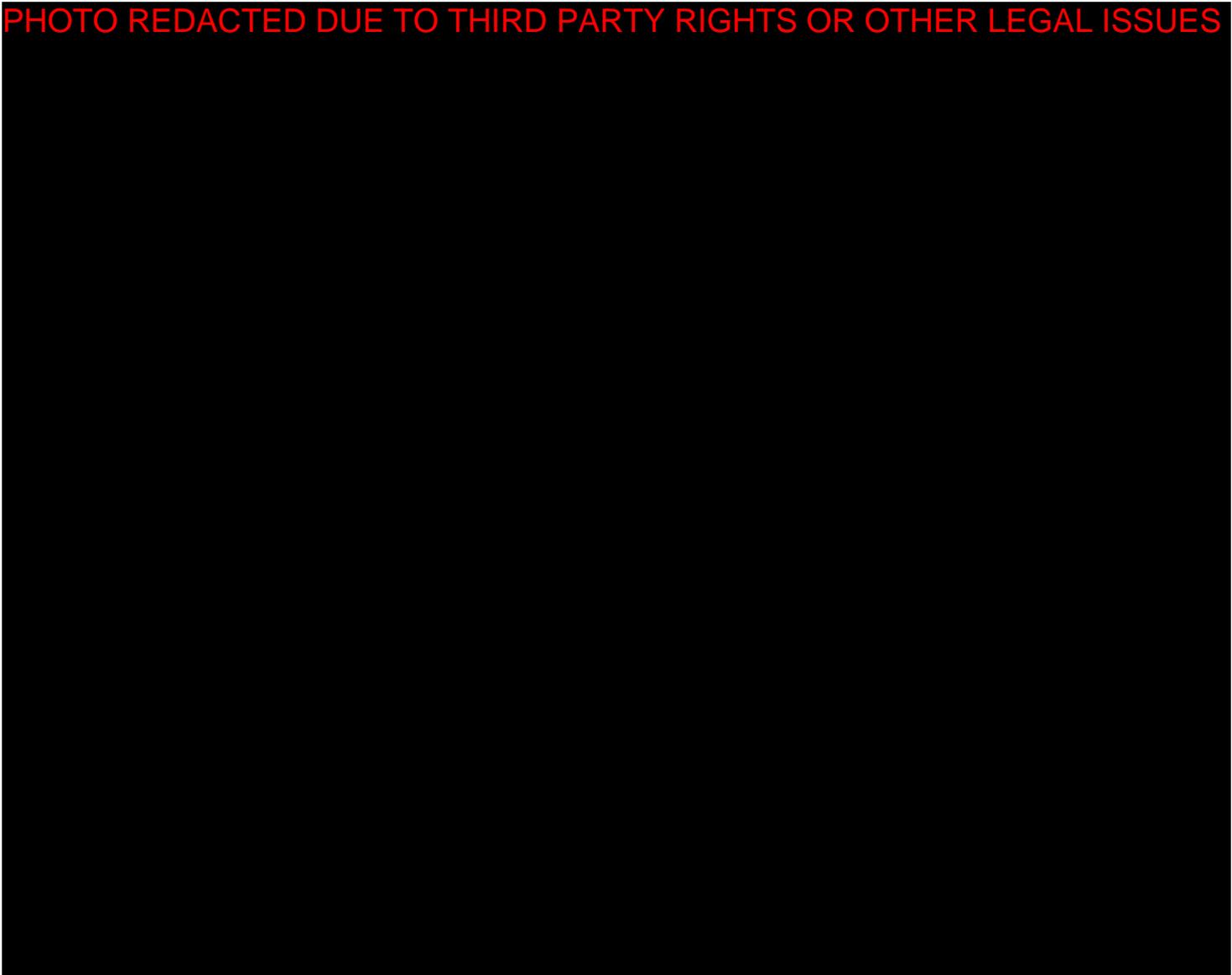

How schools and colleges used the RRRS and catch-up grants for post-16 learners

June 2021

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Introduction

The global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has had a widespread impact on teaching and learning in schools and colleges. This report focuses on the support for post-16 learners since September 2020 through the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme' grant (the RRRS grant) in schools and the catch-up grant in further education (FE) colleges. The report is written in response to a request for a rapid review in the Minister for Education's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2021-2022. Key messages and recommendations will inform future guidance and monitoring for similar funding in future.

The report draws on the evidence base set out in appendix 1 and includes interviews carried out remotely with senior and middle leaders and groups of learners in schools and colleges, as well as leaders and challenge advisers in local authorities and regional consortia. This report features cameos of interesting practice from schools and further education colleges. These are not full case studies as we are unable to fully evaluate the impact of the work because of the restrictions due to COVID-19. The cameos are included to exemplify points raised in the report and give a flavour of the work that has taken place across Wales.

Background

The RRRS and Post-16 catch up grant

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant disruption to learners' progress since March 2020. See appendix 2 for a timeline of events.

On 9 July 2020, the Welsh Government announced that it would provide an additional £29 million to schools to boost support for learners at crucial stages in their education from September 2020. The reason for this was that, during the initial crisis in the summer term 2020, many learners did not make as much progress in learning as they could have done under normal circumstances. Certain groups of learners were impacted more seriously than others. The Welsh Government's strategy was that providers should target extra support at Years 11, 12 and 13, as well as disadvantaged and vulnerable learners of all ages. It was envisaged that the grant would allow schools to recruit the equivalent of 600 extra teachers and 300 teaching assistants throughout 2020-2021 academic year.

Initially, the RRRS grant was intended to include learners in the sixth form. However, in July 2020, the Welsh Government announced additional schemes for colleges and sixth forms (in schools, this was still called the RRRS grant and the conditions for spending it were the same as those set out in the initial allocation). Over £15 million was provided to support learners following A level or vocational courses at an FE college or sixth form. This represented a 5% increase to funding per student.

The funds provided by the grant were intended to enable investment by schools and colleges to recruit and deploy additional human capacity to support and address the needs of learners following the initial COVID-19 crisis and periods of school closure in November 2020 and the Spring term of 2021.

The Welsh Government (2020a) set out five principles to guide **schools** in their spending decisions for the RRRS grant (see appendix 2).

How funding for schools and colleges is administered

Schools and FE colleges are funded differently. FE colleges and local authorities are funded directly by the Welsh Government for the learning programmes they provide to 16 to 19-year-old learners. Local authorities use their allocations to fund individual school sixth forms. Whereas the Welsh Government uses a common methodology to determine local authority and FE sector funding, the funding arrangements for school sixth forms by the local authorities vary across Wales.

In line with usual post-16 practice, the grant for schools was given to local authorities, who then decided upon the size of additional funding that individual schools received based on socio-economic considerations. This was not the case for colleges who instead received the 5% increase in funding per learner directly.

