childcare to the Foundation Phase. Best practice is not always consistently and effectively shared or adopted more widely. Sometimes schools are not well connected with their feeder early years settings and do not always work with the full range of providers to establish good information sharing and transition into school. We need to identify information and resources about effective transition from home, early years settings and Flying Start into school. We need to support all settings and schools to adopt the most effective practice through provision of practical guidance and support materials.

Effective transition is important to progress and confidence at every transition point. Guidance needs to also support effective transition from the Foundation Phase into Key Stage 2.

The Welsh Government made a commitment in its 'Programme for Government' to double the number of children and their families benefitting from the programme from 18,000 to 36,000 by the end of this Assembly term in 2016. This is an extremely positive and ambitious extension but there will still be learners living in poverty who cannot access Flying Start support.

We need to consider the costs and benefits of adapting proven Flying Start programmes and making them available to deprived young learners outside of Flying Start areas.

Whole-school approaches and multi-agency working can be particularly effective in the early years and in helping to mitigate deprivation. Schools should be well-placed to identify the most effective interventions and the right partners to meet learner needs but they will be better supported in doing this when the Early Years Development and Assessment Form (EYDAF) has been launched. We need to make it easier for schools and settings to identify well-evaluated models and to make links with other local services.

The sharing of information, or perceived barriers to sharing, is often cited as a barrier to effective multi-agency working. Schools, and other agencies and services, may not feel confident about appropriate and legal sharing of information. We need to help schools and their partners overcome this perceived barrier by promoting the use of Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) approved protocols for information sharing.

Some practitioners have indicated that they perceive there may be insufficient support for learners in stand-alone nurseries, or nursery units/classes attached to primary schools, to help them to overcome the impact of poverty. There is a perceived gap between support via Flying Start and through the PDG. We need to identify if gaps in provision and support do exist and, if they do, consider how these learners can be better supported.

Some schools have been particularly successful in supporting learners and their families through extending the school day. Breakfast clubs and after-school clubs can provide quality childcare, opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities and extend learning informally. Extended day activities can also be a way of engaging families, perhaps by extending the breakfast offer to parents/carers or making extra-curricular activities open to a wider range of participants.

Some primary schools engage parents/carers directly in children's learning by opening the classroom up to parents/carers at certain times and even including them regularly in some lessons, particularly to help with language development. This has been very effective for children with English as an additional language.

Some schools may lack confidence in tackling the practicalities of extending the school day or engaging parents/carers in this way, and may need guidance on what types of activity will have an impact or ideas on how to resource such activity.

4. High-quality learning and teaching

Teaching quality is the critical factor in supporting learner outcomes. Studies of teacher effectiveness suggest that learners placed with high-performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with low-performing teachers[15]. Our most challenged learners need access to the highest quality teaching.

A study of practices in primary schools[16] reported that the influence of overall teaching quality on reading and mathematics was stronger than the net influence of some background factors, including being eligible for free school meals. Other studies have argued that a strong focus on learning and teaching is a key characteristic of successful schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas[17].

Overall, there is no evidence to suggest that effective pedagogy for learners from deprived backgrounds is qualitatively different to effective pedagogy for other learners. What the evidence does show is that learners from deprived backgrounds may be less likely to experience good quality teaching, whereas, to buck the trend, they need more of it. International research indicates that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning[18]. Where there is active and effective leadership schools can mitigate the impact of disadvantage.

An area of significant debate is the use of teaching assistants and support staff. Support staff are a valuable resource when effectively deployed; where this is not the case there may be no appreciable difference to outcomes for vulnerable learners and some evidence indicates that there can even be a detrimental effect[19]. Evaluation of the Pupil Premium in England found that developing teaching assistant skills, particularly in Assessment for Learning, improves outcomes[20].

Learners from deprived backgrounds need to benefit from the highest quality learning and teaching. Successful schools have active and effective leadership and deploy support staff effectively.

What are we doing now?

