

Review to identify more able and talented provision across Wales

December 2015



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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Related documents

Meeting the Challenge: Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils Welsh Assembly Government
Circular No: 006/2008 (2008)

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Methodology	4
3. The identification of MAT learners	8
4. The actions taken to support and challenge MAT learners	18
5. Tracking and monitoring	31
6. Conclusions	34
Appendix A: Comparative approaches to MAT learners across the UK	38
Appendix B: Implementation of Estyn recommendations	40
Appendix C: Schools' e-survey	45
Appendix D: Main Review interview guide for special schools and PRUs	51
Appendix E: Bibliography	52

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2014 the Welsh Government commissioned Markit Training and Consultancy Ltd to undertake a review to identify more able and talented (MAT) provision across Wales.
- 1.2 The aims of the review were to:
- establish the strategies used by schools, further education institutions (FEIs) and local authorities (LAs) to identify, support, challenge, monitor and track MAT learners to ensure they reach their potential; and
 - identify if there is anything further which could be done to ensure the identification and nurturing of MAT learners.
- 1.3 The scope of the review included learners in maintained school settings within the 3-16 age range, including primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units, those in sixth forms plus learners attending FEIs up to the age of 19 years. The standards, outcomes, quality and effectiveness of MAT provision were not within the scope of this review.

Context

- 1.4 In Wales the term 'more able and talented' is used to describe learners who require enriched and extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities in one or more areas. In every education setting there will be a group of learners who require greater breadth and depth of learning activities than is normally provided for the usual cohort of learners. For the purposes of this review, the term MAT learner included those with abilities or talents which are academic, practical, creative and artistic.
- 1.5 In 2008 the Welsh Government, in collaboration with the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) Cymru, produced *Meeting the Challenge - Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils*¹. This guidance provided advice on meeting the educational needs of MAT learners and was distributed to all schools and LAs in Wales. *Meeting the Challenge* introduced a consistent approach to addressing the needs of MAT learners, and provided a framework for the development of whole school MAT provision. Schools with well-established MAT provision could also choose to be assessed for the NACE Cymru Challenge Award, based on these Quality Standards.
- 1.6 In 2010 'A curriculum for all learners'² provided specific advice on meeting the needs of MAT learners stating:

'The best provision for more able and talented learners is made by extending that which is available to all learners'.

¹ The 'Meeting the Challenge' guidance document was aimed at maintained school settings, not FEIs.

² *A curriculum for all learners; Guidance to support teachers of learners with additional learning needs* (Welsh Government, March 2010)

- 1.7 Since September 2010, Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, has required schools to evaluate the quality of their provision for MAT learners. The expectation is that schools should ensure that:
- the range and quality of teaching approaches adopted are successful in providing demanding work to meet the needs of all learners;
 - work is suitably challenging for MAT learners; and
 - materials and methods of delivery are suitably differentiated.
- 1.8 In June 2011 and June 2012 Estyn reported on the support provided for MAT learners in primary³ and secondary schools⁴. Recommendations for improvement were provided for schools and LAs. Based on the findings of our review, a brief assessment of the extent to which schools and LAs have implemented recommendations from Estyn is provided in Appendix 2.

³ *Supporting more able and talented pupils in primary schools; Estyn June 2011*

⁴ *Supporting more able and talented pupils in secondary schools; Estyn June 2012*

2. Methodology

This section outlines the methods used to collect the review evidence. The research consisted of two elements - a Scoping Stage and the Main Review.

Scoping Stage

- 2.1 The key purpose was to develop and test fieldwork methodologies by undertaking one-to-one semi-structured interviews with strategic stakeholders and a small sample of senior leaders in schools, FEIs and LAs. The methods used were qualitative in nature and included a literature review, which informed the development of the interview questions.
- 2.2 The sample of strategic stakeholder organisations included:
 - all four regional consortia;
 - four local authorities; and
 - national organisations including Estyn, Governors Wales, Arts Council of Wales, Sports Wales and NACE Cymru.
- 2.3 A geographically and linguistically balanced sample of education settings⁵ consisted of:
 - eight primary schools - 2 per regional consortium;
 - four secondary schools - 1 per regional consortium;
 - one special school;
 - one pupil referral unit; and
 - three further education institutions⁶ including Wales' only publicly funded sixth form college.
- 2.4 Senior representatives of stakeholder organisations and education settings were invited to participate in the review. Fieldwork took place between 16 September and 27 October 2014. In total 32 interviews were completed generating a wealth of detailed information.
- 2.5 The review team also met with Welsh Government officials, NACE Cymru representatives and consulted with school and FE practitioners at relevant All-Wales network meetings.

Main Review

- 2.6 Fieldwork methods were adapted in response to Scoping Stage findings and had three distinct elements:
 - an e-survey with a sample of nursery, infant, primary and secondary schools;
 - semi-structured, one-to-one telephone interviews with special school and PRU senior leaders, FEI senior managers, LA officials and stakeholders;

⁵ The schools' sample included five settings that had received the NACE Cymru Challenge Award.

⁶ There are 15 FEIs in Wales including designated institutions, but for this review it was the 13 FE colleges which were interviewed.

- focus groups with FE and HE learners, and school governors.

Schools

- 2.7 An e-survey was the most appropriate methodology for collecting information from school leaders. Interview questions, successfully tested during the Scoping Stage, were adapted and extended to create a bilingual e-survey for nursery, infant, primary and secondary settings.
- 2.8 The school population was divided for sampling into three sub-sets, namely nursery/infant, primary and secondary. The sample for each subset was identified using the following relevant criteria:
- language of instruction - English, Welsh, bilingual;
 - geographical location; by regional consortium area and secondly by local authority; and
 - school banding for secondary schools.
- 2.9 Using this approach, geographically and linguistically balanced samples of schools were developed for the e-survey. In total 124 schools were contacted, an approximate 8% sample of all maintained nursery, infant, primary and secondary schools (n = 1,591). These included:
- 8 nursery and infant schools with nursery provision; approximately 10% of such schools (nursery n = 17 and infant schools n = 59);
 - 68 primary schools; approximately 5% of all primary schools (n = 1,357);
 - 48 secondary schools; approximately 23% of all secondary schools; (n = 213)⁷.
- 2.10 Sample schools were invited to participate in the Main Review e-survey. Schools, rather than individual staff members were the primary sampling unit and a single response was sought. Typically the headteacher or the MAT Coordinator completed the e-survey on behalf of their school.
- 2.11 The e-survey was available for sample schools to access for a period of 6 weeks, from 19 January until 27 February 2015. The e-survey was not available to schools that were not part of the sample. In total 91 schools completed the e-survey; 5 nursery and infant schools; 48 primary schools and 38 secondary schools; representing a 73% response rate. This represents approximately 6% of the total population of schools in Wales. An additional five partially completed school e-surveys were discarded and responses were not included in the data analysis.
- 2.12 A different approach was used to survey special schools and PRUs. Each setting was sent an interview guide by email in advance of an interview which was subsequently carried out by telephone, or in some cases face-to-face. Completed interview notes were emailed to the interviewee who had an opportunity to quality assure the field notes.

⁷ Source: *Pupil Level Annual School Census returns, Stats Wales*

- 2.13 The Main Review focused on special school settings with a greater proportion of learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) as opposed to settings with learners with more profound and multiple learning difficulties as EBD settings were more likely to have learners who require targeted MAT provision. Four special schools, 1 per regional consortium were interviewed, representing approximately 10% of all special schools (n = 42).
- 2.14 Four PRUs representing different regional consortia and age ranges were selected. Three PRUs participated in telephone one-to-one interviews, representing approximately 10% of PRUs (n = 38).

Further Education Institutions

- 2.15 The remaining ten FE colleges, not involved in the scoping stage, were invited to participate in the Main Review, resulting in telephone or face-to-face interviews being undertaken with senior representatives of all ten colleges.

Local Authorities

- 2.16 The remaining 18 LAs, not involved in the scoping stage, were invited to participate in the Main Review. Follow-up telephone contact established the most appropriate officer to participate. One-to-one interviews were undertaken with senior representatives of 17 local authorities.

Stakeholders

- 2.17 The focus for the Main Review was to consult with stakeholder organisations more directly involved in talent identification and providing challenge for MAT learners. Sample sets were developed consisting of stakeholder organisations covering the arts, sports and curriculum areas. Each organisation was invited to participate in the Main Review. In total 22 interviews were completed, generating detailed feedback. As part of its submission, Potential Plus UK⁸ undertook a survey of parent members from Wales. In total 26 parents responded.

Focus groups

- 2.18 FE MAT learners and first year HE learners who were elite athletes were identified as being well placed to feedback on their MAT-related experiences in primary, secondary and post-16 settings across Wales. Five learner focus groups were held; four with FE learners plus one focus group with first year HE learners. In total, feedback was received from 52 learners (44 FE learners and 8 HE learners), who had previously attended 36 secondary schools across Wales.

⁸ Potential Plus UK is a national membership organisation that supports children and young people with 'high learning potential' and their parents and carers

2.19 Feedback was also obtained from eight school governors, mostly parent governors, who participated in a focus group at the Governors Wales Central South Consortium Governor Conference. These governors represented eight different primary and secondary schools.

Terminology

2.20 Schools' findings in this report are based on responses from schools that completed the Main Review e-survey. The words and phrases in the left hand column below are those that have been used to describe quantitative findings. The phrases in the right hand column are the more precise explanations.

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

2.21 While qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology for aspects of this review, it is important to bear in mind that it utilises small samples that are chosen to ensure representation of a range of views. Qualitative research is designed to be illustrative and as such the qualitative data included in this report are not statistically significant; this needs to be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

3. The identification of MAT learners

This section seeks to:

- identify how schools, FEIs, LAs and Regional Consortia in Wales interpret more able and talented;
- examine how schools, LAs and Regional Consortia use Welsh Government MAT guidance to inform their strategic planning; and
- establish the actions taken by schools, FEIs, LAs, Regional Consortia and other organisations to identify MAT learners.

Schools

- 3.1 Nearly all nursery, infant, primary and secondary schools, special schools and PRUs that took part in the review were aware of *Meeting the Challenge* and have used the quality standards to underpin their MAT provision.
- 3.2 *Meeting the Challenge* provides a definition of more able and talented and encourages schools to come to a working definition within their own setting. Many schools have their own interpretation of more able and talented, with a majority having an all-encompassing definition that refers to academic ability specifically and to talent more broadly.
- 3.3 Schools defined more able learners as those achieving above the expected outcomes for their age and/or stage of learning in one or more curriculum area. A minority of schools referred to a specific percentage of learners that they identified as more able, typically 20%. The range of percentages given however varied considerably, with the lowest example being 10% and the highest 40+%.
- 3.4 When defining more able learners, a minority of schools sought to quantify pupil achievement using national performance benchmarks, identifying MAT learners as working at least one Foundation Phase outcome or National Curriculum level above the end of phase/key stage expectation, the so called 'expected level plus one'⁹. A few schools also quantified ability in terms of assessment scores in National Numeracy and Reading tests and Cognitive Ability Tests. Typically, learners achieving a standardised assessment score of approximately 115+ were described as being more able.
- 3.5 Only a minority of schools distinguished between 'more able' and 'exceptionally able'. Exceptionally able learners were defined as those working at least two Foundation Phase outcomes or two National Curriculum levels above the end of phase/key stage expectation in one or more curriculum areas, i.e. 'expected level plus two'. A few schools also specified a percentage of learners that they identified as exceptionally able, typically 2% of pupils.

