

Improving schools – executive summary



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Improving schools – executive summary

- Audience** This document is aimed at leaders throughout the education system within Wales, from schools, governing bodies and school staff unions to local authorities, diocesan authorities and regional consortia, through to government and national partners.
- Overview** The document is focused on the schools element of the education system. It provides an executive summary of *Improving schools* which sets out plans for improving the education system in Wales incorporating commitments made within the 'Teaching makes a difference' speech presented by the Minister for Education and Skills in February 2011 and the Schools Effectiveness Framework. The plan identifies the roles of all partners in the process of reform.
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- Additional copies** This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills



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Ministerial foreword

A good education is critical to better life chances and a commitment to achieving this has been an important part of the culture of modern Wales since devolution. Progress has been made in improving examination results at GCSE and A level and ensuring fewer young people leave school without a qualification, but there is still more to do to create an education system that is at least good for all learners. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 was a wake-up call to an education system in Wales that had become complacent, falling short of being consistently good and not delivering the outcomes our learners deserved. GCSE results had not kept up with other parts of the UK and Estyn inspections revealed standards were not as good as they should be in nearly a third of maintained schools. It was time to face up to the harsh truth: the education system in Wales needed reforming. My speech 'Teaching makes a difference' on 2 February 2011 set out these reforms. I stated that by 2015 I wanted Wales to be among the 20 top performing countries in PISA on reading.



We are reforming the system to achieve the three priorities of improving levels of literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of deprivation on these. Eighteen months on and implementation of some of the reforms is well underway and having an impact. For others, further policy development or legislative work is necessary. I felt the timing was right to pause and set out the course of reform through to 2015 via this implementation plan. The plan details the 'how' and 'when' of implementing the reforms. It is focused on the schools part of our education system: reform of two other critical parts, early years and post-16 via the new Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, will be covered elsewhere.

The plan is written for leaders throughout the system from schools, through local authorities and regional consortia, to government and national partners. A short version of the plan will be published for parents/carers as well as for children and young people. Setting this course will give clarity, provide an overview of all the reforms and set clear expectations. This does not mean that the plan becomes rigid and constraining: the plan will be kept alive and refreshed as we learn lessons from implementation along the way. We will provide updates on progress and changes to the plan via my speeches, national events and further publications. This plan will become the measure for all our performance.

The plan sets the way forward, incorporating within it both my 'Teaching makes a difference' speech and the School Effectiveness Framework. The introduction sets the scene for improvement and the plan starts at Section 1 with a focus on learning and teaching in schools at the heart of the reforms. Section 2 addresses school leadership and its importance

in setting high expectations for all learners and reinforcing the focus on learning and teaching. Section 3 sets out how the system as a whole should support and challenge schools to improve via collective capacity building. Finally, Section 4 clarifies the roles and responsibilities for implementation.

We have set an ambitious reform agenda and it requires everyone in the system to engage in it. If we all play our part, we can ensure that every learner gets the education they deserve, that all learners make the progress that they should and achieve their aspirations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leighton Andrews". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leighton Andrews AM
Minister for Education and Skills

Summary

The three priorities for improving educational outcomes for learners in Wales are to: improve literacy, improve numeracy and reduce the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes. Success against these priorities and this implementation plan will be measured by the proportion of 15-year-olds, regardless of whether they are e-FSM, who leave secondary school with Level 2 including English/Welsh and mathematics. Figure 7¹ shows data up to 2012, against the ambition to get to 65 per cent by 2015. To achieve our aim to be in the top 20 countries in PISA on reading by 2015 means aiming for this 65 per cent ambition and learners achieving the highest possible grades. Figure 7 shows a shortfall against this ambition and the reforms in this plan are intended to bridge the 'gap'. It will take the efforts of everyone in the system to help achieve this.