The crucial role of quality learning and teaching is reflected in the high priority being given to policies that support the development of the whole workforce. A key aim of the Welsh Government's ***Improving schools*** plan is to deliver a skilled workforce, to support high-quality learning and teaching within schools, and to deliver effective leadership at all levels.

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15 How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top, McKinsey et al 2007.

16 Sammons, P, Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Barreau, S. and Grabbe, Y. (2008). Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project (EPPE 3-11) The Influence of School and Teaching Quality on Children's Progress in Primary School. DCSF Research Report RR028.

17 Muijs, D, Harris,A, Chapman, C, Stoll, L and Russ, J (2004) 'Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas – a review of research evidence', School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Vol 15, No 2 pp 149-175.

18 Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, Hopkins (2006) Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership.

19 The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

20 The Pupil Premium, Making it work in your school, Oxford University Press.

An **integrated model** has been put in place for practice, review and development which links teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) with performance management and professional standards. Revised **professional standards** require practitioners to ensure they meet the needs of all learners including those from socially deprived backgrounds. We are developing a national model of professional learning that will highlight key features of effective professional development.

Schools are required to self-evaluate drawing on their All Wales Core Data Set and other data, including considering the attainment of learners eligible for free school meals. This self-evaluation should underpin the **school development plan (SDP)**; the areas for development and targets in the SDP should in turn inform the headteacher's performance management objectives and CPD plans for the year for the whole staff. Legislation is being introduced to improve the consistency and quality of SDPs.

We are building **leadership capacity** throughout Wales by encouraging and supporting all practitioners to progressively develop their own leadership potential and that of others throughout their careers. The **Leadership Development Pathway** that we are developing will enable practitioners to identify what development opportunities would best suit their circumstances and aspirations and will help create a conveyor belt of leadership talent from which the leaders of the future will come.

Learning Wales provides a resource base for schools based around improvement areas, professional development reports, research and case studies.

Through **Hwb**, we are developing online networks of professional practice to facilitate collaboration at all levels. By July 2014, all schools in Wales will have their own Hwb+ learning platform and from September 2014, we will begin rolling out authenticated access to the platform for parents/carers and governors.

The **national model for regional working** clarifies and strengthens the role of regional school improvement consortia. School-to-school and peer-to-peer working is at the core of regional approaches to raising standards. It is provided through professional learning communities (PLCs), a national model for coaching and mentoring, and through the lead and emerging practitioner project where strong performing schools (lead practitioner schools) are matched with schools that have just begun their improvement journey (emerging practitioner schools).

Regional **consortia business plans** all have clear priorities and targets for improving the outcomes for learners from deprived backgrounds and set out the actions that consortia will take in partnership with local authorities and schools to facilitate the necessary improvement.

Teach First Cymru places the brightest graduate trainee teachers in secondary schools working in the most challenging circumstances to support young people who face educational disadvantage. A strong focus is placed on community engagement and wider school links. **Outstanding teachers of literacy and numeracy** are also deployed to support, mentor and coach those schools, teachers and support staff that would most benefit from that support.

We have introduced a **Masters in Educational Practice (MEP)** open to all newly qualified teachers (NQTs). It includes a module on reducing the impact of poverty on attainment; the resources are also available to all practitioners in schools through the Learning Wales website.

The **National Support Programme (NSP)** is training teachers to deliver our National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). In developing school support, the NSP has categorised a number of resources and developed others that will have direct application in terms of improving outcomes for learners form deprived backgrounds.

The development of **school support staff** in new and enhanced roles has been instrumental in securing significant cultural change in the way that the workforce is deployed and has been a key factor in the drive to raise standards through the provision of high-quality teaching. The **Support Staff Action Plan** sets out a range of actions to strengthen provision for support staff and to support the effective development and deployment of this sector of the school workforce.

Schools Challenge Cymru is the Welsh Government's multi-million pound, improvement programme to increase performance in Welsh schools. It focuses directly on Pathways to Success schools which are operating in challenging circumstances. However, it is anticipated that the impact will be across the whole education system.