⁹ For example, learners in Year 2 who are achieving at Foundation Phase Outcome 6; learners in Year 6 who are achieving at National Curriculum Level 5 or above; learners in Year 9 who are achieving at National Curriculum Level 6 or above.

- 3.6 Interpretations of talent were very consistent, being defined by schools to include learners who demonstrate innate skill and flair in creative, cultural or sporting contexts, either within or outside school. The personal and social qualities of MAT learners such as their leadership skills were also recognised.
- 3.7 Nearly all school leaders reported that they have a MAT policy and/or Teaching and Learning policy, which sets out the whole school strategy. Many reported that they also have a MAT Action Plan, which identifies short term priorities for developing MAT provision, and with very few exceptions, they have a designated member of staff responsible for coordinating MAT provision. MAT also features, either discretely or as an element of a broader priority, in the School Development Plans (SDP) of most schools. Of examples of SDP priorities given, around half referred specifically to improving the academic performance of MAT learners. Very few schools reported that they strategically plan for the development of talent.
- 3.8 In primary schools, SDP priorities typically relate to increasing the percentage of MAT pupils who achieve outcome 5+ at the end of Foundation Phase or achieve above the expected level for their age i.e. Level 5+, in end-of-key stage 2 assessments, mainly in the core subjects of English, Welsh, science and mathematics. A few primary schools also specified targets for MAT learners beyond age-related expectations in relation to Literacy and Numeracy Framework outcomes and to their performance in National Reading and Numeracy tests.
- 3.9 Secondary schools reported similar attainment-related priorities and targets. For example, to increase the percentage of MAT pupils who achieve above the expected level for their age, i.e. Level 6+, in end of key stage 3 assessments in core subjects; to increase the percentage of learners achieving the level 2+ inclusive threshold at the end of key stage 4, and to increase the number of learners achieving A or A* grades at GCSE and A Level.

'Our priorities are identified in a two year MAT action plan which is discussed as a standing agenda item at staff meetings. This provides a structured way of monitoring progress, and helps with identification and sharing of information about individual pupils, particularly talents they may be developing outside school.'

Primary School Headteacher

- 3.10 Most schools reported they have a consistent whole school approach for identifying MAT learners, which their staff apply with confidence. Examples of identification strategies used include:

Table 1	
Identification Strategy Used (n = 91)	Response (%)
Formative assessments by teachers	95
Teacher nomination	94
End of Foundation Phase/Key Stage summative assessment data	87
National Reading and Numeracy test outcomes	86
Moderation of pupils' work	71
Nomination by other professionals e.g. peripatetic music teachers	63
Subject specific criteria	63
Commercial test scores	53
Parental/carer nomination	52
Self-nomination	23
Peer nomination	21
Source: Main Review schools e-survey	

- 3.11 Schools reported using a wide range of complementary identification strategies to ensure that the abilities and talents of pupils are recognised. External benchmarks of pupil performance contribute evidence to supplement teachers' formative assessment of learners' abilities. Around half of schools also reported using pupils' commercial test scores as a strategy to identify ability and learning potential. Such tests are used to assess pupils' abilities in reading, comprehension and spelling, mathematical skills and concepts, verbal and non-verbal reasoning, and other aspects of cognitive ability.
- 3.12 Evidence indicates that teachers make qualitative judgements, often using subject-specific MAT criteria, to identify talented learners. Schools also use moderation of learners' work, lesson observations, book scrutiny and learning walks to ensure a consistent approach to identification is adopted.
- 3.13 Participation in the identification process by learners themselves is less common and is only reported to happen in a minority of schools. Parental input, in particular for the identification of talent by means of questionnaires, surveys and informal referrals, is taken into consideration in around half of schools, with nursery, infant and primary schools more likely to seek parental nominations.

- 3.14 Most schools reported that they have a MAT register and use whole school tracking systems to record assessment data and other information about MAT learners. Such systems are complemented with teachers' informal notes and on-going observations, which ensures that learners' hidden abilities and talents are identified. Most schools use the range of MAT-related information gathered to identify the specific strengths, talents, interests, learning and support needs of pupils. This includes identifying those MAT pupils who are not achieving their full learning potential.

At Penygraig Junior School the whole school ethos recognises academic prowess and talents in all learners and the MAT policy advocates 'Challenge for All' regardless of ability. The school collects information about each child's interests and skills through parent and children questionnaires on an annual basis and combines this with formative and summative assessment information to give a profile of each child. A MAT register is compiled and individual action plans provided for any exceptional learners who may be working two levels above the average level for their age.

To ensure greater curriculum challenge, a MAT-focused teaching and learning model has been introduced. Termly 'Shine Days' are also planned to provide learners with enrichment activities; either to develop and apply skills and talents or to act as a taster session whereby children try out a new activity to see if they have a talent they would like to develop further. On 'Shine Days' learners are set into ability groups across Key Stage 2 so that Year 6 MAT learners may work alongside MAT children from Year 3. The mixed age groups give a different dimension, mutual respect is fostered and the younger children accelerate their learning by imitating their peers.

The change of pedagogy has had real impact, resulting in increased engagement and enthusiasm for independent learning. The school also reports that level 5 outcomes at the end-of-Key Stage 2 have improved.

- 3.15 MAT information is shared primarily within the school, with colleagues and individual MAT learners. A majority of schools also share MAT-related learner information with parents. The sharing of MAT-related information with LAs and regional consortia is much less common.

Table 2	
Sharing of MAT information (n = 91)	Response (%)
Other practitioners in school	92
Individual MAT pupils	74
Parents/carers	63
The local authority	16
The regional consortium	8
Source: Main Review schools e-survey	

- 3.16 Learners were aware of the term 'more able and talented' and the majority had been identified as MAT during their time in primary or secondary school. The methods used to communicate that information to individuals varied considerably; subject teachers told some, their form tutor or pastoral staff told others and in other schools, all MAT learners were informed as a discrete group. For those talented at sport, being selected for school and county representative teams was the main way of identification. Similarly talented musicians were selected to take part in school and local authority choirs and orchestras. Many learners reported that being identified publicly as MAT at school was not necessarily a positive experience as they wanted to avoid being perceived as being different by their peers.
- 3.17 Most schools reported that they transfer pupil attainment data and share other information about MAT learners both within school and to other settings at key transition points. However, variation in interpretation of more able and talented and inconsistency in identification strategies between settings is reported to lead to misperceptions when information is shared about individual MAT learners at transition. Estyn, LAs, regional consortia, and NACE cited inconsistency in teacher assessment as contributing to a lack of confidence in MAT transition data.

Caldicot School, an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive, has a successful transition programme for more able and talented learners. Learners are identified by their primary teachers who liaise regularly with the Caldicot School MAT Coordinator by email and at termly meetings. Year 5 and Year 6 MAT learners from the eight partner primary schools then visit Caldicot School every month where they take part in enrichment activities focussing on different curriculum areas. Sixth form MAT learners act as positive role models, planning and delivering parts of the transition sessions under the guidance of the MAT Coordinator. This provides an opportunity to gain experience for those interested in a career in teaching and evidence to enrich their university applications.

MAT learners from partner primary schools benefit from working alongside peers of a similar ability and are introduced to new subjects taught at secondary level e.g. Spanish. The transition programme also enables MAT learners to be identified prior to entry ensuring suitable challenge is planned.

- 3.18 Special schools provided varied feedback on the relevance of *Meeting the Challenge*; in two schools the guidance has provided a useful framework for planning to meet the needs of individual learners and has been used to develop the whole school approach. Conversely, three schools, possibly due to the nature of their learners, expressed the view that the guidance is not directly relevant for special schools.
- 3.19 Special schools interpret more able and talented in a very inclusive way. Whilst learning activities are planned to meet the full range of learners' needs and interests, individuals who show ability above their expected level in a given curriculum area/or other aspect of learning are identified and nurtured. Special

schools also place a great emphasis on developing the full range of talents of individual learners.

- 3.20 MAT features as an element of a broader priority in the SDP of three of the special schools interviewed. Typically special schools adopt a person-centred planning approach to identify learners' diverse individual strengths and talents. MAT learners undergo baseline assessments on-entry to identify their specific learning and support needs. A wide range of pupil performance data is also used to inform the identification of potential MAT learners including:
- formative assessments against Performance (P) scales¹⁰, Foundation Phase outcomes and National Curriculum level descriptors;
 - Literacy and Numeracy Framework outcomes;
 - Fischer Family Trust data¹¹; and
 - commercial test scores.

Additional evidence is provided by self-identification and parent nomination during the annual review and through initial discussions on entry to the school.

- 3.21 All learners have individual education plans (IEPs) which identify their specific talents and abilities. Following input from school staff, parents, health professionals and therapists, targets are set for each learner. Whole school assessment systems allow staff to track the progress of MAT learners and IEPs are updated half termly. Special schools reported that they have well established links with mainstream schools and, where appropriate, with their local FEI and have developed their own setting specific ways, such as transition plans, for sharing information about MAT learners with other settings.
- 3.22 In contrast, MAT does not feature in the SDP of most PRUs, for whom the initial priority is to address the behavioural, social and emotional needs of each learner. As ability and talent may be masked by additional learning needs, learner behaviour and personal circumstances, typically, baseline assessments are undertaken as part of the on-entry profiling process. Once the abilities and talents of each learner are captured, needs are identified, and individual programmes developed with learning, social and emotional targets recorded in the learner's IEP. Information about a pupil's higher learning potential or specific talents is shared with parents informally by means of termly reports and during formal IEP review meetings where progress is discussed.
- 3.23 Other sources of information used to identify MAT learners in PRUs include educational psychologist reports and pupil performance data provided by the mainstream school. PRUs reported that they attempt to work in partnership with mainstream schools to support MAT learners during key transition phases, however the quality of working practices in terms of both referral into the PRU and reintegration into school, is reported to be highly variable. Consequently, the identification of MAT learners may be hampered by the lack of, or delayed

¹⁰ Performance scales are used to report attainment for learners with additional learning needs who are working below level 1 of the National Curriculum.

¹¹ Fischer Family Trust (FFT) provides data and analyses which are used by teachers to inform the setting of aspirational targets for learners.

arrival of, pupil profile information from the previous learning setting. In more effective examples consistent local authority referral and reintegration processes exist.

Further Education Institutions

- 3.24 As *Meeting the Challenge* only applies to schools, most FEIs have developed their own interpretation of more able and talented that typically covers the full spectrum of ability and talent.

