

GUIDANCE

Recruit, Recover, Raise standards: the accelerating learning programme

Key principles of the accelerating learning programme

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Context

During the crisis it is clear that many learners have not progressed as much as they might in terms of their progress in learning, some having been impacted more seriously than others. Evidence from a range of reliable sources (OECD, ARC, Estyn, the regions, Sutton Trust, Children's Commissioner, Barnardo's, International Intelligence Updates), including those focusing closely on Wales, suggests that most or all learners have been affected, and that the most vulnerable have been affected the most. The comments in this paper should be read in the context of the [Welsh Government Learning Guidance](#), designed to inform practice as we return to school in September 2020.

Principle 1: Learners in Greatest Need: Affected Cohorts

The most affected cohorts currently appear to be:

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

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

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

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

- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence within a broad and balanced curriculum – for the examination years, this will include higher order reading and writing skills, high level mathematics where relevant, and digital competence at the appropriate level and as relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications
- Development of independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to make accelerated progress by working more effectively alone and out of school
- Support and engagement through coaching – this in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need coaching and emotional support as well as support for examination preparation and skills

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

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

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

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

Principle 4: Reducing Bureaucracy and Ensuring Transparency

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

- The school should set out what it intends to do with the resources in a simple way, indicating the number of pupils included and an outline of the curriculum and staffing solution
- This should be agreed by the school's CA in the case of schools currently designated as requiring red and amber levels of support
- The intention should be signed off by the Governing Body and made available to the school's parents and community
- We will maintain a 'learning brief' as an education system, by sharing intelligence and insights in respect of the impact of the programme as it develops

Principle 5: The Principle of Collaboration

Regions, Local Authorities, Universities and Other Partners

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

School Level Collaboration

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

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