What do we need to do?

Workforce development has placed a great emphasis on literacy and numeracy in recent years. There are fewer resources and materials available to support the development of skills in recognising, understanding and addressing the needs of learners from deprived backgrounds. Schools and school leaders often do not have time to carry out in-depth research in to what is most effective and who can provide high-quality training. We need to support them, local authorities and consortia, in identifying the most effective practice and development.

Professional development activities must focus on **building sustainable workforce capacity**, including leadership capacity, so that investment has a long-term impact. This means supporting schools in developing the skills of a wider group of practitioners rather than investing in one or two staff who, when they move to another school, take the expertise with them. Whole-school approaches are also known to be effective in tackling the impact of deprivation.

Not all schools or consortia facilitate regular whole-workforce training and planning sessions for teachers, teaching assistants and support staff to support more coordinated and effective interventions. We need to assist by ensuring that school improvement services identify and broker or provide suitable whole-workforce training and providers, identifying potential barriers and ways to overcome them. This includes making more effective use of statutory INSET days[21].

[21] Estyn, Statutory Inset in Schools, June 2013
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/282418.5/statutory-inset-in-schools-june-2013/?navmap=30,163

Some schools need to deploy support staff more effectively to have the greatest impact. Some classroom teachers may also need support to manage and deploy support staff effectively. We need to promote effective deployment through providing practical guidance on good practice and effective 'team planning'.

Cognition and metacognition are known to be effective strategies for all learners but particularly so for learners from deprived backgrounds. Current Welsh Government materials on the Learning Wales website to support schools to use metacognition in the classroom offer an introduction to metacognition but may not seem applicable to all schools. We need to extend the materials available and promote their use with a view to implementation of these strategies in all classrooms.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are currently more likely to be dedicated to literacy and numeracy than to tackling the impact of deprivation. We need to increase the number of high-quality PLCs focussed on addressing the deprivation agenda.

Schools Challenge Cymru has high aspirations for all and will deliver a relentless focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching, making better use of the best expertise that exists within the system.

5. High expectations and aspirations

Attitudes and behaviours play an important part in the link between disadvantage and children's educational attainment. A study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)[22] analysed large-scale datasets to build a strong evidence base for the importance of aspirations at key stages of children's lives. Both children's and parents'/carers' aspirations and expectations were powerfully related to outcomes in these areas. For example, even after controlling for family background factors and prior attainment, young people are more likely to do well in their GCSEs if their parents/carers think it likely that the young person will go on to higher education and if young people themselves have a greater belief in their own ability at school and find school worthwhile.

Those families with high cultural capital; parents/carers with university degrees and many books in the home, for example, are more likely to expect their children to go to university or take up a professional career. This study and other research for the JRF[23] challenged the assumption that poorer children and their parents/carers have low aspirations. A study found that most of the millennium cohort children, who were all born in 2000 or 2001, were very ambitious at age seven. Just over 80 per cent of them were hoping to be managers, professionals or associated professionals. There were, however, small differences by UK country. Children in Northern Ireland were least likely to say they would like to be police officers or actors. Children in England were least likely to want to be hairdressers and most likely to say they would like to be doctors. Seven-year-olds in Scotland and Northern Ireland were most interested in becoming vets while children in Wales appeared least keen to be teachers (Institute of Education, 13 September 2012).

Rather than raising aspirations in order to raise attainment, studies have concluded that there is a need for children and families to be offered more support to learn about educational and career options and widen their horizons so they can make informed decisions about their future and convert aspirations into reality.

We know that Wales has low proportions of high performers (Levels 5 and 6 on the PISA scale) in mathematics, reading and science. For example, the proportion of 15-year-olds who reached the highest levels on the PISA mathematics scale in 2012 was 5.3 per cent, which is less than half the UK average (11.9 per cent) and OECD average of 12.6 per cent.