'We interpret MAT as those learners who are excelling in their chosen programme of study whether vocational, academic, artistic or creative. Excelling does not necessarily mean 'high flying academically' – it can be those who demonstrate a particular ability which could be further developed.'

FEI Director of Curriculum and Learning

- 3.25 In most FEIs more able learners are seen as those studying traditional academic A level subjects, whereas talented learners are more likely to be perceived to be those taking vocational options and studying the creative A level subjects.
- 3.26 MAT features in the strategic planning of a majority of FEIs, generally relating to raising standards and supporting learners to achieve their potential. Around a half of the examples given referred to improving the academic performance of MAT learners in level 2 and level 3 qualifications with detailed indicators given such as targets for improving outcomes in terms of the percentage of A/A* grades achieved. A minority of FEIs reported that they have specific annual targets to increase the number of progressions to Russell Group universities¹².
- 3.27 Although MAT features in the faculty planning of many FEIs, they do not have a consistent whole college approach to the identification of the full range of MAT learners. Usually course tutors and/or admissions staff review the qualification profiles of incoming students. MAT learners enrolling to study Advanced Level subjects tend to be identified based on their academic profile. Some FEIs use a college-specific benchmark, such as a given proportion of A/A* GCSE grades to identify MAT learners. MAT learners aspiring to Russell Group universities and medicine courses are identified via their on-entry grades, interviews and through tutorials. As identification processes focus on the levels at which learners are functioning on-entry, some FEIs also undertake baseline skills diagnostic assessments with new learners to identify learning potential.
- 3.28 FE managers reported that MAT learners in practical and creative vocational areas are not identified in the same way as those following Advanced level courses. As GCSE profiles do not necessarily provide a reliable indication of ability and talent, creative learners are also identified from portfolios of work,

¹² The leading research intensive universities in the United Kingdom.

auditions, personal statements and liaison with school staff. Talented sports people are identified by interview and liaison with school staff. Vocational learners with course specific practical skills, talents and aptitudes are identified once they begin studying their chosen course. Staff then ensure that MAT learners have enrichment opportunities and challenge built into their programmes of study. MAT learners agreed that being identified as MAT in a FE setting is generally a positive experience and they were satisfied with the additional support provided to help them achieve their potential.

- 3.29 Qualifications on-entry and initial baseline assessment results are used to create a profile, an electronic individual learning plan (e-ILP) for each learner. The systems used, such as the A Level Information System (ALIs), provide predictive data and value-added analyses to produce target aspirational grades for each learner in each subject studied. In colleges where such systems are used, they enable staff to identify MAT learners and to upload target grades onto the e-ILP which is updated by the learner and staff. One-to-one tutorials provide an on-going means of identification of additional abilities and talents as programmes progress.
- 3.30 All FEIs that took part in the main review (n = 10) reported that staff are confident in their ability to identify MAT learners. However, the tendency to distinguish MAT FE learners as either academic or vocational is identified as an issue by FE managers who feel that there is a need to further develop more holistic MAT identification criteria to better recognise the talents and abilities of vocational MAT learners.
- 3.31 FEIs reported that the effectiveness of partnership working with schools to support MAT learners during transition is highly variable and is generally an area for development. Even where relationships are based on feeder secondary schools e.g. sixth form colleges and sixth form centres within tertiary colleges, the transfer of quality information about individual learner achievement and talents is inconsistent.

Regional Consortia¹³ and Local Authorities

- 3.32 All regional consortia are aware of *Meeting the Challenge* but in most cases the guidance has not influenced their work with schools. Whilst aware of the wider interpretation of MAT learners to include talent in its broadest sense, the key priority for regional consortia is improving academic outcomes for all learners. Regional consortia focus less on the specific identification and development of talent.
- 3.33 Challenge advisers have regular contact with schools and this is the forum where the effectiveness of MAT provision, including the identification and progress of MAT learners, is raised, typically as a part of a broader discussion

¹³ Regional 'school improvement' consortia were established to work on behalf of local authorities to lead, orchestrate and co-ordinate the improvement in the performance of schools and education of young people. However local authorities retain the statutory responsibility for schools and school improvement.

around pupil attainment. Challenge advisers focus on improvement in academic performance. They also discuss MAT-related recommendations identified in individual school inspection reports during their work to support the implementation of Post Inspection Action Plans.

'If MAT provision is an issue then the challenge adviser will look at challenging this and will help the school to establish appropriate strategies and tools to improve standards for MAT learners.'

Lead Challenger Adviser

- 3.34 All LAs are aware of *Meeting the Challenge* and it has been used by many to inform their strategic planning for MAT learners. Other sources of guidance also reported to be used include:
- Welsh Government guidance documents that refer to MAT learners;
 - Estyn MAT supplementary guidance;
 - individual school inspection report findings; and
 - NACE Cymru materials and Challenge Award accreditation criteria.
- 3.35 MAT features, often as an element of a broader priority, in the strategic planning of the majority of LAs. Typically, priorities address the promotion of high quality teaching and learning to meet the needs of all learners. The emphasis is on improving academic performance with targets for raising standards focusing on increasing the proportion of learners that achieve above their expected level at all summative assessment points. LAs focus much less on the identification and development of learners' talents.
- 3.36 Most LAs adopt the MAT definition provided in *Meeting the Challenge* or definitions provided by other organisations such as NACE Cymru. Around a half of LAs have developed and disseminated MAT guidance to schools. A minority of LAs reported that they have a specific up-to-date MAT strategy, policy or action plan.
- 3.37 Many LAs (n = 14 out of 17) that took part in the main review reported that their staff are confident in their ability to support schools to identify MAT learners. School-level pupil performance data is used to develop a clearer understanding with headteachers of the need to provide greater depth and breadth of learning opportunities to enable MAT learners to achieve their potential. Information about learners' talents is not included in LA data analysis processes.
- 3.38 A majority of LAs provided positive feedback about the effectiveness of school-to-school transition arrangements. However, most LAs acknowledged that the sharing of information about MAT learners during the transition from schools to FEIs is an area for development.

- 3.39 Prior to the introduction of regional working, the majority of LAs had a designated officer with lead responsibility for MAT. Currently, as regional working evolves, there is inconsistency in the way in which MAT provision is managed at both regional consortia and LA level. LA senior managers acknowledge that practice in terms of providing MAT advice to schools is not always as systematic as it might be.

'There needs to be greater consistency across the LA and regional consortium so that schools understand the definition, know what provision and resources are available and what is expected of them. As a LA, we need to establish better relationships with the regional consortium. It is important that the LA, regional consortium and challenge advisers are giving the same message to schools about MAT provision.'

Local Authority Head of School Improvement

Other interested parties

- 3.40 Many stakeholders have a specific interest in talent identification and development in a sporting, creative or musical context, and consequently they define more able and talented learners in those terms.

'We interpret MAT as those young people who are actively involved in music, dance and theatre at local and regional levels who demonstrate qualities, aptitudes and skills that can be developed at a higher and more challenging level.'

National Youth Arts Wales (NYAW)

- 3.41 The degree to which stakeholder organisations are involved in the identification of MAT learners varies according to the nature of their programmes. In many cases, the identification of MAT learners takes place at school or college. For example, some arts organisations work on a recommendation basis, relying on teachers to provide examples of learners' work who display talent in the visual arts. Similarly, LAs nominate learners who display talent and ability in creative writing to become members of local Writing Squads¹⁴. More typically national arts stakeholder organisations hold regional and national auditions to identify talented young people who are subsequently invited to take part in specialist programmes.
- 3.42 Sporting organisations reported that they have local, regional and national structures in place to identify individuals to participate in their talent development programmes. In some cases initial identification of MAT learners takes place at school, whereas sporting organisations that do not work directly with schools identify talented young people through club networks and during

¹⁴ Writing Squads have been developed by Literature Wales in association with local authorities. Held mostly on Saturdays or after school hours, the aim is to introduce primary and secondary learners aged between 9-16 who are gifted writers, in both English and Welsh, to some of Wales' leading writers, and teachers of writing. <http://www.writingsquads.org>

competitions, with the most talented individuals being invited to join regional and national squads.

4 The actions taken to support and challenge MAT learners

This section describes:

- the actions taken by schools, FEIs, LAs, Regional Consortia and other organisations to support and challenge MAT learners from the point of identification and how these are funded;
- the partnerships schools and FEIs have with other organisations; and
- the ways by which information and support is offered to parents of MAT learners.

Schools

- 4.1 Most schools (91%) reported that their staff are confident in their ability to support MAT learners, with around half reporting that they provide specific pastoral support, mainly small group or individual mentoring provided by the MAT Coordinator. Other examples include Learning Coach support for 14-19 MAT learners and targeted support for those applying to Oxford, Cambridge and other leading universities. Although schools gave examples of peer tutoring by older MAT learners in both primary and secondary settings, few reported that they have a peer support network for MAT learners. Feedback from MAT learners indicated that the quality of support and advice that they received varied considerably from school to school.
- 4.2 MAT learners who are eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) receive specific support to overcome barriers to their learning, either individually or in small groups, in around half of schools. Schools also reported that they subsidise the costs of enrichment activities, provide access to learning resources and school equipment for homework, and, in the case of some secondary schools, participate in Reaching Wider partnerships¹⁵.

'We hold MAT FSM sessions which are funded by the PDG to ensure e-FSM pupils are able to reach their true potential. We also have a digital learning mentor to work with e-FSM pupils.'

Infant School Headteacher

- 4.3 Many schools (80%) reported that their staff are confident in their ability to challenge MAT learners. When asked to identify curriculum-related MAT strategies, nearly all schools reported that more challenging tasks are planned, within the context of improving the quality of teaching and learning for all learners. In a very few cases schools reported that this approach is supplemented by withdrawal of small groups of MAT learners to work together on extension tasks which cover a range of curriculum subjects.

¹⁵ Funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Reaching Wider Programme aims to increase higher education participation from targeted groups and communities by raising educational aspirations and skills. Reaching Wider engages two main groups who are under-represented in higher education: people living in areas of deprivation and looked after children and care leavers.

At Neath Abbey Infant School, following scrutiny of pupils' work and formative assessments, teachers identified a need to provide activities to extend the writing of MAT pupils across different genres. Acting on recommendations from the local authority Literacy team, the school invited a local author to deliver workshops to Year 2 MAT pupils whose work was subsequently published and presented to a variety of audiences including parents and the MAT governor. Year 2 MAT pupils also write a section of the weekly newsletter for parents.

Whole school monitoring has established that MAT pupils are motivated to write for different audiences, are producing more extended pieces of writing and are achieving their learning targets. Each MAT pupil has a 'distant partner' to offer support and to give them a chance to talk with an adult other than their class teacher about any worries that they may have. To help develop the partnership between the school and family, parents are invited to school to work at a task with their children. The school also produces a half-termly newsletter for parents of MAT pupils.

