



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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National school categorisation system update – changes to primary and secondary school categorisation September 2015

Introduction

In January 2015 a national school categorisation system was introduced in Wales. This system categorises schools according to the level of support that they require - showing the range from those that need significant support to the ones that are highly effective and who can become providers of such support. .

Working closely with the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) and the four regional consortia in Wales, a review of categorisation has been undertaken to ensure the process is robust, transparent and consistently applied across Wales.

The following changes to the national school categorisation system have now been agreed and will be implemented for this year for all schools. Primary categorisation now moves from a pilot phase into full implementation. Detailed updated guidance will be published in the new school year.

Changes to step one

Revised weightings for secondary school categorisation

	Current weighting	Proposed weighting
Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh first language and mathematics		
Overall performance during the previous three years	2	1.5
Performance of learners eligible for free schools meals (eFSM learners) during the previous three years	2	1.5
Relative progress (based on overall performance)	2	1.5
Performance set against free school meal (FSM) level of the school	2	3.5
Capped points score including English/Welsh first language and mathematics (new measure)		
Overall performance during the previous three years	2	1.5
eFSM learners' performance during the previous three years	2	1.5
Relative progress (based on overall performance)	2	1.5
Performance set against FSM level of the school	2	3.5

	Current weighting	Proposed weighting
5+ A*-A or equivalent (new measure)		
Overall performance during the previous three years	1	0.75
eFSM learners' performance during the previous three years	1	0.75
Relative progress (based on overall performance)	1	0.75
Performance set against FSM level of the school	1	1.75

The overall total weight in each group of indicators remains the same however the weighting is split to allow an increased weighting to the eFSM residual element and lower weightings to the other indicators. We have listened to feedback from schools and have worked with regional consortia representatives to ensure that contextual information is more fully considered.

Setting a three-year target for eFSM for secondary schools

In 2014, the average performance of schools in relation to eFSM learners achieving the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh first language and mathematics was used as a significant variable whilst considering the level of support required by a school. That figure was 27.2%. It is clear that if we are to make significant progress in Wales, the achievement of this group of pupils is of real importance.

A clear target for a three-year period will now be set, this will remain as a three year average in order to generate the step one data.

A school level target is set as follows:

2015 – 30%

2016 – 32%

2017 – 34%

Many schools are already well above these figures, but setting a three year minimum target will give schools a clear upfront target to work towards and remove any concerns in relation to changing goal posts over the coming years. It will also continue to highlight the key priority of closing the gap and improving outcomes for eFSM learners with the aim of achieving the 37% target detailed in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. In order to support this, we will move the assessment of attainment of eFSM from **step two** (improvement group) to **step one** (standards group) in the secondary categorisation model.

Where performance of eFSM learners who achieve the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh first language and mathematics is below the agreed eFSM target (30%, 32%, 34%) the schools standards group defaults to, at most, a 3 on the standards axis. This replaces the previous approach where the improvement group defaulted to a C on the leadership axis.

In addition, if a school achieves less than the eFSM target then it cannot be deemed to be categorised as a green school. This is an area of its work that requires support.

Approach for new and amalgamated schools – primary and secondary school categorisation

For amalgamated schools – data will be produced by Welsh Government for step one but not published for the first full year of a school's operation.

Step two and step three will be carried out by the regional consortia using step one to inform the process. Step two and step three will be published.

Year two of operation will generate a published step one which in line with the performance measures and weightings used will include an element of historic data within the calculation. It will be weighted in favour of the most recent year but will still cover a three-year period.

For new schools – year two (where end of phase/assessment data is available) will generate a published step one based on two years of performance.

Changes to step two and step three

Step two and step three of the categorisation model have been led by the regional consortia. In order to ensure that the system is transparent and consistently applied across Wales the ADEW Quality Standards Group has reviewed their supplementary guidance and have made the following refinements:

- Clarified and strengthened the approach to regional moderation including the development of nationally agreed documentation to support the process.
- Strengthened quality assurance procedures at a regional and national level.
- Developed a nationally agreed process for use where a school raises disagreement with either the step two or step three judgement. All such cases will be referred to the relevant regional moderation board.
- Developed a national verification process. This group will be chaired by a lead director and will consist of the following members:
 - four nominated regional lead moderators
 - Welsh Government representative (as observer)
 - trade union representative (as observer)
- Reviewed the rare exceptions and developed lines of enquiry for challenge advisers to use to ensure that the process for determining whether or not a school should be judged to be “a rare exception” is robust and applied consistently across Wales.

- Revised the criteria for leadership and teaching and learning to inform judgements about improvement capacity at step two and to support school self-evaluation.
- Revisited and simplified the support category definitions which now clearly highlight the level of challenge adviser support a school could receive when placed in each category.