The recent OECD report indicates that 'Schools should provide higher performers with a more challenging and supportive learning environment that drives them towards educational excellence. A growing body of research evidence shows this can be done through differentiated teaching' (Dumont et al., 2010; McQuarrie et al., 2008; Rock et al., 2008; Lawrence-Brown, 2004).

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22 Goodman, A and Gregg, P (2010) Poorer children's educational attainment: How important are attitudes and behaviour? York: JRF.

23 Kintrea, K., St Clair, R. and Houston, M., (2011) The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations. York: JRF.

Studies[24] show a strong link between teachers' expectations about learners and how they treat them in ways that create self-fulfilling prophesies. Learners treated as if they were high-achieving acted in high-achieving ways; those treated as if they were low-achieving performed as low achievers.

Expectations influence the goals set by teachers and learners and the strategies used to meet these goals. The research also shows that how teachers behave reflects these expectations and is related to academic achievement.

If learners are supported to consider wider options, make informed choices and if they, their parents/carers and teachers have high expectations they are more likely to achieve.

What are we doing now?

Our Leadership Standards outline expectations for headteachers including setting stretching targets for the whole school based on developing and maintaining a climate of high expectations.

Professor Graham Donaldson has been appointed to lead a comprehensive, wide ranging and independent review of the **national curriculum and assessment arrangements** in Wales. This, the **National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)** and the work to redesign GCSEs all aim to set high benchmarks and raise expectations for learner outcomes.

A range of guidance and resources are hosted on the Learning Wales website and case studies are being developed to help schools implement effective strategies for raising attainment and use **effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage**.

Through **Hwb+** we have introduced cloud-based systems providing equality of access to high-quality learning materials and teaching support. It provides a means of feedback and interaction between teacher and learner, fast access for learners to their own learning space and allows learners to track their own progress against targets.

Learners of all ages need to have challenging targets, know what those targets are and understand what they need to do to achieve them. Schools are strongly encouraged to draw on the **EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit** when identifying strategies for implementation supported by their PDG grants; the toolkit promotes the effective use of quality feedback as a low cost, high impact strategy for raising attainment of all learners, but especially those from deprived backgrounds. It also promotes the use of peer mentoring and effective assessment for learners.

Where learners fall behind a range of **catch-up** programmes suitable to learners of different ages are advocated. The **GCSE Mathematics and English Key Stage 4 Project** also help secondary schools to improve the use of outcomes data strengthening the role of school leaders in driving accelerated improvement.

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[24] Oakes, J. (1985), Keeping track: How schools structure inequality. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Recent reports compiled on behalf of Welsh Government by Professor Dai Smith and Baroness Kay Andrews OBE have set out recommendations for the role of arts in education and the power of arts, culture and heritage in promoting social justice in Wales.

Appreciating the vulnerability of learners as they approach the end of compulsory schooling we have strategies specifically focussed on support, engagement and progression. **Learning coaching** focusses on supporting and motivating young people to help them to overcome barriers to remain engaged in learning, and to achieve qualifications. The new **Youth Guarantee, introduced as part of the *Youth engagement and progression framework* aims to** ensure young people make a successful first transition to a suitable offer of education or training. By targeting support services at those at risk of disengaging all young people will be assisted to apply for and commence an appropriate offer that meets their individual needs.

The **Education Maintenance Allowance** aims to encourage learners from low household income families to remain in education post-16 while for learners aged 19 or older, the **Welsh Government Learning Grant** for further education (FE) provides support for those from low income households continuing with their studies.

Reaching Wider is a HEFCW-funded all age long-term strategic intervention to address social inclusion and widen access to higher education (HE). All HE and FE institutions in Wales are members of one of the three multi-agency Reaching Wider partnerships. The Partnerships encourage participation in HE from targeted groups and communities in Wales, particularly Community First areas, by raising educational aspirations and skills, creating new study opportunities and learning pathways to higher education.