- 4.4 Most primary and secondary schools reported that differentiation is a key strategy to challenge learners of all ability levels. Using individual learner profiles and assessment data, most schools tailor activities and resources to provide MAT learners with opportunities to learn independently. Varied teaching approaches were also reported to be a feature of classroom practice used to stretch MAT learners in many schools. Other examples given of curriculum-related challenge include subject-specific master classes and cluster workshops for MAT learners. However, feedback from learners about their classroom experiences was mixed, with some reporting that they were not challenged further once they had finished tasks. Their perception was that, in some cases, teachers used MAT learners to help less able learners with their work.

'MAT skill development is clearly differentiated in all planning and assessments are made against the targets that appear in short term planning. Interventions are implemented where progress is less than expected.'

Primary School Deputy Headteacher

- 4.5 To stretch MAT learners and develop talent, the majority of schools supplement challenging tasks in the classroom with school-based extra-curricular activities, both during lunchtime and after-school. Around half of schools reported that they also work with other organisations to provide community-based enrichment opportunities. Whilst a few schools provide information about MAT enrichment opportunities via their websites, few schools reported that they currently use social media channels to inform and engage MAT learners.

- 4.6 Around half of schools reported that they provide specific activities to challenge exceptionally able learners. Examples from primary and secondary schools include:
- numeracy extension groups e.g. most able Year 6 learners working on GCSE maths questions with Learning Support Assistant (LSA) support;
 - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) programmes and competitions;
 - online commercial platforms to encourage independent learning and to develop higher level literacy and numeracy skills;
 - working with staff from the local secondary school to provide higher level maths tuition for very small groups of learners;
 - participation in national competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge and the All European Language Olympics; and
 - opportunities to study additional GCSE subjects e.g. Mandarin, psychology and astronomy.
- 4.7 MAT learners acknowledged that they had taken part in a range of in-school enrichment activities and had also taken part in enrichment activities with MAT learners from other schools in their local area and, in a few cases, nationally.
- 4.8 Approximately two thirds of schools reported that they work successfully with other organisations to challenge MAT learners. Most common examples include other schools, HEIs, STEM providers and community sports and cultural organisations.

'I would like to establish masterclass links with other schools to improve provision and offer challenge.'

Secondary School Assistant Headteacher and MAT Coordinator

- 4.9 Few schools reported that they receive effective support from their local authority or regional consortium to develop their MAT provision. However, NACE Cymru was commonly cited as providing effective specialist support.
- 4.10 To ensure whole school MAT strategies are developed and implemented effectively, many schools reported that their staff have received MAT-related professional learning in the past three years. Around a half of those reported that they have organised whole school training often delivered by the MAT Coordinator and/or senior leaders. Examples of aspects addressed include:
- subject-specific scheme of work development;
 - exploring effective approaches to differentiation;
 - developing extension activities and higher order questioning techniques;
 - moderating examples of Key Stage 2 MAT learners' work at higher levels.

At Flint High School, an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive, the main priority was to share the principles and practice of effective MAT support and challenge to improve standards for all learners of different abilities. After a series of lesson observations with a MAT focus, the MAT Coordinator compiled a report setting out the strengths and weaknesses of MAT teaching and learning across the school. The report also included the school's five 'MAT expectations' to be applied in every classroom plus 'MAT success strategies' for staff to integrate into their everyday lessons. After a period of implementing the new approaches, all teaching staff attended an interactive MAT teaching and learning INSET session, the aim of which was to evaluate how successfully staff had implemented the 'MAT success strategies' and to share MAT practice. A group of MAT learners also delivered their views to staff on what they considered an excellent lesson. Staff sharing their own experience helped develop a collective view of what provision for MAT learners looked like in the school. Feedback from a staff survey was very positive.

Most MAT learners are now engaged in a greater range of tasks that promote higher order thinking skills and are given more opportunities to be challenged during lessons. In addition, they are experiencing teaching and learning activities that enable them to be more ambitious.

- 4.11 To enable teachers to further develop and embed provision for MAT learners, the Welsh Government commissioned NACE Cymru to develop training materials to complement *Meeting the Challenge*. Issued to all schools, the *More Able and Talented Training Pack* was intended to support schools in providing high quality, stretching learning experiences for MAT learners. However, review evidence indicates that the *MAT Training Pack* is not widely known and has not been used extensively by schools to support professional learning.
- 4.12 A minority of schools reported that their LA or regional consortium provides opportunities for MAT-related professional development and to share practice, mainly by means of professional learning communities, both within school clusters and across the LA. Other examples given of professional development opportunities included NACE Cymru conferences and events, and MAT-related training provided by commercial organisations.
- 4.13 School leaders and governors identified an on-going need to fund actions to improve provision for MAT learners, including the production of teaching resources, provision of enrichment activities and professional development of teachers. In most schools funding is found mainly from the core budget, supplemented by additional funding sources where possible. For example, in around half of schools, the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) is used to fund literacy and numeracy interventions for MAT learners and the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) is used to support MAT learners in receipt of free school meals. Such funding is used in a variety of ways including the purchase of teaching resources, to employ additional Learning Support Assistants, to arrange MAT Learning Days, and to provide enrichment experiences to raise aspiration.

- 4.14 Additional funding, in particular to support the development of talent, is provided in a very few schools by Parent Teacher Associations. Schools also access local and national grants, and Communities First match-funding, dependent on their location, to fund enrichment activities. Most MAT learners had not knowingly been in receipt of extra funding, though some described having free music tuition and instrument hire, whereas sports clothing and equipment were sometimes provided for talented athletes
- 4.15 *Meeting the Challenge* sets out an expectation that schools listen to and take account of the views of parents of MAT learners, keeping them informed and encouraging them to take responsibility for supporting their child's learning. Most schools reported that they share MAT-related information with parents via a variety of methods:

Table 4	
Methods used to share MAT-related information with parents	Response (%)
Sharing of progress and targets in written progress reports	65
By letter e.g. asking permission for MAT learners to attend enrichment activities	62
Regular progress meetings and parents' meetings	59
Year 6 transition meetings	40
Seeking parental nominations about their child's talents by questionnaire	35
Open days when parents can look at learners' work	34
Sharing class project information and homework tasks	30
School prospectus	30
Commendation letters	27
Via the school's website	21
Providing written guidance on how to support their MAT child	21
Source: Main Review schools e-survey	

- 4.16 To encourage parents to support their child's learning a few schools share information about MAT-related websites and competitions. Parents however identified a lack of MAT-related information about what is and should be happening in schools. Whilst acknowledging examples of good practice, parents also highlighted inconsistencies in approaches to the identification of MAT learners, and to the quality of support and challenge for MAT learners, both within and across schools.

At Newtown High School, the aim was to raise awareness with all members of the school community to ensure they were familiar with its MAT practice; how MAT is defined, the provision made, and the tracking and support systems in place for MAT learners. More importantly, the school also wanted everybody to see how these things raise aspirations for all learners, whether they are on the school's MAT register or not. Assemblies were held with every year group to share expectations with all learners, including those who are more able and talented. A similar launch was held with governors during a full governing body meeting, and the MAT governor receives regular feedback from the MAT Coordinator about MAT activities. The school's family handbook has specific MAT information giving advice to parents about how they can support their children. Parents also receive information about the MAT programme by letter and by means of the school newsletter and Facebook page. The outcome is a cohesive, whole-school approach to and understanding of MAT. As a result, everybody is able to support MAT learners to achieve their potential.

- 4.17 All of the special schools interviewed reported that they provide specific support and challenge for their MAT learners based on each learner's talents and abilities. MAT learners have individual plans that provide differentiated learning activities to meet their needs. Additional resources are purchased to stretch more able learners, for example, tablet computers are used to promote boys' literacy, and if necessary specialised support for talented learners is bought-in, for example, sports coaching, or one-to-one music and art tuition.
- 4.18 Special schools reported that they work in partnership with others to support and challenge MAT learners. Examples include:
- the local FEI and 14-19 Network;
 - Career Choices Dewis Gyrfa to provide advice about progression opportunities and help with person-centred planning from age 14 onwards;
 - Disability Sports Officers; and
 - local businesses that provide work placements for MAT learners,
- 4.19 MAT learners may also attend classes at the local secondary school for subjects in which they show ability and talent. In such cases special school teachers normally work with mainstream colleagues to develop differentiated resources to meet the learning needs of their learners and LSAs provide additional personal support. All special schools interviewed reported that staff have received some MAT-related training.
- 4.20 MAT in special schools is funded mainly from the core school budget. For example, one school funds three learning coaches to enable learners to take part in enrichment activities and also enters MAT pupils in competitions alongside learners from mainstream schools. Special schools also use additional sources of funding such as the SEG to employ specialist teaching assistants (TAs) who provide targeted one-to-one support and small group activities for literacy and numeracy, and to fund training for staff. The PDG is used to fund additional specialist support, plus enrichment activities and residential visits.

- 4.21 Special schools reported that MAT-related individual learning targets, both academic and personal, are reviewed termly and discussed with learners and parents at the annual review and termly parent evenings. Parents contribute to the pupil-centred planning process during the annual review whilst regular informal meetings provide a chance for parents to meet with staff and discuss the support needs of individual learners. The successes of individual MAT learners are celebrated.
- 4.22 PRUs also adopt a highly personalised approach. MAT-related targets are recorded in IEPs, one-to-one tuition is provided to extend MAT learners and personal support is provided. As they have limited budgetary control, PRUs work closely with their LA manager to fund MAT provision. However they reported that they have had very little support from their LA or regional consortium to develop effective MAT provision. PRUs do work in partnership with other organisations to support and challenge MAT learners. Examples given include mainstream schools, FEIs, community organisations such as art centres and charitable organisations such as the Prince's Trust.

Further Education Institutions

- 4.23 Seven of the ten FEIs that took part in the Main Review reported that their staff are confident in their ability to support and challenge MAT learners. They identified a range of actions taken to support MAT learners. Course tutors and MAT coordinators have one-to-one discussions with MAT learners to determine how they are performing against individual targets and to identify their additional support needs. MAT learners also receive mentoring from specialist mentors; for example, learners on the Gifted and Talented Excellence (GATE) Programme in one FEI, form a discrete tutorial group and receive mentoring from specialist subject tutors. Most FEIs however reported that they do not provide a cross-college peer support network to link MAT learners.
- 4.24 Most FEIs provide targeted support for the most able learners applying for Oxford and Cambridge Universities and, in some cases, for those applying for other Russell Group universities. Support includes mentoring, advice on drafting personal statements, mock interviews, talks by Oxbridge undergraduates, visits to open days and visits from university admissions tutors who offer workshops on completing UCAS applications. In some cases, alumni and guest speakers talk about their experiences of Higher Education and employment to inspire and inform current learners.

At Coleg Cambria MAT learners are identified as the top 10% of learners on the A level programme i.e. those with the best GCSE grades. This equates to approximately 40 learners per year who form a more able and talented tutorial group, a competitive environment that fosters higher achievement and peer support.