Conditions for spending the grants

The broad thrust of the conditions for spending the RRRS and catch up grants for schools and colleges were similar though not identical. For schools, funding was explicitly intended to recruit additional staff; for colleges, it was to increase the teaching time available. The stipulations of how the grants should be spent were worded differently. Below are extracts from grant letters that outline the conditions under which schools and colleges should allocate spending.¹

In schools:

'This funding enables investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy additional human capacity to support and address the needs of learners following the initial COVID-19 crisis and subsequent period of school closure.

The funding should be used to support learners in years 12 and 13 who are identified as in need of additional help when they return to school in September, although the scope and extent of the help needed will vary greatly depending on individual circumstances.

The foci for support under this Programme are:

Literacy, numeracy and digital competence, this will include higher order reading and writing skills, high level mathematics where relevant, and digital competence at the appropriate level and as relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications.

¹ These letters are not publicly available.

- *Development of independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to make accelerated progress by working more effectively alone and out of school.*
- *Support and engagement through coaching – this in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need coaching and emotional support as well as support for examination preparation and skills.'*

Colleges were issued with the following instructions:

Catch Up Funding

Welsh Government recognises that most learners have experienced considerable disruption to their learning this year and many will experience gaps in their learning that will need to be filled during the Autumn term.

This funding is being provided to recognise the additional costs of providing the increased teaching support necessary for those students who missed face to face learning earlier this year plus the additional cost of supporting transition to post-16 learning. The funding will be provided for all full-time learners and represents a 5 per cent increase to funding per student. This in turn increases the number of hours we fund for a typical programme from 650 to 682 per programme. Audit guidance for 2020/21 will be reflective of this.

School leaders had specific aims and prohibitions for spending the grant. For example, the grant had to be spent on specific groups of learners, but these were not made explicit to colleges.

Although, the absolute amounts given to schools and colleges are the same, schools were issued with the following advice from the Welsh Government (2020b):

'In regard to schools the additional funding should very much be linked to the £29m as it's a whole school approach being adopted not separate pre-16/post-16 approaches'. <https://gov.wales/recruit-recover-raise-standards-accelerating-learning-programme-frequently-asked-questions-html>

Main findings

- 1 Nearly all schools and colleges planned carefully to make good use of the RRRS or catch-up grants. In these providers, most learners have appreciated the additional provision, care and guidance they have received. In a few cases, leaders have not planned their spending strategically and just added the additional funds to their main budget.
- 2 There is a high degree of variability in the approaches leaders have taken in spending the RRRS or catch-up grants. In schools, the most common approaches were appointing additional staff to:
 - cover teaching in key stage 3 to free up time for extra lessons for learners in key stage 4 and post 16 or greater pastoral support in the sixth-form
 - teach specific subjects
 - focus mainly on learners' wellbeing.
- 3 Colleges have a high number of learners following vocational courses and took a different approach from schools. Most commonly they:
 - provided additional 'catch-up' sessions
 - created capacity for additional sessions for practical assessments
 - provided additional capacity to track and support learners' wellbeing
- 4 Appointing high quality additional staff at short notice has been challenging for providers, especially in rural areas, Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, and areas of high deprivation. Instead, most leaders in schools and colleges have extended hours for part-time staff, paid current staff overtime or retained the services of staff who were about to retire.
- 5 A few Welsh-medium or bilingual schools and colleges have used the grant strategically to ensure that learners maintained their Welsh speaking skills during periods where they could not attend school in person. However, in many cases this has not been a strong aspect of providers' work and learners' ability and confidence to use Welsh has declined during lockdown.
- 6 In many cases, courses run in partnership with other providers that normally involve learners travelling between centres have operated smoothly by streaming lessons. A few of these courses have not been delivered successfully and learners have dropped out. Mostly, this is because learners embarking on new partnership courses found remote learning in this context frustrating and ineffective.
- 7 All schools and colleges report close working with a range of external services including social services, health boards, the police and counselling services. All of these services have seen increases in demand during the pandemic. Leaders in a few schools have worked creatively with other providers, for example to evaluate each other's work or to identify and address gaps in learners' studies. Colegau

Cymru has provided useful networks for college leaders to discuss issues and share practice during the pandemic.

- 8 Many school leaders have been in regular contact with representatives from regional consortia and local authorities. In the most useful cases, these representatives have offered leaders valuable guidance on catch up approaches based on research.
- 9 Many leaders in schools and colleges continually evaluated and refined their approach to grant spending during the pandemic. In the best examples, leaders have a vision for what they would like to achieve and set a range of criteria against which they can track and evaluate the success of initiatives. In a few cases, leaders have not considered the impact of additional spending.

Recommendations

In the case of future similar grants, leaders in schools and colleges should:

- R1 Ensure they have a clear vision for the outcomes they desire from additional spending
- R2 Work with a wide range of partners to develop strategies to support learners' progress and wellbeing
- R3 Regularly track and evaluate the impact of additional spending in order to adjust current plans and inform future planning
- R4 Consider building on successful changes to practice made during the pandemic
- R5 Ensure that learners' progress in Welsh is priority, irrespective of the linguistic backgrounds of learners

Regional consortia and local authorities should:

- R6 Track and evaluate the success of different models of providing additional support to learners across their areas, referring to the indicators suggested in this report

The Welsh Government should:

- R7 Ensure that conditions for any future catch up grant spending are flexible and are equivalent for schools and colleges

1 How school leaders deployed the RRRS grant

- 10 The number of learners in the sixth form determined the amount of additional funds that schools received from the RRRS grant. This meant that small sixth forms received additional sums of around a few thousand pounds, whereas the largest sixth forms received sums approaching or above £100k. Larger sixth forms were therefore able to do more with the grant than smaller ones. When the grant was initially announced, leaders were unclear about the proportion of funding that should be allocated to learners in the sixth form. They were also uncertain about how long the grant would last. Despite these uncertainties, all school leaders expressed gratitude for the grant funding and most agreed that it allowed them to increase subject specific provision and enhance pastoral care for sixth-form learners.
- 11 There is a high degree of variability in the approaches that school leaders have taken in spending the RRRS grant. In many cases, their approach was well thought out and aligned closely with the Welsh Government's aims for the grant. In these cases, school leaders targeted the additional spending carefully to benefit specific groups of learners. At the beginning of the pandemic, when teaching was mainly face-to-face, these groups included learners eligible for free school meals, boys, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, learners with special educational needs and learners studying through the medium of Welsh but with no Welsh spoken at home. In many schools, leaders maintained a firm oversight on how the grant was being spent and its impact on individual learners' and groups of learners' engagement, achievement, attendance and wellbeing.
- 12 As lockdown began in January 2021 and most learners stayed at home, additional groups of learners became a focus for support. These included:
 - learners who had limited access to ICT equipment
 - more able learners
 - learners who had demonstrated low levels of engagement with online provision
 - learners displaying significant anxiety about the pandemic
- 13 In a few cases, school leaders did not consider how they would spend the RRRS grant strategically and simply added the additional funds to their overall budget. In these schools, staff responded in an ad hoc manner to learners' needs. Leaders in these schools did not monitor the additional spending and, as a result, have little idea of the impact of the funds. In a very few cases, leaders did not spend the money. Instead, they plan to use the grant to provide catch-up activities during the summer holidays.
- 14 In general, schools have used the RRRS grant to create additional capacity to enhance learners' progress and to offer them extra guidance and support. In many schools, senior leaders met regularly to plan in detail how to deploy the grant and included governors in these discussions. In many cases, leaders also had useful regular discussions with regional consortia or local authority representatives on how to deploy the grant.