Meanwhile our **Oxbridge Ambassador** has set out recommendations for ensuring that those with the ability recognise that they should aim for places in the very best universities. Welsh learners should also have access to a range of **summer school** programmes across the UK and internationally that address a variety of needs. Local authorities also offer a range of summer activity programmes and some offer summer learning programmes.

What do we need to do?

Not all schools are making best use of the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit and many have yet to establish whole-school approaches to low cost, high-impact strategies such as effective feedback, assessment for learning and peer mentoring. We need to promote the benefits of such strategies and provide schools with practical advice on how to apply them within their school settings.

Some learners do not have the opportunity to engage in arts and culture and therefore miss out on opportunities to broaden their horizons and think and act creatively. Baroness Andrews sets out a number of recommendations around the need to form closer partnerships between schools and the 'cultural infrastructure', using the arts and culture to support literacy and numeracy development and provide extra curricular activities in some cases that extend beyond the school day. We need to work with local authorities, consortia and schools to consider how we can implement Baroness Andrews' recommendations.

Much activity relating to expectations and aspirations tends to focus on older, secondary age children with far less generally targeted at younger children. There is often a lack of focus given to the need to enrich children's experiences and to provide them with a range of experiences and role models. We need to ensure that primary schools offer opportunities for children to start thinking about careers and future education ambitions and have access to a range of role models. All schools need to think carefully about how to ensure that learners from deprived backgrounds in particular can access enrichment activities and opportunities.

Summer schools can have greater impact where they are part of a programme of support. Learners, teachers and parents/carers may not be aware of the opportunities to engage with existing summer schools or of the range of bursaries and scholarships available. We need to raise awareness of existing provision and consider if there are gaps or target groups who might benefit from additional provision.

There is evidence that learners in Wales with the right grades at A level to gain access to university do go on to study at a higher level regardless of their background or social class. Nevertheless, those with the highest grades are less likely to apply to higher tariff universities, or to be successful in their applications than students from other parts of the UK. We need to take forward the recommendations of the **Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales**, in particular where they relate to those from deprived backgrounds, including seeking to understand the reasons for any decline in entries to Oxford and Cambridge universities for Welsh learners.

The role of **learning coaches** could be developed further to focus on supporting delivery of the *Youth engagement and progression framework*, including the Youth Guarantee. Their role could also be developed to help eFSM learners to realise their aspirations and this could be linked more closely with a programme of support around summer schools and Oxbridge entrance.

Schools may find it more difficult to identify **more able and talented (MAT)** learners from deprived backgrounds as their ability may be masked as a result of the challenges they face. Schools need to be supported to identify and nurture talent and ability wherever it is identified and provide challenging extension activity and opportunities for MAT learners.

Schools and consortia need to identify and address the gaps in knowledge and pedagogy that constrain standards in teaching and learning and offer subject-based training that will enable teachers to differentiate their curriculum delivery.

6. Call to action

The following tables set out, theme by theme, the Welsh Government's commitments to action. They also set out the actions that local authorities, regional consortia and schools should consider implementing.

The case for action is compelling as is the need for the system to work in partnership and at pace to deliver improvements for learners from deprived backgrounds.

Family and community engagement			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• set out clear expectations for family and community engagement • establish standards for best practice and illustrate them through case studies • publish practical resources based on the approaches used by successful schools and communities	• work with schools to incorporate community and family engagement into School Development Plans (SDPs) • monitor schools against standards for best practice and identify how they can meet and exceed those standards • identify leading practice and facilitate school-to-school support to share and extend it	• set out a clear whole-school vision for family and community engagement based on the principle of partnership • have clearly articulated aspirations and targets for engagement in their SDP and monitor progress against them • offer a range of activities and ways to engage that reflect the community and families they serve	Schools will be clear about their role in engaging families and communities and how to fulfil that role. Schools, local authorities and consortia will plan engagement, reflecting their local circumstances in the actions and activities they promote. Schools, local authorities and consortia will use a range of approaches to make engagement a central theme of school life.