All learners have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Individual targets are set to ensure more able and talented learners are stretched and challenged. The progress of MAT A level learners is tracked and benchmarked against their targets. A significant number of learners are targeted for A*/A. A level subject teams discuss MAT learners and monitor their progress at team meetings and staff mentor and prepare MAT learners for competitive universities and courses and particularly for Oxbridge entry. The College also hosts Oxford and Cambridge University regional events to support the development of MAT learners' interview technique and the drafting of personal statements.

Learners are encouraged to apply for a range of outreach events and summer schools. In addition learners attend subject specific events such as the Oxbridge Easter Maths School. These not only broaden their experience, but also enable learners to realise that the aspiration to attend the leading universities is something they can fulfil. Past learners who are now at Oxford, Cambridge or other Russell Group universities return to the College to talk about their experience and provide role models for the current learners. The support offered is having a positive impact; of those who apply for leading universities the success rate is above the national average.

- 4.25 Most FEIs provide specific support for MAT learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome barriers to their learning. Examples include:
- one-to-one academic support and encouragement to be aspirational in their career plans;
 - help with university applications and interview training from staff mentors;
 - support to apply for and attend summer schools at local universities including those funded by Reaching Wider Partnerships.
- 4.26 A minority of FEIs also have links with the Sutton Trust¹⁶ and the Villiers Park Education Trust¹⁷ to help MAT learners from less advantaged backgrounds gain experience when applying for places at leading universities. Nuffield Foundation research placements, managed in Wales by Techniquest, also target post-16 MAT learners from the most deprived areas and those who do not have a family history of going to university. Learners who apply successfully undertake a 4-6 week STEM-related placement during the summer holiday period.

¹⁶ <http://www.suttontrust.com/programmes/uk-summer-school-2/>

¹⁷ <http://www.villierspark.org.uk/>

- 4.27 In addition to encouraging MAT learners to apply for the Welsh Government Learning Grant FE¹⁸, FEIs reported that they provide further financial support by means of Learner Support funds, bursaries and scholarships. Funding is also made available to MAT learners who need help to participate in extra-curricular events, and to pay transport and accommodation expenses for attendance at auditions or interviews.
- 4.28 Most FEIs adopt a range of strategies to challenge MAT learners. Course specific differentiated learning opportunities are planned by teaching staff and the impact is witnessed by observation of teaching and learning by curriculum managers. The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification provides opportunities for independent learning and MAT learners are encouraged to be ambitious in their Extended Project research. MAT learners also take part in competitions, such as the UK Maths Challenge and Rotary national youth competitions for young writers, musicians and photographers, to extend their learning beyond the curriculum. Talented vocational learners in most FEIs, participate in skills challenges such as Skills Competition Wales¹⁹ and WorldSkills UK²⁰, in some cases receiving additional skills sessions to prepare them for competitions.

'All teachers work within the Stretch and Challenge strategy to ensure that teaching is differentiated and every learner is encouraged to meet their potential.'

Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality

- 4.29 FE managers value the partnerships they have developed with HEIs to provide subject-specific lectures, masterclasses and mock interviews for MAT learners. For example, the Swansea HE+ Consortium²¹, a collaborative project between Gower College and seven secondary schools, provides super-curricular sessions, academic extension classes, and guidance sessions for applicants to leading universities. The majority of FEIs, however, reported that they do not currently implement a MAT hub model such as the Gower College example.
- 4.30 In January 2015, following a report to Welsh Government²² by Paul Murphy MP, the Minister for Education and Skills launched Seren, a network of partnership hubs designed to support Wales' brightest learners achieve their academic potential and gain access to leading universities. From September 2015, the first tranche of pilot hubs were established, consisting of 11-18

¹⁸ <http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe/information-for-parents/welsh-government-learning-grant-further-education.aspx#.VbfGndJFD5p>

¹⁹ Skills Competition Wales consists of around 30 local skills competitions, funded by the Welsh Government and run by a dedicated network of colleges, work-based learning providers and employer-led organisations.

²⁰ WorldSkills UK competitions are run regionally and nationally in the UK annually and aim to improve standards of training and performance by promoting world-class skills and international competitiveness.

²¹ HE+ is funded by the University of Cambridge in fourteen regions of the UK. Schools and FEIs collaborate in a year-long programme to encourage and prepare more academically-able learners to make competitive applications to top universities.

²² The Oxbridge Ambassador's report is available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/oxbridge-project/news-and-events/seren-supporting-wales-brightest/?lang=en>

schools and FEIs in a local area, working in partnership with LAs and regional consortia and with further support from universities and alumni. . Underpinned by a high quality academic support programme to stretch and challenge year 12 and 13 MAT learners beyond the A level curriculum, regular meetings will enable MAT learners to come together to take part in super-curricular activities. FE managers reported that the planned roll-out of Seren network hubs across Wales offers significant opportunities for FEIs and schools to work more closely together to support MAT learners.

- 4.31 All FEIs work in partnership with local businesses and employers to provide course specific work placements, industry mentors, role models and STEM ambassadors. Other enrichment opportunities include:
- regional sports academies;
 - arts and dance academies and master classes;
 - entrepreneurship activities such as the Global Entrepreneurship Challenge;
 - learner-run societies e.g. philosophy and world development; and
 - debating competitions e.g. European Youth Parliament, Model United Nations, and Youth Speaks.
- 4.32 Although most enrichment activities are open to all, MAT learners are expected to be proactive about identifying extension opportunities, entering competitions and attending relevant events.
- 4.33 Whilst FEIs reported that MAT information is included in marketing literature, the potential for online and social media channels to communicate with MAT learners or their parents is an aspect for further development in nearly all colleges. Parent's evenings are reported to be the main forum for sharing MAT-related information about an individual learner's progress and potential with parents. Generally progression opportunities are discussed, scholarship options are explained, parents are encouraged to support their youngster's participation in relevant extra-curricular activities and staff respond to any parental concerns.
- 4.34 Approximately two thirds of FEIs reported that their staff have received MAT-related training, either delivered in-house or by external providers. Common aspects addressed include developing learning strategies that enhance differentiation, support for A level teaching staff to help them prepare competitive university applications, setting challenging targets, visiting other FEIs to observe and share practice and excellent teaching that promotes stretch and challenge.
- 4.35 All FEIs use elements of their core funding, including recurrent, enrichment and uplift funding, to provide MAT support and challenge. Additional funding sources include:
- Welsh Government Seren Network funding and Quality Improvement Fund grants;
 - Higher Education Funding Council for Wales Reaching Wider partnership funding;
 - funding from HEIs to develop hubs for the most able learners;
 - STEM grants e.g. from the British Science Association;
 - Erasmus+; and European Social Fund (ESF)

At Bridgend College ESF funding contributes towards a range of MAT enrichment opportunities such as:

- MAT learners taking part in a cross-curricular food tourism project to raise awareness of sustainability. After independent research, including video logs and song writing, more talented learners were invited to present their findings at an international conference in Monaco.*
- Music Technology and IT learners working with the International Bee Research Association and local primary school MAT pupils to produce songs about the plight of the bumble bee. Facebook groups are created and the winning songs are available to download from online music sites.*

Regional Consortia and Local Authorities

- 4.36 Local Authority managers (13 out of 17) reported that their staff were confident in their ability to assist schools in carrying out their role to support and challenge MAT learners.
- 4.37 In a minority of cases LAs provide programmes to challenge MAT learners, often working closely with stakeholder organisations. Examples given include Writing Squads, Maths Challenge²³ groups, arts programmes, music ensembles, and Urdd competitions. Most LAs and regional consortia do not however provide MAT-related information to parents as this is seen to be a school responsibility.
- 4.38 Many LAs reported they no longer provide specific programmes, extra-curricular activities or summer schools to challenge MAT learners. Increasingly the expectation of LAs and regional consortia is for schools to work together to develop effective approaches to support and challenge MAT learners. Consequently, LA officers have seen the formation of the Seren Network as a positive development.
- 4.39 Nearly all LAs and regional consortia encourage schools to access NACE Cymru's online guidance materials and resources. Officers reported that the NACE Challenge Award provides a valued structure for schools to develop their MAT provision. However, they identified the cost of the Challenge Award process and the burden of collecting evidence, particularly for small primary schools, as potential reasons why schools do not seek recognition for their MAT provision.
- 4.40 LAs and regional consortia confirm that MAT provision in schools is generally funded from the core school budget, supplemented with SEG and PDG funding. However, they were unable to quantify the extent to which such grant funding is used to support MAT learners.

²³ The UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT) organises national individual and team mathematics challenges and other mathematical enrichment activities for 11-18-year-old pupils. <http://www.ukmt.org.uk/>

Other interested parties

- 4.41 Many stakeholder organisations reported that they provide curricular and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities. A balance has to be struck between providing enrichment opportunities for all learners alongside more specialist progression opportunities for those identified as more able and talented. Typically programmes are offered to all learners and do not specifically target MAT learners. Examples of curriculum-related activities for more able learners include Further Maths study days, revision sessions and summer schools, and triple literacy workshops for more able linguists.
- 4.42 Arts stakeholder organisations provide extra-curricular enrichment opportunities for talented individuals. For example, support and challenge for talented musicians has traditionally been provided by local authority Music Support Services offering progression routes for learners in collaboration with schools. Normally MAT musicians progress through the well-established pyramid structure, namely school and county orchestras, and regional ensembles, before performing nationally. Additional challenge for talented musicians is provided by means of residential summer schools, national development courses and one-to-one tuition such as that provided at the Junior Music Conservatoire, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Similarly, talented contemporary and ballet dancers attend classes, workshops and summer schools, enabling more talented dancers to be identified and auditioned to participate in targeted programmes.
- 4.43 Stakeholders reported that creative subjects are not necessarily a priority in many schools due to the focus on literacy and numeracy and, as they do not feature in core school performance data, they lack profile. Consequently, stakeholders feel that it is essential that schools work with them to nurture children and young people who excel in the visual arts. Typically, Arts stakeholders work closely with LA officers, in particular with those from Music Support Services and Arts Development Officers. They also have active links with youth and community-based groups to ensure talented learners are made aware of progression routes and performance opportunities.
- 4.44 Most sporting stakeholders interviewed provide programmes to challenge talented learners as part of well-structured talent development pathways. Examples given include in-school taster sessions both curricular and extra-curricular, differentiated award schemes, school-level, regional and national competitions, targeted extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, and elite pathways.
- 4.45 Enrichment programmes for MAT learners offered by stakeholder organisations are funded in various ways including:
- Welsh Government funding which is supplemented in some cases with ESF funding;
 - LA match funding and/or in-kind funding by providing venues, project co-ordination and administrative support;
 - National Governing Body funding, plus in some cases lottery funding;

- external funding, such as Sports Wales and Arts Council of Wales grants, in some cases with an element of cost recovery by charging per learner or per school to participate;
- fund raising activities e.g. some LA music services send their most talented musicians to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama for additional tuition, and fundraise to subsidise this provision; and
- individual MAT learners, or their parents, paying to participate in specialist enrichment activities. In most cases where charges are levied, subsidies and means-tested bursaries are available for MAT learners from low income families.