15 The most common approaches taken by school leaders to support sixth formers were:

- **Appointing additional staff to cover teaching in key stage 3 in order to free up time for teaching or pastoral support in the sixth-form**

This approach allowed schools to offer learners regular, additional lessons and provide time for pastoral staff to engage more frequently with learners to support their wellbeing. In these schools, learners in the sixth form were generally positive about the provision they have received and appreciated the concern and guidance given to them. However, this approach risks compromising the quality of the provision offered to learners in key stage 3. This is because experienced teachers with established working relationships are replaced by cover staff who in some cases do not know the learners or the learning programme well.

- **Appointing additional subject teachers**

In general, schools have not found it easy to recruit additional support or teaching staff quickly. In the main, this is because of the lack of appropriately qualified staff available to take up positions at short notice, the length of the recruitment process, and the constantly changing needs within the school as a result of the developing pandemic.

In particular, Welsh-medium and bilingual schools and schools in areas of economic deprivation have found it exceptionally difficult to appoint new staff. Instead, leaders in these schools have spent the money on increasing the hours of part-time staff and persuaded staff who were about to retire to stay on. In a few cases, schools have deployed the grant to reduce class sizes in popular subjects. In these cases, learners report that they appreciated the additional personal attention that they have received. In many cases, learners feel that this additional provision has helped them overcome barriers to learning.

Where teachers in highly subscribed subjects have had to self-isolate for extended periods, leaders have often had to deploy additional staff to teach outside of their main area of subject expertise at short notice and with minimal guidance. Under normal circumstances, teachers are given additional A level teaching experience incrementally. However, during the pandemic, staff who normally teach in key stage 3 or key stage 4 have had to upskill rapidly to be familiar with A level programmes of study.

A minority of schools have utilised the grant by offering additional subject support after school hours. This additional tutoring was either provided by staff from school or by paying for external online tuition.

- **Appointing additional staff to focus mainly on learners' wellbeing**

In a minority of cases, schools have targeted the additional funds to employ staff to monitor and support learners' wellbeing (see Cameo – Flint High school). In general, these staff have kept in regular contact with learners, often by telephone conversations. They prioritised certain groups of learners and tracked their

performance closely, maintaining regular communication with their subject teachers. As a result, they were able to use their knowledge to co-ordinate additional subject or support for individual learners' wellbeing. However, many schools have reported difficulties in accessing counselling services and have noted a backlog developing over time. In many schools, leaders became particularly concerned about the wellbeing of a few learners and invited them to learn in the school's 'hub' during lockdown. These learners were extremely grateful for this provision and many of them felt that they would have struggled emotionally and with their learning were it not for the opportunity to attend the hub.

In schools that adopted this enhanced focus on wellbeing, learners appreciated the additional contact and reported that they received timely support such as additional tuition offered by their subject teachers and direction to useful resources to support their learning. They appreciated also the care given to them by school staff and a few felt they had benefited from services such as counselling.

In a minority of cases, learners did not like this approach as that they felt that the focus on their wellbeing was to the detriment of their progress in learning. In these cases, learners were frustrated about the need to cover the same ground in telephone conversations and would have welcomed more subject-specific challenge and support.

Cameo – Flint High School: Supporting learners' wellbeing

Senior leaders spent the RRRS grant on supporting learners' wellbeing and ensuring online safety during lessons that were streamed live. A member of staff who was due to finish at October half term 2020 was given the remit of acting as a 'Sixth-form supervisor'.

The sixth form supervisor carried out weekly engagement phone calls, focusing on the more vulnerable learners. During these phone calls, the supervisor assessed learners' academic and wellbeing needs. She then communicated these to subject teachers, form tutors and other staff to co-ordinate appropriate subject-specific or wellbeing support. The criteria for identifying those who needed support changed as staff developed their understanding of how individuals were dealing with lockdown. As a result of close interactions with learners, the sixth form supervisor was able to track changes in their needs accurately and co-ordinate tailored support as a result. Learners appreciated the care and guidance given by the school. As a result, they reported that they were able to make good progress in their courses, whether provision was face-to-face or remote.

Partnership working

- 16 In general, schools have worked well during the pandemic with a range of partners to ensure that learners received appropriate guidance on sixth form pathways. Of necessity, schools' normal work with universities, the Seren network and Careers Wales moved online. In many cases, schools have spent part of the grant on web-based services to enhance support for learners making applications to study at university. A majority of learners report that they have received useful guidance, but many remain anxious about the future. In particular, learners are concerned about

how they will be assessed and many perceive unfairness in the system, for example as a result of variation in the number of separate assessments required in different schools. In a minority of cases, learners feel that they are underprepared for university admissions processes or other next step in the lives.

- 17 Where schools delivered a part of their sixth form offer in partnership with other providers, leaders faced complex travel issues to solve because of COVID-19 rules governing transport and the need to reduce social mixing. To resolve these issues, leaders in most schools decided that provision for courses offered in partnership should be offered virtually. While a minority of learners were happy with this arrangement, a majority felt poorly served and cited difficulties in accessing work and a lack of online interaction with tutors. In many cases, learners felt reluctant to post questions for clarification in online chat facilities as these questions would appear to everyone, risking social embarrassment. In a few cases, learners stated that they felt ignored by teachers in partner schools and that their progress in subjects they had chosen to study in these schools was poor. In a few cases, learners simply dropped courses they had opted for in partner schools because they felt too disconnected from their tutors.
- 18 Where partnership working to deliver courses was most successful, learners already knew their tutors well (see Cameo on work between Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe). This was often a result of well-co-ordinated transition arrangements for learners in key stage 4 and well-considered induction programmes. In a few cases, schools have thought creatively about how to make the most out of their partnerships (see Cameos for Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda).

Cameo – Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe Sixth form partnership during the pandemic

There is a significant degree of partnership working in the sixth form between the schools. Around two-thirds of subjects are either taught only in one school, or teaching is shared between the two schools.

Before the pandemic, learners routinely travelled between the two schools during the day with each lesson timetabled for two periods. Since September 2020, learners did not travel to ensure that ‘bubbles’ were maintained. Instead, all lessons taught by the partnership were streamed from one school to the other to prevent learners mixing.

Teachers who teach some of these classes stated that the provision was effective with Year 13 where teachers already know the learners, but this was less effective with Year 12 learners as staff had not developed a working relationship with them. Similarly, these learners were not able to build relationships with other learners on the same course.