Family and community engagement (continued)			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• launch an engagement campaign promoting 'education begins and home' and the theme of home-school-community partnerships • establish models for joint approaches to school, family and adult education • provide a resource base of evaluated third sector programmes that schools can draw on • review how effective engagement is reflected in school performance measures and evaluation.	• build networks across services at the strategic and delivery levels and take a leadership role in promoting multi-agency working • provide practical advice and support for schools to provide community-focussed services and activities • utilise local communications and media to support the message that 'education begins at home' and the theme of home-school-community partnerships.	• work with a range of partners to provide services • identify learners who may not be benefitting from family support or have access to a limited range of extra-curricular activities and experiences and work to fill the gap in those learners' experiences.	Schools, local authorities and consortia will work in partnership with other local agencies and the third sector to meet the needs of learners, families and the wider community. Children from deprived backgrounds will acquire social and cultural capital. Schools will be the heart of their community. Education will be delivered in partnership.

Early Years			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• set out clear expectations for multi-agency working • promote successful, well-evidenced whole-school interventions • establish standards for best practice and illustrate them through case studies • publish practical resources based on the approaches used by successful schools to extend the school day and provide extra-curricular activities • better align existing programmes and policies, identify gaps and how such gaps can be filled as set out within *Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan*	• work with schools to build multi-agency working, whole-school approaches and good transition into SDPs • monitor schools against standards for best practice and identify how they can meet and exceed those standards • identify leading practice and facilitate school-to-school support to share and extend it • develop WASPI protocols to facilitate appropriate information sharing between partners • implement recommendations from the Foundation Phase stocktake and evaluation when published	• set out clear goals for multi-agency working in their SDP • implement whole-school or class approaches to meet shared learner needs and monitor impact • collaborate with early years settings, Flying Start partners, families and health services to ensure children are support on transition into school • facilitate joint planning so that children are well supported during the transition to Key Stage 2 • establish tracking systems that include information from the early years and across agencies	Schools will know their learners before they enter formal schooling and relationships between school and home will already have been established. Effective information sharing will enable schools to plan ahead to meet learner needs earlier. Early intervention, on whole-school or class basis will help learners overcome challenges and reduce inequality in outcomes. Learning opportunities will be extended and enriched. Hwb+ will become a consistent learning and teaching tool across settings; making full use of the enhanced connectivity provision enabled by the Learning in Digital Wales Grant investment.

Early Years (continued)			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• set out how children who are neither eligible for Flying Start or PDG can be best supported • publish practical guidance, drawing on best practice, on effective transition in all stages of the learner journey • provide centrally-funded individual learning platforms to all primary schools in Wales to facilitate digital learning opportunities • identify and extend successful programmes and interventions from Flying Start to non-Flying Start areas and/or into Foundation Phase.	• ensure schools are supported in using the learning platform effectively; brokering collaborative opportunities wherever possible • encourage innovation in schools' approaches to delivering and resourcing extended services.	• take advantage of the opportunities presented by the provision of Hwb+; ensuring all teachers and learners are provided with opportunities to embed the use of the platform in learning and teaching • use data to identify learners who need extra support early, intervene early and monitor impact • think and plan creatively beyond the school day and the core curriculum to offer enriched learning opportunities.	Inequalities caused by deprivation will be mitigated early and learner's outcomes will be on a par with their peers.