Figure 7: Secondary school performance up to 2012

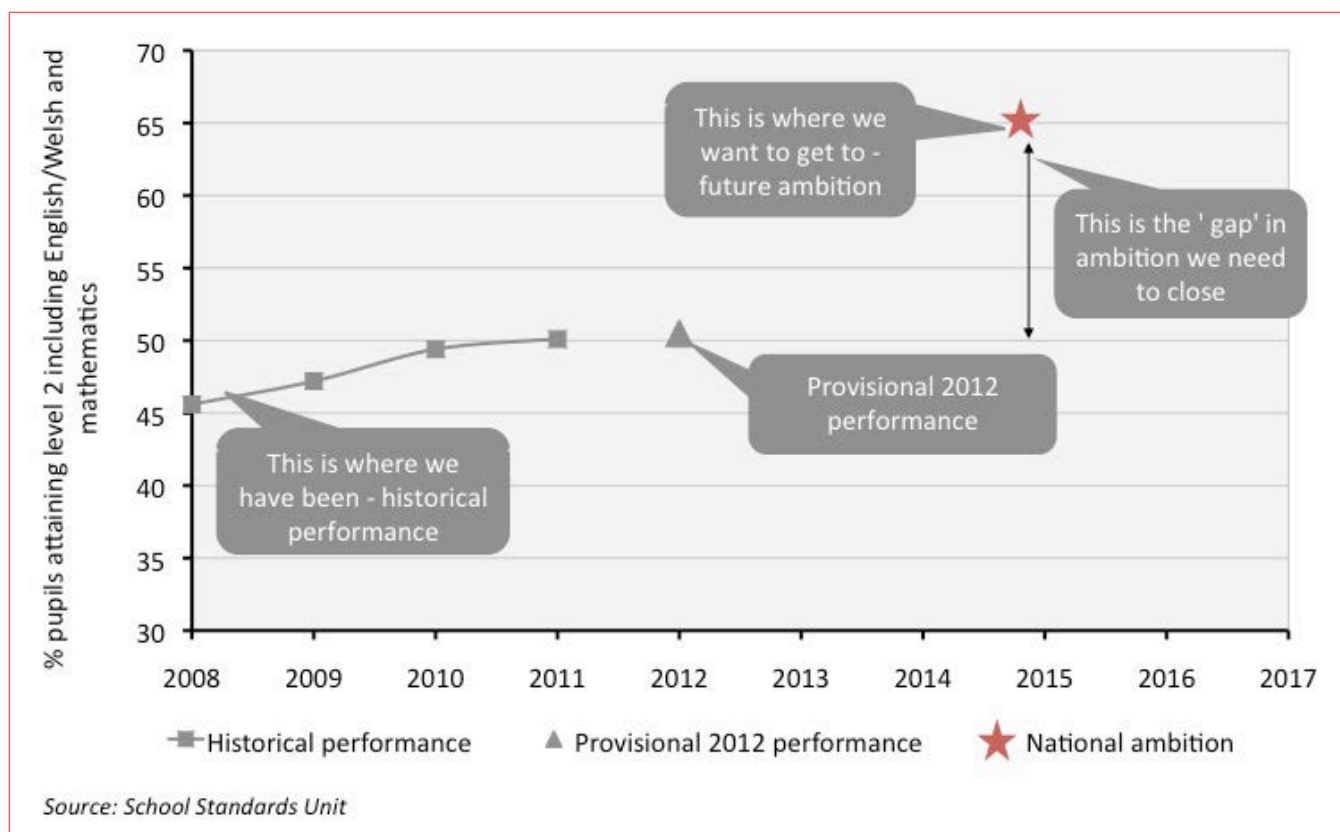


Figure 8 sets out the approach to reforming the school system, starting with the teacher, being the single most important factor in determining how much is learnt in the classroom. There are three main areas of priority **for improving the quality of learning and teaching**.

¹ Taken from the *Improving schools* implementation plan.

- **Improving the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy** – the National Literacy and Numeracy Programmes will set high expectations for what teachers and support staff should know, be able to do and what learners should learn in the core subjects. They will help make every teacher a teacher of literacy and numeracy. The investment in ICT will further support the sharing of good practice and innovation.
- **Supporting teacher professional development** – we will improve the quality of future teachers entering the profession through changes to teacher induction and a new Masters in Educational Practice (MEP) qualification. New training and practice development opportunities will support teachers and support staff to progress throughout their careers.
- **Strengthening our approaches to inclusion and safeguarding** – we will support vulnerable learners, learners from deprived backgrounds and those with additional needs so that all learners achieve their potential. These programmes will also have a particular focus on improving behaviour and attendance.

The focus on learning and teaching is reinforced through **effective leadership at all levels in schools** (the middle oval). Effective leadership at all levels in schools is essential to ensure that learning and teaching is of a consistently high quality and that the reforms in this plan are implemented successfully. Excellent leadership in schools requires a focus on priorities; setting high expectations for all learners; creating the right culture for improvement; communicating the vision and successes along the way; and building capacity and maintaining the focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching. To build leadership capacity across the system, this plan sets out three key priorities for improvement.