Leaders in both schools are evaluating the adjustments made this year and are considering providing the partnership provision next year via a mixture of learners travelling and accessing live streaming.

Cameo – Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen: Identifying gaps in learners’ learning and working in partnership to address these

During September, the head of sixth form met with subject team leaders to identify the main gaps in learning. This information was used with data analysis and information from learner voice activities to identify the main priorities for using the grant funding. Once the main priorities had been identified the school planned a ‘Bridging the Gap’ programme to address the identified skills shortfall. The school identified skills that were common to a number of subjects and part of the programme involved Year 12 learners having two extra sessions on their timetable. These sessions focused on how to organise writing, how to write different styles of essays, revision techniques, how to use spreadsheets in the Welsh Baccaalaureate, and other skills that had been identified by learners and Subject Team leaders as weaknesses due to Year 11 learners not accessing face-to-face teaching at the end of last school year. The school identified that recruiting good quality staff at such a short notice would be difficult and, instead, they used the partnership that they had with Bridgend College to staff these sessions with two members of staff from the college. What was taught in these sessions by the college tutors was tailored to the needs of the school’s learners and was evaluated every two weeks by the tutors and the head of sixth form. The evaluation involved regular learner voice activities. The learners involved in this work were grateful for these sessions and stated that they were beneficial.

Cameo – Ysgol Cwm Rhondda: Partnership working to provide an objective evaluation of grant spending

In the Welsh-medium post-16 sector in Rhondda Cynon Taf, schools operate a partnership where they are responsible for overseeing each other’s work. As part of this arrangement, the headteachers of Ysgol Llanhari, Ysgol Gartholwg, and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, together with Ysgol Llangynwyd, scrutinised each other’s plans. They challenged each other’s ideas with the aim of ensuring that all expenditure was for the benefit of learners. All participants respected the challenge from the other headteachers. This arrangement allowed the schools to refine their plans and share ideas to ensure the best use of the funding.

Supporting learners’ Welsh language skills

- 19 One group of learners identified as a priority in the grant conditions was learners in Welsh-medium education with no Welsh spoken at home. In general, Welsh-medium and bilingual schools continued to provide learning materials or streamed lessons in the language that learners had chosen to study a particular course. However, not all leaders in these schools planned strategically to ensure learners maintained their Welsh oral and written skills. In these cases, most learners, including those who spoke Welsh at home, noticed a decline in their ability and confidence to communicate in Welsh.
- 20 In a few cases, leaders foresaw that sustained absence from school would lead to a deterioration in learners’ Welsh. These schools made detailed and well-considered

plans to support learners' Welsh during absence from school and to re-engage them in speaking the language on their return to schools. Learners in these schools appreciated the efforts that their teachers made to maintain their Welsh communication skills. Most of these learners were able to converse fluently and confidently in Welsh in our meetings with them for this review. However, even in these schools, learners reported that it took a while to get back into the habit of using Welsh as a matter course during their social interactions.

Cameo – Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr: Maintaining standards in Welsh

During the first lockdown, most learning was conducted remotely by pre-prepared resources that learners could access online. This type of delivery meant that opportunities for learners to hear and use Welsh were limited. Staff noticed that, during this period, learners' Welsh communication skills declined as well as their inclination to use the language.

Leaders were acutely aware that learners should have as many opportunities as possible to hear and speak the language. During the second lockdown, they decided that the normal timetable would continue whether learners were at school or at home. Each lesson would include an element of active learning so that learners could hear Welsh in every lesson. Staff provided regular opportunities for learners to use their Welsh by telephone and live-streamed registration sessions.

With the additional capacity offered by the RRRS grant, leaders decided that all events noted on the calendar could go ahead be they face-to-face or virtual. They gave learners the responsibility for planning, organising and hosting them. The events included a school eisteddfod, public speaking competitions, fun activities such as 'Bake-off', competitions between learners and staff, podcasting, an open evening for prospective sixth form students, and yoga and fitness sessions. On St David's Day, a group of sixth formers recorded a session where they discussed what it meant to them to be part of a Welsh-speaking Wales in 2021. Learners also created a Welsh-medium sixth form social media account to ensure that all learners receive news, school bulletins, information on open days and so on.

Learners appreciated the way in which the school supported their Welsh language skills. They very much enjoyed their involvement in whole-school events and felt that they gave them valuable opportunities to maintain their fluency.

The role of local authorities and regional consortia

- 21 Most commonly, the additional funding was allocated to schools by local authorities. In all cases, the grant was distributed according to the number of learners in the sixth form. In some cases, regional consortia offered strong support to schools and parents through online events.

Cameo – EAS: Offering professional learning events to support learners' progress and wellbeing during the pandemic

The EAS hosted several live and recorded web-based events focused on strategies to support all learners during the pandemic including online events for

parents. These events covered aspects such as:

- developing learners' higher order thinking skills
- supporting learners' mental health and wellbeing
- how to engage learners at risk of disengagement
- supporting applications to university
- developing learners' oracy skills
- supporting more able learners
- supporting learners' transition from Year 11 into the sixth form

These events were well-attended and provided staff and parents with valuable strategies to support learners' progress in learning and their wellbeing during the pandemic.

- 22 In many cases, schools had constructive discussions with their challenge advisors/school improvement partners about the most productive manner to spend the additional funding. Meetings between senior leaders and representatives of the regional consortia or local authorities were regular and helpful. In general, local authorities and regional consortia trusted schools to spend the grant in any way they saw fit, while prioritising their contacts with schools that they were already targeting for support.
- 23 Leaders in local authorities and regional consortia had a common vision of how to spend the grant which was aligned with that of the Welsh Government. However, in many cases, the processes for evaluating the impact of the additional spending are at an early stage of development. In a few cases, leaders thought carefully about how they might evaluate the additional spending (see EAS case study).

Cameo – EAS: Using findings from research to guide additional spending

In partnership with local authorities, the EAS offered well-considered support to schools in their use of the RRRS grant. Leaders gave guidance for schools on seeking agreement with their governors and on how to publish their spending plan on the school's website. In addition, they provided schools with a range of strategies to support learners' learning and wellbeing taken from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2018) toolkit (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/>). This tool encourages and promotes activities that research has shown to have the highest impact on learning. The EAS also provided a comprehensive range of professional learning and complementary resources, including sharing school approaches. By using the regional 'grant mapping tool', schools are able to monitor their resource spend and demonstrate early successes. This strategy provides a well-co-ordinated approach to focusing schools' spending and a useful method of assessing the quality of planning in different schools.