To deliver opportunities in advanced training and participation for dancers, Ballet Cymru and Rubicon Dance, a community based arts organisation, were awarded grant funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. To identify talent, 1200 pupils from primary schools in Cardiff and Newport Communities First areas were auditioned and 30 scholarships awarded to young people with outstanding dance potential. The scholarships enabled these young people to access dance tuition that would not have been accessible to them previously. Some pupils are given dance shoes and clothing to ensure that such matters do not become a barrier to participation.

4.46 Most stakeholder organisations that provide enrichment and progression opportunities for MAT learners reported that they do not communicate directly with parents. In a few cases they publish literature which outlines the provision that is available however this is not typically MAT-specific information. Information is also made available via stakeholder organisations' websites although in most cases parents are not the target audience.

5. Tracking and monitoring

This section identifies the actions taken by:

- schools, FEIs, LAs and Regional Consortia to track the progress of MAT learners;
- schools and FEIs to monitor the effectiveness of MAT provision.

Schools

- 5.1 Most schools, primary and secondary, reported that they use electronic whole school tracking systems, either commercial or developed in-house, to collate and analyse pupil performance data and other information about MAT learners. Schools reported that they use their own data sources to track and monitor the progress of MAT learners, with only a minority of schools reporting that they receive MAT-related assessment data from their LA or regional consortia. The emphasis is on academic performance with progress in the core subjects being the main focus. Very little evidence was provided to suggest that the schools systematically track the progress of learners in respect of talent.
- 5.2 Regular analysis of formative and summative assessment data, supplemented by learner outcomes in National tests, allows schools to track the performance of MAT learners against predicted annual and end-of-key stage targets. Many schools also reported that opportunities to review and moderate learners' work such as book scrutiny, plus opportunities to observe classroom practice are used to monitor the progress of MAT learners. MAT learners are reported to be involved in tracking their own progress in a majority of schools.
- 5.3 Evidence about the effectiveness of MAT provision is gathered by schools' monitoring systems, in most cases by the senior leadership team and MAT Coordinator. Observation of classroom practice and monitoring of teachers' planning are used in the majority of schools to ensure that MAT support and challenge is a routine element of teaching and learning. The quality and impact is also monitored by means of reviews between teachers and the MAT Coordinator.
- 5.4 Whilst there is no statutory duty to have a named governor with responsibility for more able and talented, this is viewed as effective practice by Governors Wales and in some schools a governor is designated to work with the MAT Coordinator. A majority of schools reported that MAT support and challenge is also monitored by the governing body with regular reports provided on learner progress against end of key stage targets.
- 5.5 An external perspective is reported as being offered by regional consortia challenge advisers in about one third of schools. Very few schools reported that LA officers play a role in monitoring MAT provision. However, those schools that are working towards the NACE Cymru Challenge Award report that they receive valued feedback as part of the accreditation process.

At Ysgol Bro Morgannwg, an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school and holder of the NACE Cymru Challenge Award, the targeting of MAT and exceptionally able learners at all key stages is a key element. MAT provision is mapped in all departmental learning plans, identifying clearly how differentiation takes into account the needs of MAT learners. The MAT coordinator ensures that annual update training occurs for all staff with opportunities given to showcase good practice. Additional training is provided for NQTs and teachers new to the school.

To ensure consistency the Senior Leadership Team samples the work of MAT learners and monitors the work of departments closely and reports back on MAT provision, helping to develop staff confidence. The governing body also monitors provision and performance closely. An individual pupil tracking system is used across the school and the progress of MAT pupils is monitored three times throughout the year, resulting in very good departmental knowledge of individual pupils. The progress of MAT pupils also feeds into the school's self-evaluation report. Exceptionally able pupils are mentored personally by the MAT Coordinator, who monitors the progress of the most able pupils every half term. The school report that these strategies have contributed to an increase in level 7+ performance by MAT pupils at Key Stage 3. During the past two years there has also been an increase in pupils achieving the Exceptional Performance level at Key Stage 3.

- 5.6 Special schools use in-house or commercial tracking systems to monitor learner progress including those identified as MAT learners. Moderation of learners' work, both in school and with other special schools, helps to ensure greater consistency. Teachers are aware of learners' different needs and abilities and this helps them to identify appropriate progression pathways.

'The literacy and maths coordinators provision map the support offered by the literacy and numeracy TAs to establish the impact of their input.'

Special School Deputy Headteacher

- 5.7 In PRUs the progress of MAT learners is tracked by monitoring if individual learning targets have been achieved, mainly through regular IEP reviews and the annual review. The transient nature of cohorts makes tracking of learner progress a challenge, with most PRUs acknowledging that this is an aspect for further development.

Further Education Institutions

- 5.8 Processes for tracking the progress of MAT learners vary across FEIs. Many use web-based portals/electronic tracking systems to set targets and record learner achievement data. Such systems often incorporate a self-assessment element, and enable the progress of individual MAT learners to be monitored in real time against their targets.

- 5.9 Typically the MAT Coordinator or senior managers are responsible for monitoring and tracking the progress of academic MAT learners whereas the progress of vocational MAT learners is tracked mainly by course tutors. Sources given of MAT-related data include:
- external examination results; for example the percentage of learners achieving A*/A grades per subject at GCSE and A level, and award of distinction in vocational qualifications
 - the percentage of learners achieving a positive progression; the distance travelled by each learner from their on-entry baseline
 - the proportion of WorldSkills UK entries and the number of skills competition winners
 - attendance at enrichment activities
- 5.10 Reporting on the progress of MAT learners is an integral aspect of quality assurance processes. Typically learner data showing progress against individual targets, including that for MAT learners, feeds into management reports, are analysed at Quality Boards and reported to senior leadership/executive teams to assess the effectiveness of provision.

Regional Consortia and Local Authorities

- 5.11 MAT-related pupil performance data is collected by the majority of LAs. All Wales Core Data Sets are also used as contextual analysis tools. A few LAs reported that they have developed sophisticated data tracking systems which allow tracking of progress at an individual learner level. Data is then analysed to inform strategic planning.
- 5.12 The collection and analysis of MAT-related pupil attainment data is a regional consortium responsibility who in turn report back to LAs and schools on the comparative progress of learner cohorts. Tracking systems used by regional consortia to collect and analyse data are reported to be at different stages of development. Nevertheless, pupil performance data for core subjects is reported to be captured, analysed and used for planning, identifying effective practice and targeting interventions where necessary by all four regional consortia. School pupil performance data is also reported to be used by challenge advisers to inform focused discussions with individual schools about the effectiveness of their support and challenge for MAT learners.

'Family of schools data clearly shows that there is a disparity between expectations in different consortia and local authorities and therefore there can't be a 'level playing field' for MAT provision.'

Primary School Headteacher

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Learners in Wales study in many different types of settings, each with different priorities, funding arrangements, staffing, resources and support. Such diversity not unexpectedly results in a range of strategies for identifying, supporting and challenging more able and talented learners.
- 6.2 Schools²⁴ and FEIs that participated in the review displayed a strong commitment to providing appropriate support and challenge for their more able and talented learners. Where senior leaders have made MAT provision a priority, practice tends to be embedded. Despite this, national and local priorities such as raising standards in literacy and numeracy and the focus on accountability measures can take precedence. Consequently, considerable variation exists in provision for more able and talented learners across schools and FEIs.

Definition and guidance

- 6.3 The majority of schools have school-specific MAT definitions that refer to learners' academic abilities and their wider talents. Most FEIs however do not have an agreed cross-college MAT definition. All settings should strive to develop an approach which recognises an individual's talents and abilities within the context of their setting.
- 6.4 Regional consortia, LAs and schools are aware of the Welsh Government guidance document *Meeting the Challenge - Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils* and most have used it successfully to develop provision.
- 6.5 *Meeting the Challenge* reflected best practice when launched, however review evidence indicates that the guidance needs to be updated to:
- set out the expected standards for developing quality MAT provision in all schools and FEIs;
 - reflect current policy priorities, teaching and learning approaches, national testing arrangements and requirements for reporting learner progress;
 - explain the complementary roles of LAs and regional consortia in terms of supporting schools to develop their MAT provision; and
 - provide a focus on the impact of provision on outcomes for MAT learners.

Strategic Planning

- 6.6 MAT features in the current development plans of most schools and FEIs. Improving academic performance and increasing the proportion of MAT learners who achieve above the expected level for their age are common priorities. However, very few schools or FEIs plan strategically for the

²⁴ 'Schools' refers to all mainstream schools, special schools and PRUs 'unless specifically referred to'.

development of talent and rarely involve MAT learners or their parents when planning improvements to provision. Settings need to be more proactive in taking account of the views of MAT learners and their parents.

- 6.7 MAT features, either discretely or as an element of a broader priority, in the strategic planning of the majority of LAs and two regional consortia. Promoting high quality teaching and learning, and improving academic performance so that more MAT learners achieve above their expected level are often priorities in these plans. Specific planning to improve the quality of MAT provision is variable across LAs and regional consortia; for example, a minority have an up-to-date MAT strategy, policy or action plan. A more targeted approach to strategic planning is required by regional consortia and LAs in order to support the improvement of MAT provision in all schools.

Identification

- 6.8 Most schools have a whole school strategy for identifying MAT learners, making use of a range of performance data, teacher observation, and referrals from parents, and other agencies. However, the focus, particularly in secondary schools, tends to be on academic ability rather than the identification and nurturing of talent.

Also in most FEIs, criteria for identifying MAT learners vary considerably and are in need of further development to better identify the abilities and talents of vocational MAT learners. All settings need to make the systematic identification of the talents of learners a central component of their MAT provision.

- 6.9 More able and talented learners are often self-aware and recognise their own capabilities. However participation in the identification process by MAT learners happens in only a minority of settings. Sharing agreed identification criteria with learners and involving them in the identification process is an aspect for further development across all sectors.

Support and Challenge

- 6.10 Following identification, most schools and FEIs plan a combination of learning experiences, both within and beyond the classroom, to meet the needs of MAT learners. Nearly all schools and FEIs have a designated senior leader or coordinator who manages MAT provision. A wide range of academic, personal and financial support is provided, with targeted support given to the most able when applying for leading universities.

- 6.11 Despite this, the use of MAT role models to raise aspiration, and engagement with social media channels to inform learners, are aspects of support that are underdeveloped across all sectors. The sharing of MAT-related information, such as enrichment opportunities, with learners and parents is also an aspect of support which requires further development in most settings.

- 6.12 MAT learners in general are provided with appropriate challenge. Schools and FEIs concentrate on improving the quality of teaching to extend the breadth and

depth of learning experiences for MAT learners. However, only around half of schools provide specific activities to challenge exceptionally able learners. Settings should develop their provision to ensure such learners are provided with appropriately challenging programmes based on each individual's talents and abilities.