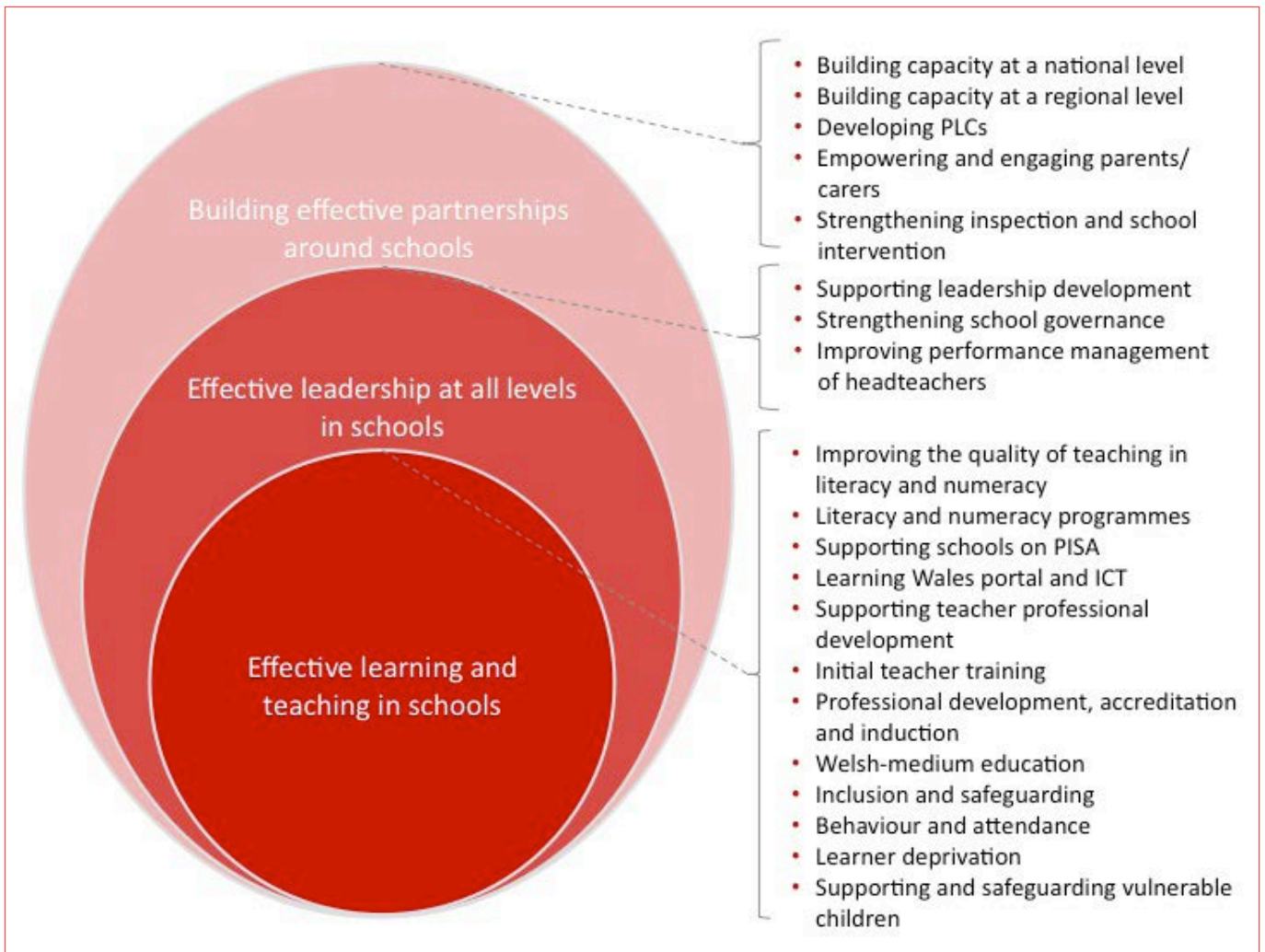
- **Supporting leadership development** – we will provide a more coherent and stretching programme of professional development for school leaders and ensure that this is integrated in the school development plan.
- **Strengthening school governance** – we will ensure governing bodies have the skills they need to be effective, and enable local authorities and school governing bodies to take forward structural options such as federation where this would strengthen schools and support good governance.
- **Improving the performance management of headteachers** – we will set high expectations for leadership roles through new standards.

Schools are the heart of the system and obviously the most important part of it. But **the relationships between schools, other local partners, local authorities, regional consortia, government and national partners are important for enabling all schools to improve and the whole system to work effectively**. Actions set out in this plan are therefore aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the key partnerships and relationships between schools and other partners engaged in leading school improvement, and cover five key priorities.

- **Building capacity at a national level** – we will continue to build capacity within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and have created the School Standards Delivery Division to help keep the focus on school improvement.
- **Building capacity at a regional level** – we will bring together resources and expertise in consortia and strengthen capacity to create an effective ‘middle tier’.
- **Developing professional learning communities** – we will support professional learning communities (PLCs) to focus on the key priorities and embed best practice.
- **Empowering and engaging with parents/carers** – we will improve the flow of information on school performance and support schools to engage with and develop strong partnerships with parents/carers.
- **Strengthening inspection and school intervention** – we will amend current legislation around school intervention and with Estyn explore options for the future inspection of regional consortia.