How school leaders evaluated the impact of the catch-up grant

- 24 In many schools, leaders have attempted to evaluate the impact of the additional staffing provided by the RRRS grant. Where this evaluation was most successful, leaders had considered carefully the desired outcomes for any additional spending from the outset. In general, these leaders regularly tracked aspects such as:
- learners' progress against targets in individual subjects
 - learners' engagement in work set (including completion of tasks, quality of completions, and levels of interaction during streamed lessons)
 - attendance
 - referrals to external agencies
- 25 Leaders in these schools also sought the views of learners and parents through surveys and informal meetings. In general, these leaders have not produced extended self-evaluation reports. Rather, they have acted swiftly either to extend practice they found effective or to refine any provision in the light of learners' emerging needs. In general, school leaders feel that it would not be helpful to use the outcomes from centre determined grades to evaluate their performance as they are not comparable with outcomes in previous years.
- 26 A few schools have not attempted to evaluate the impact of this grant. Leaders in these schools did not have a clear strategy for spending the grant nor a vision for what it could achieve.

Cameo – Ysgol Dyffryn Aman: Evaluating the impact of the school's work during the pandemic

When they received the RRRS grant, the senior team met to agree and set a range of indicators they could use to measure the impact of any additional expenditure. In the sixth form, this included learners' achievement, attendance, engagement in work and the number of referrals to external agencies.

The senior leadership team also carried out regular surveys to gather the views of learners and parents about the provision learners received. During lockdown, all learners and parents were given the opportunity to complete a 'Wellbeing and Working from Home' questionnaire asking about the online provision, as well as their wellbeing. The parental questionnaires focussed on the quality of overall provision and the value of registration sessions, "drop in" sessions and weekly services. The outcomes from these questionnaires were evaluated and leaders made sure that appropriate support was made available to learners who needed extra help.

Senior leaders responded to findings from their evaluations in several ways including:

- holding live sessions for specific subject areas
- adapting the online provision to allow greater interaction
- reducing the length of live lessons
- ensuring a break between lessons to support learners' wellbeing
- reducing the length of the online day to enable staff to offer tailored and timely

feedback to learners, and to prepare useful digital resources

- offering mentoring sessions to vulnerable learners and providing time for members of the extended senior team to lead on this
- offering teaching assistant support to visit learners at home
- expanding school counselling provision
- providing virtual sessions for parents to raise awareness of the dangers of the internet during the lockdown

Cameo – Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen: Listening to learners

The school has involved learners in many of the key decisions that the school has made this year. Through the regular use of surveys, meetings with focus groups and individual learners, the school was able to identify wellbeing needs and the gaps in learners' learning as a result of periods where learners could not attend. These helped the school to establish its priorities for the autumn term. Further, regular learner voice activities have been used to evaluate the provision and identify how the provision needed to be adjusted during the year. For example, learner voice and discussions with parents informed the school that during the period of remote learning, workload was a big concern, so the school put in place a one day per week 'Catch up on learning' day where no new work was set, but teachers were still available during timetabled slots to answer any questions from the learners.

2 How leaders in further education colleges deployed the Catch-up grant

- 27 Colleges have received several grants to support learners during the pandemic. Most of these are similar to those that schools received from their local authorities. In a majority of cases, leaders have not directed specific grants for specific purposes. Rather, they have taken the approach of first assessing their learners' needs and planning provision to support them as necessary. In most cases, leaders have accounted for specific grant spending retrospectively. In all cases, senior leaders have involved their governing body closely, although they have not always sought approval for various decisions as they would in normal circumstances. In a few cases, they have asked middle leaders to bid for additional support and delegated additional spending to them. Leaders in a few colleges allocated funding to secure additional support for learners before the announcement of any grants linked with the pandemic. Because of this, they were able to increase their staffing quickly.
- 28 Further education colleges offer a wide range of courses for post-16 learners and the proportion of learners following vocational courses is greater than that in schools. Often, learners on vocational courses need greater support compared with those following A-level courses because of the hands-on nature of their work and assessments and the nature of the support needed across vocational courses varies widely. In general, leaders in colleges have targeted additional support towards the following groups:
- **Learners undertaking Access to Higher Education courses.** In many cases, this group of learners showed the highest increase in levels of dropout from their course. During the pandemic, these learners found it especially difficult to combine their studies because of increased employment pressures and difficulties with childcare.
 - **Learners following the English for Speakers of Other Language courses.** These learners found it difficult to come to college, many were nervous about using public transport and mixing with others. This group also had difficulty accessing remote learning, due to a lack of ICT devices, internet connection difficulties and because of their limited English language skills.
 - **The most vulnerable learners**, including those with special educational needs, safeguarding risks, and those from areas with high levels of deprivation. These learners often needed personal support, financial support or help with other resources for life and learning.
 - **Learners on practical licence to practise courses.** These learners were particularly at risk of disengaging from learning due to reduced opportunities to develop their practical skills. A minority did not complete their courses in 2019-2020.
 - **Learners following A level courses** – particularly where these learners had experienced significant disruption to their learning as a result of school closures when they were in Year 11.

- 29 There was a particular need for extra staffing in specific vocational learning areas because of stringent requirements for safe working practices when on-site. This was especially the case for engineering and construction courses, where COVID-19 measures restricted learners' attendance and the manner in which learning could be delivered. As a result, these courses required additional teaching, technical and learning support staff.
- 30 Learners involved in the performing arts found learning during lockdown particularly challenging as they were prohibited from working with others and did not always have access to the specific apparatus or space necessary to develop their skills. Before lockdown in January 2021, colleges had developed solutions for these learners, which involved extensive mitigations to ensure the safety of the staff and learners to allow practical, face-to-face work to take place.

Cameo – NPTC group: Providing an opportunity for learners to take part in a live dance performance

Normally, learners following dance courses (A Level Dance, BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts (Dance), BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts Practice (Dance) and the BTEC Level 3 in Production Arts) work collaboratively to create and perform an annual theatrical production. However, in March 2020, all theatres were closed and public performances ceased.

Staff worked closely with the college's Health and Safety team, to ensure that measures were taken to ensure the safety of staff and learners to allow practical, face-to-face dance work to take place in a theatre setting.

The college enlisted the services of a professional film maker to capture the learners' live performance and broadcast it across the internet. The performance work contributed strongly to the skills development of the dance students and formed part of the portfolio of evidence for the BTEC Level 3 Dance courses.

- 31 Some issues have proven intractable. For example, there are significant challenges with work placements, especially in the care sector. Many Level 2 childcare learners were unable to complete their placement hours in 2019-2020 but have been allowed to progress to Level 3 courses in 2020-2021. It is a concern for leaders that they have still been unable to complete their placements this year.
- 32 Often leaders deployed the catch-up grant by offering overtime to staff already employed by the college. In many colleges, this included cleaning staff. As in schools, leaders found it difficult to appoint additional staff at short notice. This was especially the case in certain subject areas such as engineering, construction and the sciences. However, a few leaders thought deeply about this issue and came up with creative solutions (see Pembrokeshire College cameo). Most commonly, colleges used the grant for:

Providing additional 'catch-up' sessions. As a result of disruption to their learning, most learners had gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding, which created a barrier to their future learning. In many cases, colleges provided additional

lessons for groups of learners or one-to-one tutorials to tackle these deficits. In addition, a minority of colleges re-designed and extended their induction programmes to prepare learners for the specific demands of their courses. A few colleges extended the length of their teaching day to allow for catch up sessions. In many cases, colleges offered online, one-to-one coaching and guidance for learners who were struggling with specific aspects of the course. In a few cases, learners were guided to alternative courses that suited their specific skills and interests better as a result of these interactions.

