



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

Guide to the Pupil Development Grant

Guidance on what it is and how to use it to reduce the impact of poverty on educational achievement.

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The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is a key enabler for tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment and ensuring high standards and aspirations for all. This document provides headteachers and staff of schools and settings with guidance on evidence-informed practice regarding use of the PDG for children and young people aged 5 to 15 years from low-income households.

Introduction

The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is a key element of our policy for tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment to ensure high standards and aspirations for all.

This document provides headteachers and staff of schools and settings with guidance on evidence-informed practice regarding use of the PDG for children and young people aged 5 to 15 years from low-income households. It is also aimed at regional consortia, local authorities, funded non-maintained childcare settings, national umbrella organisations and other interested parties. Updates to guidance on derivative grants including the Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG), the Pupil Development Grant for Looked After Children (PDG-LAC) and use of PDG in Education Other than at School (EOTAS) settings will follow in 2023 to 2024.

For further information about this guidance or to notify of amendments, please contact: EquityinEducation@gov.wales

Ministerial foreword

Tackling the impact of poverty on attainment is at the heart of **our national mission in education**. I set out my vision for how we will do this in a **speech to**

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the Bevan Foundation in 2022. In this speech I outlined the key areas we will address in a sustained, whole-system approach that supports children and young people through all phases of their education, from pre-school through to post-16. I have made it clear that we must consider all educational policies through the lens of whether they help tackle the impact of poverty on educational outcomes. I reaffirmed this commitment with the launch of our new '**High Standards and Aspirations for All**' road map (**Oral Statement, 21 March 2023**). This also highlighted the need to focus on positive actions that help realise the potential of all our young people in a way that nurtures and reflects their aspirations.

The **Pupil Development Grant (PDG)** is a key resource for tackling the impact of poverty on attainment. I recognise that schools have already developed evidence-informed practice in the use of the grant. This is shown in the case studies from Estyn included in this guidance. I want this effective practice to be built upon.

While it is right that we leave final decisions on the use of the grant to school leaders and governors, the Welsh Government want to ensure that schools increasingly focus on 3 things. Firstly, that the PDG is used, through work in the key areas, to improve the attainment of children and young people from low-income households. Secondly, that the use of the grant is informed by evidence on what is effective in improving the attainment of learners from low-income households. Thirdly, that schools monitor the use of the PDG and evaluate the impact it is having on learner attainment. This will enable them to inform their governing bodies, their local authorities and Estyn on the progress they are making in tackling the impact of poverty on attainment.

Along with the **School Essentials Grant**, which aims to reduce the impact that poverty is having on children and young people's experience of education, the PDG must play a major role in both reducing and overcoming the impact of poverty on attainment.

The Welsh Government is determined to reduce inequalities in Welsh society. Education has a vital role to play in achieving this commitment. Building on the excellent work that is already being undertaken in our schools, and through a continuous focus on improving outcomes for children impacted by poverty supported by the PDG, we will strive to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Every child in Wales deserves equity and excellence in their education and we must deliver both.