High-quality learning and teaching			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• clarify expectations for SDP in regulations • set out the key characteristics of effective professional development for the whole-school workforce • publish practical guidance, drawing on best practice approaches used by successful schools, on understanding and mitigating the impact of deprivation on learner outcomes • extend the range of practical materials to support teachers in developing learners' cognition and metacognition and effective assessment for learning	• work with schools to ensure that SDPs prioritise developing the school workforce to better understand and tackle the impact of deprivation • monitor schools against standards for whole-school planning and development • actively promote development of cognition, metacognition and assessment for learning skills and their implementation on whole-school basis • work with schools to ensure that SDPs have clear and challenging targets for improving outcomes for deprived learners supported by coherent professional development plans	• prioritise whole-workforce professional development focussed on tackling the impact of deprivation • set clear and challenging targets for improving outcomes for learners from deprived backgrounds in their SDPs • set aside at least one of their statutory inset days to focus on the impact of deprivation • implement whole-school approaches to cognition, metacognition and assessment for learning	The whole-school workforce will be skilled in recognising and mitigating the impact of deprivation on learner outcomes. Learners from deprived backgrounds will benefit from the highest quality learning and teaching. All schools will make effective use of cognition, metacognition and assessment for learning approaches. Learners will become independent thinkers and better problem solvers. Hwb+ becomes a consistent learning and teaching tool across settings; making full use of the enhanced connectivity provision enabled by the Learning in Digital Wales Grant investment.

High-quality learning and teaching (continued)			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• establish standards for best practice, illustrated through case studies, for effective deployment of teaching assistants and support staff • provide centrally-funded individual learning platforms to all primary schools in Wales to facilitate digital learning opportunities.	• identify leading practice and establish high-quality PLCs focussed on tackling the impact of deprivation on attainment • promote Teach First Cymru specifically in schools with high levels of deprivation • ensure schools are supported in using the learning platform effectively; brokering collaborative opportunities wherever possible.	• seek to deploy their most skilled and talented teachers to work with the most disadvantaged learners • deploy support staff and teaching assistants effectively and engage them in planning • use data to identify learners who need extra support, intervene early and monitor impact • take advantage of the opportunities presented by the provision of Hwb+; ensuring all teachers and learners are provided with opportunities to embed the use of the platform in learning and teaching.	

High expectations and aspirations			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• challenge consortia to accelerate improvements in outcomes for learners from deprived backgrounds • promote the use of the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit • publish practical 'How to guides' to support implementation of high-impact, low cost interventions and get the most out of PDG spend • develop practical guidance on developing the role of arts and culture in education • set clear expectations for the provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities and their role in raising attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds	• challenge schools on their expectations for learners from deprived backgrounds • promote the use of the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit and support schools to implement high-impact, low cost interventions • work with local businesses to develop networks of role models and a range of opportunities for learners of all ages to engage with and learn about different career options • promote partnership working between schools, business, arts and cultural organisations • ensure schools provide our more able and talented learners with challenging and customised learning experiences to enable them to achieve their potential	• expect all learners to achieve • set clear, challenging targets for all learners and make sure that they understand what they need to do to achieve them • focus on long-term goals and aspirations as well as short- and medium-term milestones • make effective use of PDG funding to support accelerated improvements in outcomes for learners from deprived backgrounds • be clear about interventions intended to raise attainment of all learners and those specifically targeted at overcoming challenges faced by learners from deprived backgrounds	We will have high expectations for all learners. Learners will be confident in their ability to succeed and have high expectations of themselves. The rate of improvement of learners from deprived backgrounds will accelerate considerably. We will see a good rate of return on PDG investment. Learners from deprived backgrounds will have wider experience of career options to draw on in setting their aspirations. Learners will develop broader horizons through engagement with arts and culture. Learners will become more independent learners and learn from one another.

High expectations and aspirations (continued)			
Welsh Government will:	Local authorities in partnership with their regional consortia should:	Schools should:	Desired outcome/impact
• promote summer schools and bursaries and scholarships • audit provision for more able and talented (MAT) learners to identify, and fill, gaps and to identify and share best practice • implement effective and consistent approaches to supporting progression and engagement of young people as set out in the *youth engagement and progression framework* • implement the Youth Guarantee across all local authorities.		• work with businesses, arts and cultural organisations to broaden learner horizons and help them make well-informed decisions about future aspirations • maintain links with learners when they move on to the next stage of their learning and use them as role models for future cohorts • teach learners to plan, maintain and evaluate their own learning.	