Offering additional sessions for practical assessments. For a few courses, colleges were able to adapt their coursework or controlled assessments so they could be carried out remotely. However, in many vocational courses such as plumbing, it was impossible to adapt the assessments in this way. A portion of the grant was used in all colleges to provide additional capacity to carry out these assessments in line with COVID-19 guidance.

Providing additional capacity to track and support learners' wellbeing. In many cases, college leaders created specialist support posts to strengthen their tracking and monitoring procedures in order to provide targeted guidance and support to individual learners. These staff kept in regular contact with learners, especially those from vulnerable groups. This allowed colleges to identify the developing needs of specific groups of learners and provide additional them with additional support. For example, as a result of their close monitoring of learners, specialist support staff in NPTC Group identified young adult carers as a priority group.

Cameo – NPTC group: Inspiring learners through a series of online 'masterclasses'

The college hosted a series of virtual guest speakers across all qualifications in the hair and applied therapies school.

A specialist industry expert in 'hair up' and bridal hairdressing styles presented a masterclass to all hairdressing courses. Practical demonstrations were matched to the level of the qualification and there was the opportunity for the learners to ask the guest speaker industry related questions.

Beauty therapy learners also attended a virtual industry-related masterclass, that demonstrated skills in nail extensions and further stretched and challenged the techniques that they had already mastered.

Level 3 sports therapy learners received a masterclass from an ex-Olympic gymnast who talked about rehabilitation of sports injuries and its impact on the professional sports person.

Level 3 theatrical make up and level 3 applied therapy learners received a masterclass on how to use high-definition airbrush make up with advanced techniques for facial and body art. The theatrical make-up and special effects learners also received a specialist masterclass from a guest speaker on prosthetic make up in TV and film industry.

Learners found these events highly engaging and inspirational. They reported that they had learnt a great deal from their interactions with the speakers and gained a great deal of information to help them make future career choices.

Cameo – Pembrokeshire College: Recruiting staff across a wide geographical area

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant additional staffing requirements for the college. These resulted from the need to replace staff members unable to work and the requirement to expand teaching capacity not only to provide additional tutoring for learners, but also tutoring in smaller, socially distanced groups. Securing the services of additional staff members to enable this was initially challenging in light of the rural and sparsely populated nature of the region.

Upon reviewing the college's likely adoption of increased online delivery after the end of the pandemic, senior leaders decided to broaden the conditions of their staff recruitment drive to allow for remote working.

The college advertised for new teaching staff across a broad geographical area, giving candidates the option of working remotely.

The college feels that this has been a successful development. In the past, middle leaders have found it difficult to recruit specialist staff quickly, particularly for fixed term appointments. During the lockdown periods, staff members working remotely have provided teaching in A2 Biology; AS and A2 Mathematics and Further Mathematics; GCSE Mathematics; BTEC Applied Science; AS and A2 Spanish; and A2 and AS Law. These online lecturers are located across different localities in south Wales. They would not usually have been available to the college, particularly for the part-time hours on offer and because of the distance between the college and their homes.

This approach has made managing staff absence cover more efficient, resulting in a better learning experience for learners. Leaders are now confident that they can secure the services of qualified, specialist teachers even for short-term appointments, which has previously been very difficult.

Partnership working

- 33 In all cases, colleges worked closely with a wide range of partners to ensure that learners received appropriate care support and guidance. These included schools, health services, counselling services, health and safety networks, the police, social services and local authorities. In many cases these partnerships evolved over time as learners' needs changed, for example when learning became predominantly online in January 2021.
- 34 In particular, the networks supported by Colegau Cymru have been highly valued by college leaders across Wales. The range of networks have enabled those with similar roles at different colleges to work collaboratively in order to overcome the common challenges they have faced during the pandemic. Staff attending these

networks included principals, finance directors, human resource directors and additional learning needs co-ordinators. Meetings were regular and focused on aspects such as possible adaptations to the curriculum, sharing good practice, supporting learners with additional learning needs and developing resources collaboratively. These networks also facilitated productive dialogue with the Welsh Government, Qualifications Wales and WJEC. Most leaders feel that the increased level of collaboration between colleges has been a beneficial outcome of the pandemic.

Supporting learners' Welsh language skills

- 35 Many colleges have considered carefully how to support learners' Welsh communication skills. In many cases, they have allocated Welsh-speaking staff to check Welsh-speaking learners' wellbeing and offer them opportunities to use their Welsh.
- 36 In a few cases, there has been substantial, well thought-out provision to support learners' Welsh skills.

Cameo – Cardiff and Vale College: Supporting learners' Welsh skills

Leaders considered carefully how to support learners' Welsh communication skills throughout the pandemic. They provided valuable opportunities including:

- one-to-one support through medium of Welsh
- additional Welsh classes for childcare and sport courses
- use of Welsh champions and ambassadors to increase online personal tutorials to help with written and spoken Welsh for assignments.
- development of Y Ples Lles (bilingual learner-led Wellbeing club)
- increase in online support sessions for Welsh-medium Care and Public Services learners specifically and for all departments generally.
- development of “drop-in” online Welsh support for learners and “Y Porth Cymraeg” for learners

As a result of these innovations, the college logged more than 1,500 interactions with learners to support their oral and written Welsh this academic year.

How college leaders evaluated the impact of the catch-up grant

- 37 Funding comes to colleges from several different grants. In general, they have used these collectively. As a result, leaders have found it difficult to isolate the impact of the catch-up grant. However, all colleges have undertaken some evaluations of the overall impact of their provision during the pandemic. Similarly to school leaders, leaders in colleges are reluctant to use the outcomes from centre determined grades to evaluate comparative performance. However, it may be useful to compare the outcomes from these with learners' predicted performance to gauge the impact of any additional support.
- 38 In general, college leaders have monitored learners' progress and wellbeing closely

throughout the pandemic through student surveys, retention data, completion of work and speaking to focus groups of learners. However, many leaders felt that it was too early to draw any conclusions from the normal range of self-evaluation activities such as lesson observations and work scrutiny.

