

# What really works for the early years?



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Guidance for the Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant

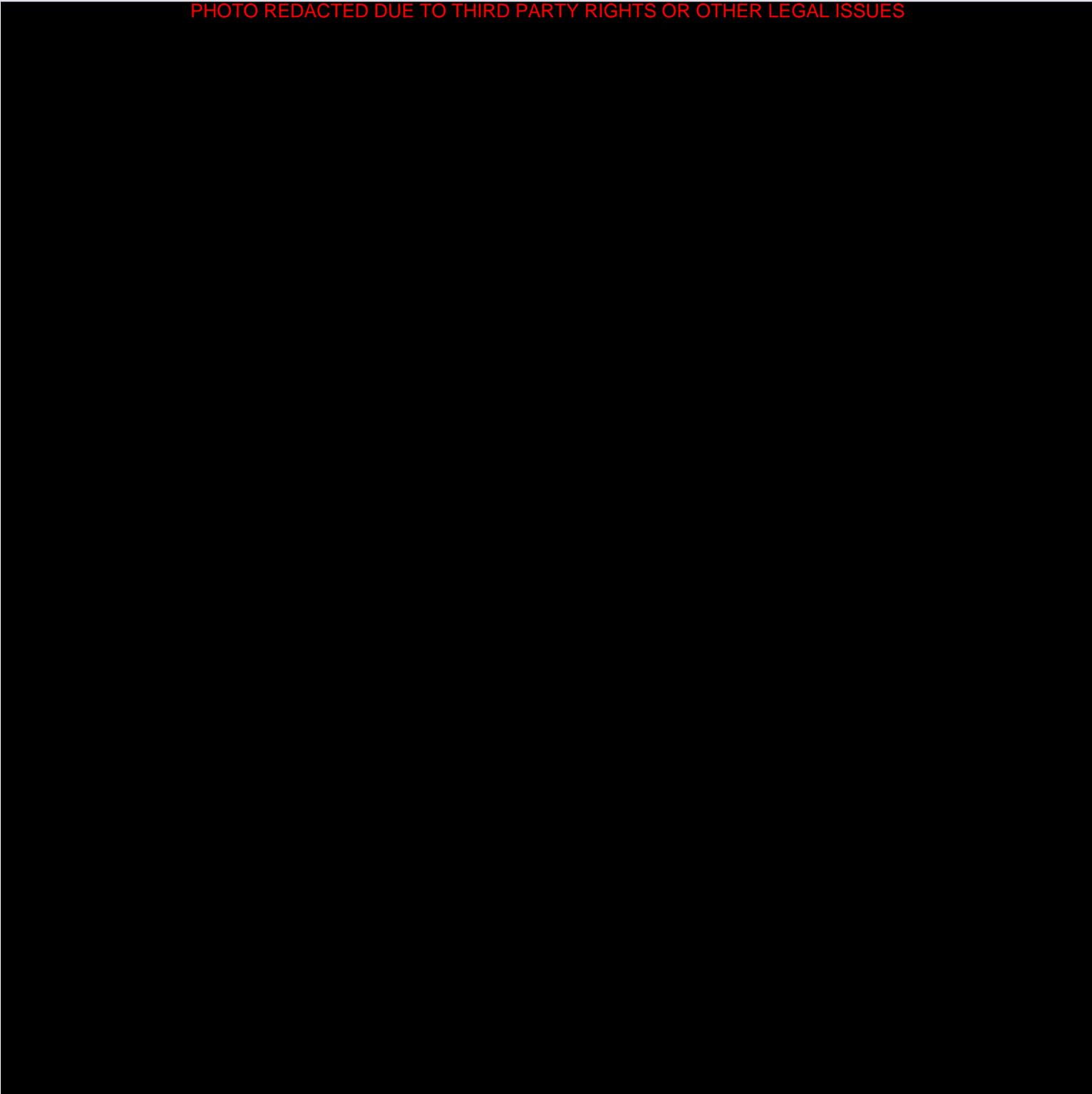
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At the very start of their educational journey, over one-quarter of our learners are failing to get the results of which they are capable, simply because they are from a poor background. The Millennium Cohort Study shows that by the age of five children who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) can be up to a year behind in some aspects of their literacy, compared to children from more affluent backgrounds. At the end of the Foundation Phase, 72 per cent of eFSM learners reach the expected levels of achievement, compared to nearly 89 per cent from better-off families.

The gap in attainment gets bigger as they move through the education system, and the evidence shows that the best time to address this is in the early years. The Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant (EYPDG) provides a new opportunity for schools and settings to address these inequalities.

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## What is the Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant?

The Pupil Deprivation Grant is extra funding from the Welsh Government intended to overcome the additional barriers disadvantaged learners face which prevent them from achieving their full potential. From 2015–16 the PDG is being extended to three- and four-year-olds in the Foundation Phase. Schools, maintained and non-maintained settings will receive £300 for each eligible learner.