Funding

6.13 Schools and FEIs mostly use core funding to develop MAT provision, supplemented by grant funding to underpin extension and enrichment activities. However, few settings monitor how effectively funding is being used to meet the needs of MAT learners. The development of a clear understanding on the appropriate uses of funding for MAT provision would assist in the monitoring of the support and challenge available to MAT learners.

Partnerships

6.14 Partnerships with stakeholder organisations, many of whom provide curricular and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities for MAT learners, are a central feature of provision in many schools and FEIs. However, most schools receive limited support from their authority or regional consortium to develop specific MAT provision and to share practice. Most FEIs also work independently to develop their MAT provision.

6.15 More consistent approaches are needed to provide schools and FEIs with quality MAT advice and support, alongside a more coordinated approach to sharing practice across all sectors.

Tracking Progress and Transition

6.16 Schools and FEIs have improved their use and analysis of data. Electronic systems are used effectively in most schools and FEIs to collate information about and track the progress of all learners, including those identified as more able and talented. Schools and FEIs primarily track the academic performance of MAT learners and focus less so on monitoring the development of talent.

6.17 In order to provide data on the performance of different groups of learners, including those who are more able and talented, regional consortia and LAs have developed a variety of processes for tracking pupil progress. However, the effective use of data to inform interventions at school level to support and challenge MAT learners is variable. Regional consortia and LAs should consider how to make better use of MAT attainment data to provide a more consistent way to challenge schools on the effectiveness of their MAT provision and its impact on developing the potential of MAT learners.

6.18 Transition arrangements for MAT learners, within and between settings, are also an aspect for further development. Currently practice is variable across all sectors. Settings need to better share information on prior attainment and specific talents of individual MAT learners to ensure that they sustain the progress they have made and can continue to be supported to achieve their

potential. To ensure greater consistency, protocols for effective information exchange about MAT learners should be developed.

Appendix A: Comparative approaches to MAT learners across the UK

In **England**, where the term 'gifted and talented' is used, the definition provided is '*Children and young people with one or more abilities developed significantly ahead of their year group or with the potential to develop these abilities.*'

In 1999 the UK government launched a programme for 'gifted and talented' learners in England. The policy was intended to raise the educational achievement of more able learners in secondary schools in socially deprived urban areas but was subsequently extended to all age groups and schools in England. From 2006 primary and secondary schools were required to record their percentage of gifted and talented children on the annual School Census return; those learners who had been identified by the school to have the ability, or potential, to be in the top 5 to 10%+ of the individual school population.

In March 2007 the National Programme for Gifted and Talented Education (later rebranded as the Young, Gifted and Talented Programme) was launched and in September 2007 a Young Gifted and Talented Learner Academy for 4 to 19-year-olds was established as an online resource for learners, teachers and providers. In February 2009 a National Register of Gifted and Talented was launched. However in July 2009 the UK Government announced a move away from a centralised Young Gifted and Talented programme to more locally-based activities. The National Register was discontinued and by March 2010 the contract for the Young Gifted and Talented Learner Academy ended. To fill the gap, the National Strategies²⁵ placed a renewed focus on Gifted and Talented provision. However, in March 2011 funding for National Strategies ended. Funding for Gifted and Talented provision in England is now re-routed through the Dedicated Schools Grant revenue stream for schools.

Despite considerable political interest and substantial financial investment for gifted and talented provision in England over an extended period, concerns remain about the quality and effectiveness of provision for MAT learners. A recent Ofsted report²⁶ found that most non-selective schools visited in England, both primary and secondary, have been slow in taking forward recommendations for improving the quality of gifted and talented provision.

In **Northern Ireland** the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) uses the term 'gifted and talented' to describe learners who are achieving, or who have the potential to achieve, a level substantially beyond the rest of their peer group inside their particular school. Those learners who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate extremely high levels of ability, compared to their peers across the entire population, are referred to as Exceptionally Able. Non-statutory guidelines are provided for teachers to support the teaching and learning of gifted and

²⁵ The aim of the Department for Education's National Strategies in England was: '*To raise standards of achievement and rates of progression for children and young people in all phases and settings through personalised learning supported by high quality, well-planned teaching which addresses individual needs with a particular focus on the core subjects and early years.*'

²⁶ Ofsted; '*The most able students; an update on progress since June 2013*' (March 2015)

talented learners; online support materials and brief guidance for parents are also made available.

In **Scotland**, legislation places the education of able pupils into the special education arena. Non-statutory guidelines consistent with the aims and objectives of Curriculum for Excellence are available from the Scottish Network for Able Pupils. The term 'highly able' is adopted referring to learners who are working ahead of their age peers, and to pupils who have the potential to work ahead of their age peers. Scotland has also established six national centres of excellence, located in comprehensive schools, which enable talented pupils to maximise their potential whilst receiving additional specialist study in music, dance or sport.

Appendix B: Implementation of Estyn recommendations

Since September 2010 the Estyn Common Inspection Framework has required schools to regularly evaluate the quality of their provision for more able and talented learners. The expectation is that schools should ensure that:

- the range and quality of teaching approaches adopted are successful in providing demanding work to meet the needs of all pupils;
- work is suitably challenging for MAT learners;
- materials and methods of delivery are suitably differentiated.

In June 2011 Estyn reported on the support provided for MAT learners in primary schools²⁷ and subsequently, in June 2012, reported on MAT provision in secondary schools²⁸. In both cases recommendations for improvement were provided for schools and local authorities.

The following text provides a brief assessment, based on review findings, of the extent to which schools and LAs have implemented recommendations from Estyn aimed at providing support for MAT learners.

Review evidence suggests that positive change in practice in relation to many of the recommendations has been limited, suggesting that MAT provision remains an area for further development in many schools. Also MAT provision is a relatively common recommendation in inspection reports, even in some higher performing schools, indicating that Estyn recommendations have not been fully implemented.

Primary recommendations

R1 provide more challenging and individualised learning experiences to help more able and talented pupils to achieve the highest standards.

Most primary schools reported that they set aspirational targets, with an expectation that MAT learners achieve at least one Foundation Phase outcome or National Curriculum level above the end-of-phase/key stage expectation in summative assessments. To enable MAT learners to achieve their potential, schools reported that they have taken actions to extend the breadth and depth of learning experiences for MAT learners. Most schools also reported that they plan activities to provide MAT learners with opportunities to learn independently. As the standards and outcomes, and the quality/effectiveness of MAT provision in schools were not within the scope of the review, evidence has not been gathered to indicate whether these strategies have had a positive impact on standards of learner achievement. The underperformance of primary learners was identified, however, as an issue by Estyn during the fieldwork stage of the Main Review.

*'MAT learners in Wales do not achieve as well as they should. Too few primary school learners achieve above the expected level for their age in end-of-key stage assessments at the age of 11.'*²⁹

²⁷ Supporting more able and talented pupils in primary schools; Estyn June 2011

²⁸ Supporting more able and talented pupils in secondary schools; Estyn June 2012

²⁹ Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2013-2014

R2 improve the use of data and assessment to identify, track and monitor the progress of more able and talented pupils.

Evidence suggests that primary schools are more 'data rich' than they used to be. In general, it would appear that they have improved their use of formative and summative assessment data to identify MAT learners. Most primary schools use electronic systems, either developed in-house or commercial systems, to track the academic progress of MAT learners against personal targets and national expectations.

R3 build on existing transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools to provide more appropriate challenge for more able and talented pupils.

Transition arrangements for MAT learners between primary and secondary schools are an aspect for further improvement. The majority of primary schools reported that MAT information is used to ensure effective transition arrangements for MAT learners, and cluster moderation of Key Stage 2 MAT learners' work provides a focus for transition. However, evidence suggests that relatively few primary and secondary schools are working closely on a consistent basis to provide 'more appropriate challenge' for more able and talented learners.

R4 improve parents' understanding of how they can better support the education of their child.

Most primary schools use the reporting process and parents-teacher meetings to share MAT-related information with parents. However, review evidence indicates that many primary schools need to be more proactive about informing parents about their MAT policy and practice, and to take more positive action to improve parents' understanding of how they can better support their child's learning.

R5 use professional learning communities to share best practice in the education of more able and talented pupils.

Whilst a few examples were provided of effective MAT school cluster working during the review, this is an aspect for further development as only a minority of primary schools reported sharing practice about the education of MAT learners by means of professional learning communities.

R6 provide training for school leaders, teachers and support staff on how to address the needs of more able and talented pupils.

Many primary schools that took part in the review reported that they have provided MAT-related training for staff in the past three years. Examples given include exploring effective approaches to differentiation, planning extension activities and developing higher order questioning techniques. Other examples of professional learning include attendance at NACE Cymru conferences and MAT-related training provided by commercial organisations. Although review evidence suggests this recommendation

has been addressed by many schools, primary school leaders identified a continuing need for more MAT-related professional learning opportunities.

Secondary recommendations:

R1 build on existing transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools to provide better continuity and progression in the education of more able and talented pupils.

Around half of secondary schools reported that MAT information is used to ensure effective transition arrangements for MAT learners. Review evidence indicates that inconsistency in teacher assessment can contribute to a lack of confidence in MAT transition data, suggesting that it is not used consistently to ensure continuity and progression in the education of MAT learners. Transition arrangements for MAT learners from secondary settings to FEIs are also an area for further improvement.

R2 improve the use of data and assessment to identify, track and monitor the progress of more able and talented pupils and share this information with all staff and relevant parents.

Secondary schools reported that they have improved their use and analysis of data to track learner performance and have developed whole school tracking systems to monitor the progress of MAT learners. The emphasis is primarily on academic performance and less so on the development of talent. The collation and analysis of formative assessment data, mainly for the core subjects, plus national test outcomes, coupled with the tracking of learner progress appears to be an improved area of practice. The effectiveness of the subsequent use of data to support and challenge individual MAT learners to achieve their potential is still open to question. Estyn report³⁰ that *'Many schools are using electronic tracking systems to monitor the progress of pupilsHowever, only a minority of schools make effective use of data to track the progress of different groups of pupils.'*

R3 provide enriched opportunities and appropriately challenging provision across the curriculum for more able and talented pupils to achieve the highest standards.

Where secondary school leaders have made MAT a priority, whole school structures tend to be well embedded. Nearly all schools reported that more challenging tasks are planned for MAT learners within the context of improving the quality of teaching and learning for all learners. Most schools reported that they provide individual MAT learners with opportunities to learn independently. Varied teaching approaches are also reported to be a feature of classroom practice used to stretch MAT learners in many schools. As the standards and outcomes, and the quality/effectiveness of MAT provision in schools were not within the scope of the review, evidence is not available to indicate whether these strategies have had a positive impact on standards of learner achievement. The underperformance of MAT learners in secondary schools is identified, however, as a concern by Estyn. It is reported that too few secondary

³⁰ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2013-2014

school learners achieve above the expected level for their age in end-of-key stage assessments at the age of 14 in the core subjects. Similarly, too few 16-year-olds achieve A/A* grades in the core subjects.