3 Conclusions and suggestions for future catch-up grants

- 39 Overall, school and college leaders appreciated the terms under which the RRRS and catch-up grants were offered. In particular, they felt that the flexibility offered to them was useful. For example, in a few tragic situations, schools used some of the additional funding to offer learners bereavement counselling.
- 40 In colleges, the number of different grants, some with overlapping aims, made planning for the spending of these grants complicated. All leaders in schools felt that the priorities outlined in the conditions for spending the grant were appropriate. In colleges, these conditions did not apply. However, in most cases, school and college leaders allocated the grant in similar ways, prioritising the same groups. Discussions with leaders and learners reveal no universal ideal model for spending these grants. A variety of different approaches seem to have worked well and in general, learners in schools and colleges appreciated the efforts made to support their progress and wellbeing. In schools and colleges where learners were most positive:
- leaders had set clear criteria for spending the grant from the outset
 - staff monitored learners' wellbeing and progress closely, adjusting their strategies and support where necessary
 - leaders had thought creatively about how to gain additional staff
 - leaders had allocated additional spending thoughtfully to support learners' wellbeing and progress in their subjects
 - leaders evaluated the impact of any additional spending closely and refined their approach in light of emerging findings
 - leaders had engaged positively in professional learning networks to discuss and evaluate different models
- 41 In Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, there was an expectation that learners from homes where Welsh is not spoken were offered additional support from this grant. This is a much-needed aspect during lockdown as, during these periods, learners told us that they did not get many opportunities to hear or practise the language. In all of our meetings with learners, they report a decline in their Welsh language skills, whether they come from Welsh-speaking backgrounds or not. Only a few Welsh-medium or bilingual schools made learners' Welsh communication skills a strong focus during the pandemic.
- 42 The best practice identified in this survey suggests that grants in the future should align to the following principles:
- allowing sufficient flexibility, including in the timescales, so providers can adapt their spending to their particular needs

- specific conditions for spending the grant should be the same for schools and colleges
- ensuring that leaders consider how they will track the impact of additional spending on learners' wellbeing and progress (see suggested indicators below)
- in Welsh-medium and bilingual providers, there should be a focus on learners' Welsh communication skills whatever their linguistic background
- encouraging providers to consider how collaborative models could support planned approaches

43 Much of the evidence that leaders will need to gather to inform their self-evaluation during the pandemic will come from discussions with staff and learners. Here are a few indicators that may be useful for providers to consider:

- **learners' attendance**
- **learners' levels of engagement** such as, the time spent in guided learning activities including any catch-up, intervention or support sessions and the extent to which they participate in discussions and ask questions
- **enrolment trends (from 2021 onwards)** – any large changes in the proportion of learners who change their minds about the courses they have chosen (transfers or withdrawals). An increase could indicate that learners have not been able to make optimal progression choices perhaps due to the limited relevant study experience during the lockdown period. A great increase in early transfers could indicate helpful work by providers in advising learners. A substantial increase in late transfers or withdrawals could indicate that improvements need to be made
- **the proportion of learners taking longer than usual to complete their 16-19 studies** – specifically, any increase in the proportion of learners taking more than two years (although to some extent this may reflect factors beyond the provider's control)
- **the performance of learners against their targets**
- **destinations data** – any changes to the proportion of any groups progressing to studies at a higher level, training or employment
- **changes in the proportion of previous learners not in education, employment or training**
- **subsequent qualifications data** – do learners affected by lockdown go on to achieve future qualifications at broadly the same level and classification as would normally be expected? This will be possibly become more reliable from 2022 onwards or when assessments and grading methodologies may have returned to normal
- **learner surveys** about their experience of education and training, wellbeing, self-esteem, optimism about the future
- **amount of contact time** learners have received in which to practise their Welsh and their inclination to use the language on return to school or college

Questions for leaders to use to help plan for spending similar grants in the future

- What criteria do you think the school/college should use to guide spending the grant? Which groups of learners or subjects should be prioritised and why? How

- will you involve learners in these decisions?
- How will staff monitor learner wellbeing and progress? What mechanisms should leaders use to adjust their strategies and support where necessary? How will you involve learners in any evaluations?
 - How will you appoint additional staff? Would appointing additional staff to work remotely be beneficial/appropriate?
 - How could you work with other schools, colleges or services to develop a shared approach to using the funding?
 - What indicators will you use to evaluate the impact of any additional spending? How will you gauge any unintended consequences of your initiatives on specific groups of learners (for example, on the key stage 3 cohort)? How are you going to mitigate these?
 - What are the implications of any initiatives on staff workload?
 - How will staff engage in professional learning networks to discuss and evaluate different approaches?

Appendix 1: Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on:

- virtual visits to 17 secondary schools, 12 further education colleges, two local authorities and 3 regional consortia; during these visits we met with senior and middle leaders, challenge advisers and groups of learners
- a review of relevant literature including Welsh Government policies and updates, and grant letters to providers
- information from Estyn's regular engagement with schools, colleges, local authorities and regional consortia

Schools visited:

Bedwas High School – Caerphilly local authority
Brynteg High School – Bridgend local authority
Caldicot School – Monmouthshire local authority
Cantonian High School – Cardiff Local authority
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen – Bridgend local authority
Flint High School – Flintshire local authority
Haverfordwest High VC School – Pembrokeshire local authority
Idris Davies School – Caerphilly local authority
Ysgol Calon Cymru – Powys local authority
Ysgol Dyffryn Aman – Carmarthenshire local authority
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy – Conwy local authority
Ysgol Friars – Gwynedd local authority
Ysgol Glantaf – Cardiff local authority
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda – Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority
Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr – Swansea local authority
Ysgol Penglais – Ceredigion local authority
Ysgol y Preseli – Pembrokeshire local authority

Colleges visited:

Bridgend College
Cardiff and Vale College
Coleg Cambria
Coleg Gwent
Coleg Sir Gar/Ceredigion
Coleg-Y-Cymoedd
Gower College
Grwp Llandrillo Menai
NPTC group
Pembrokeshire College
St David's Catholic Sixth form College
The College, Merthyr

Local authorities

Ceredigion local authority
Swansea local authority

Regional consortia

EAS
ERW
GwE

Appendix 2: Timeline of events that affected learners in schools and colleges from March 2020

March 2020

The Welsh Government announced that schools and colleges would close to all learners except those children of key workers and vulnerable learners.

June 2020

All schools and colleges welcomed learners from all year groups back into the classroom for limited periods during the week, with only a third of learners in school at any one time.

8 July 2020

The Welsh Government announced additional funding of £29 million to provide extra staffing in order to support learners in schools from September 2020.

August 2020

Equivalent funding was given to school sixth forms and colleges under the guise of the RRRS grant or the FE catch-up grant respectively. This represented a 5% uplift overall for these providers for each student beginning their A level or vocational course at an FE college or sixth form.

September 2020

The Education Minister confirmed that the autumn term would start on 1 September and that schools and colleges that could accommodate all learners from the start of the term should do so. There was a period of flexibility in recognition that schools may want to focus on priority year groups, such as those new to secondary schools, those sitting exams next summer or those in reception classes. This flexibility would also allow up to a fortnight, for any planning and reorganisation.