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## How can schools and settings make best use of the EYPDG?

The Education Endowment Foundation's Early Years Toolkit is a tried and evaluated source of effective interventions and practitioners are recommended to refer to this for practical guidance and inspiration.

Evidence on successful practice in early years education, including an independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales, the evaluation led by Cardiff University of the Foundation Phase, and also the evaluation of Flying Start, suggests that there are three main areas in which schools and settings should focus their use of the EYPDG:

- Family engagement
- Pedagogy
- Leadership and staff development.

## Family engagement

Young children develop within a complex system of relationships involving their family, community and school. If children are to prosper, they need to feel they are in warm and caring learning environments that support their well-being, and this is particularly true for children living in poverty or who are looked after.

An effective way for early years providers to influence these relationships is through engagement with the home learning environment of learners.

Effective family engagement approaches should include the following.

- Nurture groups for learners and their families.
- Learning opportunities for families.
- Parenting programmes.
- Multi-agency work.
- Opportunities for community participation.

**Milbrook Primary School** is located within a disadvantaged area in Newport and about 30 per cent of its children are eFSM. The school believes strongly in supporting and engaging parents/carers and the community in order to close the 'poverty gap'.

Before children join the school, each family is visited by staff in their home environment to begin fostering relationships.

Each Thursday school staff and partner agencies such as Communities First invite families into the school to make healthy meals and undertake art and craft work.

The school also runs a weekly Family Homework Club in the local library and a Nurture Programme for targeted children and their families which is co-funded by Communities First.

The school also runs family learning opportunities for parents/carers to equip them to better support their children in reading, literacy and other areas of learning.

The range and breadth of experiences means that children are happy and content in their environment and are keen to experiment, solve problems and be adventurous in their learning.

The Welsh Government's Education Begins at Home campaign encourages families to play an active part in supporting their children's education.

The Welsh Government will be publishing guidance and a toolkit for practitioners on family and community engagement on Learning Wales and it will be flagged in the *Dysg* newsletter.

## Pedagogy

High-quality early years education can make a major contribution to overcoming the effects of disadvantage and improving learner achievement.

The stocktake and the evaluation of the Foundation Phase have identified effective practice in embedding the Foundation Phase. This includes:

- active learning, including problem solving, collaborative (often peer-to-peer) and individual tasks
- high-quality feedback
- opportunities to develop thinking.

**Ysgol Feithrin Pont-y-Pŵl** is situated in a church hall in Pontypool. The setting welcomes children from two-and-a-half years old until they enter Welsh-medium schools in the area after their third birthday.

All children are encouraged to share and express their opinions as well as their likes and dislikes. The main focus is on developing children's Welsh language skills. There are daily opportunities for children to explore and experiment in all areas of learning both indoors and outdoors. Wherever possible staff encourage the children to initiate their own learning.

## Leadership and staff development

Good leadership is critical in making effective use of resources such as the EYPDG, to raise the achievement of the most disadvantaged children in the early years.

Good leaders make effective use of all staff, including teaching assistants (TAs). A recent report by the Education Endowment Foundation has recommendations to help schools maximise the impact of teaching assistants including:

- using TAs to add value to what teachers do, not to replace them
- ensuring TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom
- using TAs to deliver high-quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions.

Training TAs to undertake this work to a high level enables experienced and highly effective teachers to be released to work with disadvantaged learners who will benefit the most from their expertise.

Research shows that for learners from low income households the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher is a whole year's learning (Sutton Trust, 2011). Early years providers are encouraged to upskill all their staff and the EYPDG can be used to pay for training. Providers are also encouraged to pool their resources with other schools and settings in order to buy-in joint training.

Collaboration is encouraged and leaders in schools and settings can maximise the use of the EYPDG by working with agencies/programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and Communities First where these operate in their area.

## Planning successful use of the EYPDG

A practical focus for these joint approaches could be providing 'hands-on' experiences, such as visits to museums, theatres, towns, historic sites, etc. Such experiences can contribute to the cultural and social experience of children who often do not enjoy such opportunities.

Nearly 40 per cent of the learners in **Maes-y-Morfa Primary Community School** in Llanelli are eFSM. For the last four years it has been working closely with Flying Start so that it has good information on the 84 per cent of learners who have received Flying Start support before entering the school.

The work with Flying Start helps the school to organise their resources more effectively to respond to issues which have been identified pre-school and to go on working with multi-agency partners to engage and support families. This provides an invaluable bridge with pre-school and families and ensures that learners are far more ready to learn and to access the curriculum.

The transition from a home environment, Flying Start, Meithrin or other pre-school setting can be a challenging one for all children. School readiness can be used by leaders to monitor the impact of the EYPDG and as a measure to establish:

- academic attainment, such as being able to recognise letters and numbers
- social and emotional development, including children's ability to cooperate and socialise with other children; sustain attention and be confident about their parents/carers leaving them for the day; and motor control such as being able to use a knife and fork or hold a pencil.