*'Even in good schools, there are groups of pupils, particularly the most able, who are not making as much progress as they should.'*³¹

R4 ensure that more able and talented pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds receive specific support to overcome barriers to their learning.

The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) is reported to be used to support MAT learners in receipt of free school meals in around half of schools. Such funding is reported to be used in a variety of ways including the purchase of resources, to employ additional Learning Support Assistants, to arrange MAT Learning Days, and to provide enrichment experiences to raise aspiration. MAT learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are also supported to apply for and attend summer schools at local universities including those funded by Reaching Wider Partnerships.

R5 provide mentoring for more able and talented pupils to help them make the best extra-curricular, option and career choices.

Approximately two thirds of secondary schools reported that they provide pastoral support, mainly small group or individual mentoring provided by the MAT Coordinator, Learning Coach support for 14-19 MAT learners, plus targeted support for those applying to leading universities. However, evidence suggests that the provision of quality advice about subject options and specific career choices for MAT learners is an area for further development in many schools.

R6 train school leaders, teachers and support staff on how to address the needs of more able and talented pupils and use networks of professional practice to share best practice.

Many secondary schools reported that their staff have received MAT-related professional learning in the past three years. Examples include whole school training, MAT working groups, and attendance at NACE Cymru conferences. The use of networks of professional practice to share best practice, however, is an area for further development as school leaders identified a need for more opportunities to share and observe effective practice at cluster, LA and regional level.

R7 Improve parents' understanding of how they can better support the education of their more able or talented child.

This is another aspect for further development as evidence indicates that secondary schools need to do more to inform parents of more able and talented learners about how they can support their more able and talented child's learning. Whilst schools use written progress reports and parent-teacher meetings to share academic progress, only a minority of schools reported that they inform parents about their MAT policy and

³¹ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2013-2014

practice by means of the school prospectus, the school website or other written materials.

Local authority recommendations:

Since the publication of the Estyn reports, local authority education services have undergone significant change, with the move to a regional model of school improvement resulting, in many cases, in reduced LA capacity. Consequently the thoroughness with which local authorities have responded to and implemented Estyn recommendations is debatable.

R1 train school improvement officers on how to identify, support, track, monitor and evaluate the progress of more able and talented pupils.

Whilst many LAs reported that officers have received training about the analysis of attainment data and the tracking of pupil performance, review evidence suggests that most LAs and regional consortia have not provided specific training for officers on how to identify, support, track, monitor and evaluate the progress of more able and talented learners.

R2 use data more effectively to evaluate trends over time in the achievement of more able and talented pupils.

Most LAs report that they have invested considerably in developing processes and systems for the tracking and monitoring pupil performance, and MAT-related pupil performance data is reported to be collected by the majority of LAs. A few LAs report that their data tracking systems allow monitoring of progress at an individual learner level. A minority of LAs report however that the collection and analysis of MAT-related pupil attainment data is a regional consortium responsibility. Evidence suggests that the subsequent use of data to evaluate trends over time in the achievement of more able and talented learners is underdeveloped in most LAs.

Appendix C: Schools' e-survey

1. Name of your school:
2. Name of your Local Authority:
3. Please select the answer below which best describes your setting:
 - A maintained nursery
 - An infant school
 - A junior school
 - A primary school
 - An 11-16 secondary school
 - An 11-18 secondary school
 - Other, please specify
4. Please select the answer below which best describes your setting:
 - English medium
 - Welsh medium
 - Bilingual
5. Please select the answer(s) below that best describes your role?
 - Head teacher
 - Senior leader
 - SENCO/ALNCO
 - MAT Coordinator
 - Classroom practitioner
 - Other, please specify

Whole school MAT strategy

6. How does your school interpret the term '*More Able and Talented*'?
7. Does MAT provision feature in your current School Development Plan?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

If yes, please provide brief details of MAT-related priorities and intended outcomes.
8. Does your school have an up-to-date MAT policy?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
9. Does your school have a MAT Coordinator?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

10. Does your school have a MAT Action Plan?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
11. Are you aware of the Welsh Government guidance document '*Meeting the Challenge - Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils*' (September 2008)?
- Yes
 - No

If 'yes', how has the guidance influenced MAT provision in your school?

12. Have staff in your school received MAT-related training in the past 3 years?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

If yes, please give an example.

13. We would like you to assess the confidence levels of staff in your school to identify, support and challenge MAT learners. Please select one answer in each case.

a. '*Staff in our school are confident in their ability to **identify** MAT learners.*'

Strongly agree	= 1
Agree	= 2
Neither agree or disagree	= 3
Disagree	= 4
Strongly disagree	= 5

b. '*Staff in our school are confident in their ability to **support** MAT learners.*'

Strongly agree	= 1
Agree	= 2
Neither agree or disagree	= 3
Disagree	= 4
Strongly disagree	= 5

c. '*Staff in our school are confident in their ability to **challenge** MAT learners.*'

Strongly agree	= 1
Agree	= 2
Neither agree or disagree	= 3
Disagree	= 4
Strongly disagree	= 5

Identification of MAT learners

14. Do you have a consistent whole school strategy for identifying MAT learners?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know

15. Which identification strategies do you use to ensure that all abilities and talents are recognised? Please select any answers which apply.

- Formative assessments by teachers
- End of Key Stage summative assessment data
- National reading and numeracy test outcomes
- Moderation of pupils' work
- Commercial test scores*
- Subject specific criteria
- Teacher nomination
- Self-nomination
- Peer nomination
- Parental nomination
- Nomination by other professionals eg peripatetic music teachers
- Other, please specify

* If you use commercial test scores, please specify which:

16. For what purpose(s) is MAT profiling information being used? Please select any answers which apply.

- To identify the strengths and interests of individual pupils
- To identify the needs of individual pupils
- To monitor progress of individual pupils
- To inform pupils of their achievements
- To inform pupils of the next steps for their learning
- To inform colleagues of pupils' achievements and next steps for their learning
- To identify underachievement
- To plan appropriate enrichment activities
- To ensure effective transition arrangements for MAT pupils
- Other, please specify

17. How is information gathered on MAT pupils recorded? Please select any answers which apply.

- on paper e.g. teacher's notes and observations
- on paper using a standardised recording form
- computer-based e.g. an electronic profile
- Other, please specify

18. Does your school use the information collected to compile a MAT register?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

19. With whom do you share MAT information? Please select any answers which apply.

- Individual MAT pupils
- Other practitioners in school
- Parents/carers
- Other schools and/or FE colleges at transition
- The Local Authority
- The Regional Consortium
- Other, please specify

Support for more able and talented learners

From the point of identification,

20. What curriculum support do you provide for MAT learners? Please select any answers which apply.

- More challenging tasks
- Differentiated learning experiences
- Opportunities for independent learning
- Varied teaching approaches
- Other, please specify

21. What non-curriculum support do you provide for MAT learners? Please select any answers which apply.

- Pastoral e.g. mentoring
- School-based extra-curricular activities
- Via online/social media channels
- Community-based enrichment opportunities
- Other, please specify

22. Does your school have a peer support network for MAT learners in different year groups?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please describe.

23. Do MAT pupils who are eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) receive specific support to overcome barriers to their learning?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please give an example.

Challenge for more able and talented learners

24. Does your school provide specific programmes to challenge exceptionally able learners?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please specify the target age range and curriculum focus.

25. Does your school work in partnership with other organisations to challenge MAT learners?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please give examples of organisations with which you work.

26. How is the progress of MAT learners tracked and monitored? Please select any answers which apply.

- Discussions with pupils
- Regular analysis of attainment data
- Reviews between class teachers and the MAT Co-ordinator
- Pupil performance in National tests
- Lesson observation
- Book scrutiny
- Data analysis at the end of the key stage
- Other, please specify.....

Sharing MAT information

27. Does your school transfer information about MAT learners during key transition phases?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

28. Does your school share MAT-related information with parents/carers?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, how does your school share MAT-related information with parents/carers? Please select any answers which apply.

- Sharing of progress and targets in written progress reports
- Regular progress meetings and parents' meetings
- Open days when parents can look at pupils' work
- Via the school's website
- Providing written guidance e.g. leaflets on how to support their MAT child
- Seeking parental nominations about their child's talents by questionnaire
- Sharing class project information and homework tasks
- Year 6 transition meetings
- School prospectus
- Commendation letters
- By letter e.g. asking permission for MAT pupils to attend enrichment activities
- Other, please specify.....

Partnership Working

29. Does your school receive effective support to develop MAT provision? Please select any answers which apply.

- Yes, from the Local Authority
- Yes, from the Regional Consortium
- Yes, by other, please state.....
- No

30. Is MAT provision monitored in your school? Please select any answers which apply.

- Yes, by the school governing body

- Yes, by LA officers
 - Yes, by Regional Consortia challenge advisors
 - Yes, by other, please state.....
 - No
31. Is assessment data, to identify, track and monitor the progress of MAT learners, provided to your school? Please select any answers which apply.
- Yes, by LA officers
 - Yes, by Regional Consortia challenge advisors
 - Yes, by other, please state.....
 - No
32. Are opportunities provided for MAT-related training and to share best practice? Please select any answers which apply.
- Yes, by the LA
 - Yes, by the Regional Consortium
 - Yes, by other, please state.....
 - No
33. How are MAT provision, support and challenge funded in your school? Please select any answers which apply.
- The core school budget
 - The Pupil Deprivation Grant
 - The School Effectiveness Grant
 - PTA funding
 - Other, please specify.....
34. From your perspective what are the weaknesses in provision and information for MAT learners?
35. What further should be done to improve current practice and ensure the identification and nurturing of MAT learners?
36. Would you be willing for your school to feature in a case study of effective practice for MAT provision?
- Yes
 - No
37. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for completing this e-survey.

Appendix D: Main Review interview guide for special schools and PRUs

1. How does your setting interpret the term 'More Able and Talented'?
2. How is MAT provision organised within your setting?
3. Does MAT provision feature in your current Development Plan?
4. Are you aware of the Welsh Government guidance 'Meeting the Challenge - Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Pupils'?
5. How have the guidance and the Quality Standards influenced your work?
6. How do you as a school ensure the needs of MAT learners are identified?
7. What actions have you taken to develop provision for MAT learners (from the point of identification)?
8. Does your setting provide specific programmes to support and challenge MAT learners?
9. Please give examples. (Target age range, curriculum focus, provider etc.)
10. Do you work in partnership with other organisations to support and challenge MAT learners? Please give examples.
11. How is the progress of MAT learners tracked and monitored?
12. How do you monitor the impact of MAT support and challenge?
13. How effectively do you work in partnership with other schools/colleges to support MAT learners during transition?
14. How is MAT-related information (identification, progress etc.) shared with parents/carers?
15. How is MAT support funded in your setting?
16. What support have you had from your LA to develop effective MAT provision?
17. What support have you had from your Regional Consortium to develop effective MAT provision?
18. From your perspective are there any weaknesses or gaps in provision and information for MAT learners?
19. Finally, in your opinion, is there anything further which could/should be done to ensure the identification and nurturing of MAT learners?

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