October 2020

The First Minister announced a two-week coronavirus firebreak for Wales, beginning at 6pm on Friday 23 October and ending on Monday 9 November. This period covered the half-term holiday for maintained schools and colleges in Wales and the week commencing Monday 2 November 2020. In this week, the vast majority of learners in Years 9 and above continued their learning from home.

14 December 2020

All secondary schools and further education colleges moved to online teaching, with children of key workers and vulnerable learners able to attend for face-to-face learning.

The Welsh Government confirmed a flexible policy regarding the return of schools for the spring term; some schools could return fully by 6 January, others doing so by 11 January.

January 2021

The First Minister announced that schools and colleges in Wales would remain closed to most learners until after the February half term.

The First Minister extended the Alert level four lockdown for a further three weeks.

February 2021

The Welsh Government announced that there would be an extra £29 million for colleges, including £26.5 million to support learners on vocational learning programmes.

Some vocational learners returned to college after the half term break.

March 2021

Learners in qualifications years (Year 10 – Year 13) and more learners in colleges and training returned to onsite learning. Providers were offered flexibility for some learners in Year 10 and Year 12 to return. Secondary schools were also given the flexibility to provide learners in Years 7, 8 and 9 with the opportunity of a 'check-in' focused on support for wellbeing and readiness for a return to their onsite learning after Easter.

12 April 2021

All schools were back to face-to-face teaching. Further education colleges adopted a blended learning approach.

Appendix 3: Principles the Welsh Government set out for schools to guide their spending

The following principles were issued to schools to guide their spending of the RRRS grant. (Welsh Government, 2020a <https://gov.wales/recruit-recover-raise-standards-accelerating-learning-programme-html>)

Principle 1: Learners in Greatest Need: Affected Cohorts

The most affected cohorts currently appear to be:

1. Learners preparing for examinations in the forthcoming academic years 11, 12 and 13 (Note to Heads of schools with sixth forms – in addition to the resource referenced here, there is an uplift to the sixth form funding to meet the needs of Years 12 and 13 – the same principles apply to both sets of funding) who have relatively little time between returning to school and taking life-chance determining public examinations
2. Vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as defined by a range of approaches, but including the poorest children and families, learners with special educational needs, learners from black and minority ethnic communities and learners in Welsh medium schools who live in non-Welsh speaking households
3. Year 7, because of the disruption to the transition from primary to secondary schools

The cohort analysis above is in line with the findings of many other countries and territories with similar characteristics to Wales, has informed the allocation of funding, and will inform the priority groups we expect to be addressed by the work we do. We should note, though, that there will be individuals not in these groups who will need support, and it is an important principle that Head Teachers will decide which groups and individuals will get support.

Principle 2: The Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards Curriculum: Areas of Support Learners Should Receive

To achieve the ambitions we set out in Our National Mission (Welsh Government, 2017), curriculum reform remains our central priority for education in Wales. It is essential that all our work with the education system in the context of COVID-19 aligns with international best practice, which is also the basis of our curriculum reform proposals. Our focus for the coming year will be:

- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence within a broad and balanced curriculum – for the examination years, this will include higher order reading and writing skills, high level mathematics where relevant, and digital competence at the appropriate level and as relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications

- Development of independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to make accelerated progress by working more effectively alone and out of school
- Support and engagement through coaching – this in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need coaching and emotional support as well as support for examination preparation and skills

This focus will be particularly relevant for the priority cohorts. We will work closely with Qualifications Wales to ensure our approach to curriculum and learning is consistent with and promotes the credibility and validity of the 2021 exam series.

Principle 3: Growing Capacity: What the Funding is Designed to Provide

Our response to the situation is to dedicate financial resources to the creation of new capacity in the system. The investment amounts to some £29 million and will be enough to grow capacity in the system by the equivalent of 600 teachers and 300 Teaching Assistants. Alongside this, we will use our current investment in Professional Learning, digital infrastructure, connectivity, devices and content to enrich the experiences schools make available to learners. We do not want to place restrictions on Head Teachers in how they go about appointing and deploying this new capacity, so we recognise that:

- Schools may appoint teachers, Teaching Assistants and other roles in the school designed to provide coaching such as Youth Workers, in line with the school's understanding of its learners
- The new capacity may be full time or part time
- The new colleagues might work across more than one school
- Head Teachers may appoint new teachers to the school in order to release those who know their learners best to work with them to accelerate their progress
- There may be instances where a group of new colleagues is recruited to work across a whole cluster or collaborative partnership
- The skill sets of new colleagues will need to reflect the needs of groups and learners
- The delivery model within which new colleagues work will be specific to the needs of the school and its learners

Principle 4: Reducing Bureaucracy and Ensuring Transparency

The allocation of such a level of investment to a project at a time of severe financial stress across the education system and beyond means we need to ensure that we use the resources well. At the same time, we want to keep the paperwork to a minimum, so we are proposing...

- The school should set out what it intends to do with the resources in a simple way, indicating the number of learners included and an outline of the curriculum and staffing solution
- This should be agreed by the school's challenge advisor in the case of schools currently designated as requiring red and amber levels of support

- The intention should be signed off by the Governing Body and made available to the school's parents and community
- We will maintain a 'learning brief' as an education system, by sharing intelligence and insights in respect of the impact of the programme as it develops

Principle 5: The Principle of Collaboration

Regions, local authorities, universities and other partners

We want to encourage strategic education partners to collaborate in support of this work. We are already seeing examples of this emerging across the system, and these activities will provide further opportunities for the regions, Local Authorities, Universities, FE Colleges and other partners to support children, families and schools in returning to school.

School level collaboration

We want to encourage clusters and collaboratives of schools to pool their resources and achieve critical mass in growing capacity. This may include cross-phase collaboration, collaboration between schools in the same phase and collaboration based on partnership delivery in sixth forms.

Glossary

Catch-up grant	This was a grant offered to colleges during the pandemic with a view to mitigating the impact of the disruption to learning learners had suffered. The grant was to be spent on creating additional staffing capacity.
Colegau Cymru	An education charity which promotes the public benefit of further education in Wales. It also organises the professional networks for all 13 further education institutions in Wales.
License to practise courses	These are courses to allow learners meet prescribed standards of competence in line with legal (or statutory) requirements
Local authority	An organisation that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area
Qualifications Wales	This is a Welsh Government sponsored body, responsible for the recognition of awarding bodies and the review and approval of non-degree qualifications in Wales.
Regional consortium	There are four regional education consortia in Wales: GWE, ERW, The EAS, and CSC. These work with schools to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, providing a range of support which includes professional learning and intervention programmes.
RRRS grant	Recruit, recover, raise standards: the accelerating learning programme. This was a grant offered to schools during the pandemic to mitigate the impact of the disruption to learning learners had suffered. The grant was to be spent on creating additional staffing capacity.
Seren network	A network of regional hubs designed to support Wales' brightest sixth formers achieve their academic potential and gain access to leading universities
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Council: The examination board that serves Wales for A levels and GCSEs

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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