A key leadership task is to plan, monitor and evaluate the use of the EYPDG, referencing the *Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant* guidance (Welsh Government, 2015).

This should include the three areas highlighted in this document: Family engagement; Pedagogy; Leadership and staff development.

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## Steps to success – action points and summary

- 1** Develop home–school relationships through family engagement interventions such as nurture groups, learning opportunities for families, parenting programmes, multi-agency work and community participation.
- 2** Help families to support their children’s education at home by providing them with tips and activities or encouraging them to engage with the Education Begins at Home campaign.
- 3** Use contextualised evidence-based approaches such as those contained in the Education Endowment Foundation’s Early Years Toolkit.
- 4** Make use of active learning, high-quality feedback and developing learners’ thinking skills.
- 5** Ensure good practice is shared by all members of staff.
- 6** Use the EYPDG to improve the quality of all staff through professional development and use of advisory teachers.
- 7** Make effective use of teaching assistants by deploying them in specific ways and use EYPDG funding to undertake staff development to support this. Ensure this frees up more experienced and effective teachers to work with the more needy children.
- 8** Monitor and evaluate your interventions to make sure you are getting the results you hoped for.
- 9** Use school readiness as a measure of the effectiveness of your approaches, to include readiness to learn and having appropriate social and personal skills.
- 10** Pool resources and work collaboratively with other schools and settings to make the most of your grant.
- 11** Adopt a multi-agency approach and engage with programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and Communities First to make the most effective use of EYPDG funding.

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## Useful resources and publications

*An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales*

(Welsh Government, 2014)

[www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation-phase/stocktake-of-the-foundation-phase-final-report/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation-phase/stocktake-of-the-foundation-phase-final-report/?lang=en)

*A review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start*

(Welsh Government, 2014)

[www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/review-practice-implementation-early-language-development-support-element-within-flying-start/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/review-practice-implementation-early-language-development-support-element-within-flying-start/?lang=en)

*Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*

(Welsh Government, 2013)

[www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en)

Early Years Toolkit

(Education Endowment Foundation, 2015)

[www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/early-years/](http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/early-years/)

Evaluating the Foundation Phase

(Welsh Government, 2015)

[www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/?lang=en)

*Exploring Effective Pedagogy in Primary Schools: Evidence from Research*

(Pearson, 2014)

[https://research.pearson.com/content/plc/prkc/uk/open-ideas/en/articles/explore-eppse/\\_jcr\\_content/par/articledownloadcompo/file.res/Exploring%20Effective%20Pedagogy%20in%20Primary%20Schools.pdf](https://research.pearson.com/content/plc/prkc/uk/open-ideas/en/articles/explore-eppse/_jcr_content/par/articledownloadcompo/file.res/Exploring%20Effective%20Pedagogy%20in%20Primary%20Schools.pdf)

*Flying Start – Annex: Transition Guidance*

(Welsh Government, 2014)

[www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/141124-transition-guidance-en.pdf](http://www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/141124-transition-guidance-en.pdf)

*Improving the impact of teachers on pupil achievement in the UK – interim findings*

(Sutton Trust, 2011)

[www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/2teachers-impact-report-final.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/2teachers-impact-report-final.pdf)

*Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants*

(Education Endowment Foundation, 2015)

[www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/teaching-assistants-should-not-be-substitute-teachers-but-can-make-a-real-d/](http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/teaching-assistants-should-not-be-substitute-teachers-but-can-make-a-real-d/)

*Parenting in Wales: Guidance on engagement and support*

(Welsh Government, 2014)

[www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/140910-parenting-in-wales-guidance-en.pdf](http://www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/140910-parenting-in-wales-guidance-en.pdf)

*Rewriting the future: Raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools*  
(Welsh Government, 2014)

[www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/rewriting-the-future-schools/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/rewriting-the-future-schools/?lang=en)

Tackling deprivation and raising standards  
(Estyn, 2014)

[www.estyn.gov.uk/english/best-practice/tackling-deprivation-and-raising-standards/](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/best-practice/tackling-deprivation-and-raising-standards/)

*The DIY Evaluation Guide*

(Education Endowment Foundation, 2013)

[www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evaluation/diy-evaluation-guide/](http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evaluation/diy-evaluation-guide/)

*The Early Years Pupil Deprivation Grant: A Resource for Leaders and Practitioners*  
(Chicken, Egan, Siraj and Waters, Wales Centre for Equity in Education, 2015)

Dr Sarah Chicken, Professor David Egan, Alys Parkins, Professor Iram Siraj and Dr Jane Waters at the Wales Centre for Equity in Education, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, undertook the preparation of this guidance for the Welsh Government.