The approach to implementation in Wales is system-wide. Its effectiveness depends on being clear about roles and responsibilities and, importantly, creating strong links between them. DfES plays a system leader role in this approach to implementation, sets the priority and ambition, the policy framework, high expectations for implementation and the associated accountability mechanisms. Responsibility for implementation of the reforms to drive school improvement rests with schools themselves and schools working together. Regional consortia and local authorities, the ‘middle tier’, have the main role in enabling or supporting implementation and making the connections between DfES through to the classroom. DfES will only be hands-on with implementation and commission support where there is a national policy that might require new expertise, pace or standardisation across Wales or where there is an obvious need for building capacity or local provision is weak.

Figure 8: Reform at all levels of the school system²



² Taken from the *Improving schools* implementation plan.

Figure 10: High level timeline for achieving effective learning and teaching in schools³

	Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Spring 2014
Literacy and numeracy programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oct – Framework and test consultation ends ● Sep – National Numeracy Programme launched ● Sep – Disseminate catch-up guidance ● Sep – High-quality materials and resources launched on Learning Wales ● Oct – Publication of review of teacher assessment with policy development to follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → ● Jan – Framework and tests available ● Jan – Trial of numeracy tests ends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → ● May – Tests distributed to all schools and administered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → ● Sep – Literacy framework becomes statutory 	
PISA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nov – Publish INSET materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – Publish INSET materials 			
Learning Wales portal and ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – National Digital Learning Council starts ● Sep – Learning Wales launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jan – Digital leaders start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apr – Digital content repository in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – ICT professional development for teachers launches 	
Initial teacher training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Induction guidance and Masters is launched ● Sep – Regulations in place for induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nov – Review of Initial Teacher Training 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → ● Jul – Review ends and implementation of recommendations 	
Professional development			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apr – Induction for support staff 		
Welsh-medium education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oct – Introduction of the annual Welsh in Education grant to support implementation ● Sep – Review of Welsh Second Language in Key Stage 4 and new Ministerial Advice Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dec – Welsh in Education strategic plans introduced on voluntary basis 			
Behaviour and attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Identify effective practice for reducing exclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jan – Revised regulations for attendance data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apr – Regulations for fixed penalty notices introduced 		
Pupil deprivation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jan – Issue PDG guidance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oct – Individual development plan consultation ends 	
Safeguarding (and support)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – Range of guidance published 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – New resources for dyslexia on Learning Wales portal 	

³ Taken from the *Improving schools* implementation plan.

Figure 12: High level timeline for action to support effective leadership at all levels in schools⁴

	Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Spring 2014
Leadership development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Second round NPQH starts ● Oct – Leadership self-evaluation framework and support needs developed with school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feb – Lead practitioner schools launched ● Jan – Consultation on leadership component of school development plans 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Third round NPQH starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Implement component in school development plans
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Review the role of governors starts ● Oct – Consultation on regulations for federation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nov – Guidance published and regulations introduced for mandatory training ● Jan – Training starts ● Nov – Introduction of collaboration regulations ● Mar – Regulations introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – Report on review and preparation for any legislation needed 		
Performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – New regulations in use ● Sep – Training pack and model forms issued ● Sep to Jan – School leaders and system leaders implementing new arrangements 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jun to Oct – School leaders and system leaders reviewing progress and planning next year's cycle 		

⁴ Taken from the *Improving schools* implementation plan.

Figure 14: High level timeline for action to build effective partnerships around schools⁵

	Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Spring 2014
National capacity – DfES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Policy proposals on floor targets ● Dec – Stocktakes each term with consortia get underway and secondary banding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – School profiles launched 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Workshops on primary banding ● Dec – Secondary banding 	
Regional capacity Consortia and LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Consortia in place ● Sep – Recruitment complete and national/Estyn training starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dec – DfES work with consortia to test 'readiness' to implement new arrangements and provide support to build capacity ● Jan – Develop proposals for accreditation of the training and role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – Clarify policy direction for future regional service delivery 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jul – Develop proposals for some national deployment of system leaders
Professional learning communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – PLC coordinators in place ● Nov – Schools access PLC online through the Learning Wales portal 				
Parents/carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Model forms and policies developed and issued ● Sep – Test portal design for public data access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dec – All Wales data sets and underpinning raw data available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mar – Refine and launch portal 		
Inspection and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – Ongoing policy development to inform the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill 2012 ● Sep – Interim Executive Board regulations come into force 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sep – New statutory guidance on intervention consultation ● Sep – Regulations on timescale for response to Estyn reports 	

⁵ Taken from the *Improving schools* implementation plan.