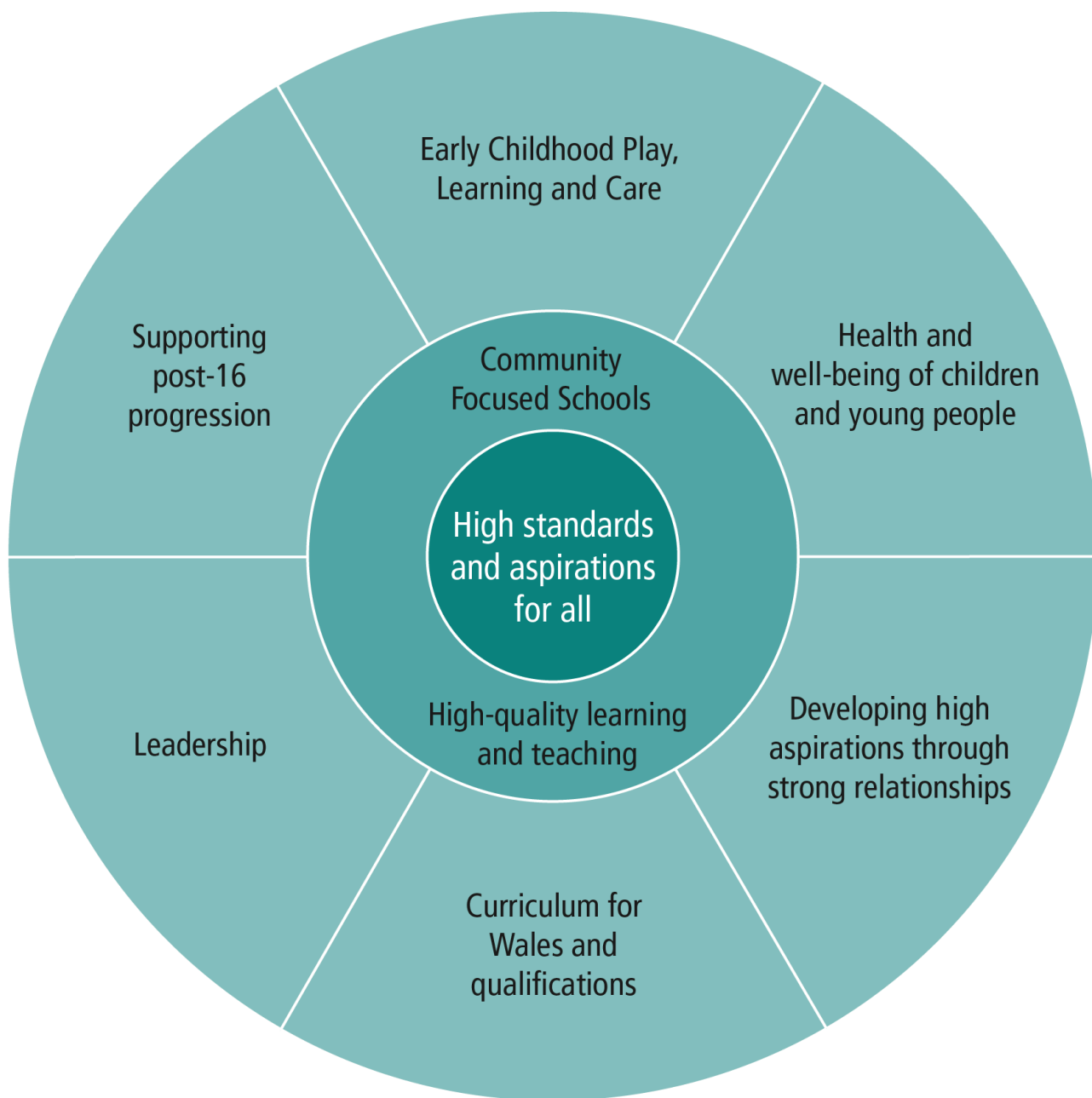
Jeremy Miles MS

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Welsh Government

Tackling the impact of poverty on attainment

Overcoming educational inequality is complex. However, discussions held with practitioners and key stakeholders in the Welsh education system, as well as evidence from educational research, suggest that focusing on the following key areas should improve the attainment of children and young people from low-income households:



While all of these key areas are important, Estyn have stressed that schools which are effective in reducing the impact of poverty ensure that all pupils, especially those experiencing the challenges brought about by poverty, have access to the very best learning and teaching, and that relationships are built

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with 'parents, the local community and specialist services to meet the needs of pupils and their families' (Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2016 to 2017). For this reason, schools should prioritise these 2 areas:

- high-quality learning and teaching
- the development of Community Focused Schools

High-quality learning and teaching

The link between high-quality teaching and learner progression is paramount. As such it should be a key focus for the use of PDG. Curriculum for Wales is designed to promote and enable high quality learning and teaching so that all learners realise the **four purposes**.

The aspects of learning and teaching pedagogy, included within the Curriculum for Wales cross curricular and integral skills, which have the greatest impact on learners from low-income households are:

- language development
- metacognition
- self-regulation

Other elements which impact on these learners are:

- appropriate use of educational technology and avoiding digital exclusion ('**Teaching and Learning Toolkit**', **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)**)
- providing educational practitioners with high-quality professional learning in these and other areas ('**Effective Professional Development**', **EEF**)
- the effective deployment of classroom support staff ('**Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants**', **EEF**)

All schools in Wales are moving to teach Curriculum for Wales and this process is supported by a range of professional learning and pedagogy support to improve learning and teaching. Extensive advice has been produced for schools on implementing learning and teaching strategies. Examples of this literature include **the EEF's guidance report 'Putting Evidence to Work'** and the work of **Professor John Hattie: 'Visible Learning'**.

Schools are encouraged to engage with the **National Pedagogy Project** in order to strengthen pedagogical development across their school. The **Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership** describe the skills, knowledge and behaviours that characterise excellent practice and support professional growth. They also reflect practice that is consistent with the realisation of the new curriculum.

A case study on high-quality learning and teaching can be found in the Case studies section.

Community Focused Schools

We want all schools in Wales to be Community Focused Schools. Estyn's guidance '**Community schools: families and communities at the heart of school life**' and our guidance '**Community Focused Schools**' highlight the role which Community Focused Schools can play in overcoming the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

This evidence suggests that there should be a focus on 3 interrelated areas of activity:

1. Family engagement

Family engagement involves creating meaningful opportunities for families and

carers to be:

- engaged in children's learning
- involved in school life and decision making (including developing the home learning environment)

More information can be found in '[Annex 3: Developing family engagement in Community Focused Schools](#)'.

2. Community engagement

Community engagement involves encouraging schools to draw upon and use links with community groups and organisations. It also involves offering support and opportunities to community members.

3. Multi-agency engagement

Multi-agency engagement involves developing:

- partnerships with wider services
- interventions to remove any barriers to learning

A Community Focused School makes links with these services and supports the child and family to access the right support at the right time and place.

How Community Focused Schools help attainment

It is broadly agreed that attainment is improved by:

- high quality Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care
- parental support and encouragement for learning

- positive and stimulating home learning environment
- high expectations and aspirations

Schools therefore can:

- be proactive by asking parents and carers what they need or want and developing things together
- communicate effectively with parents and carers, encouraging discussions about learning
- offer opportunities for families to find out more about how they can support their children's learning at home
- target support and have more intensive support where required
- ensure children have the things they need in the home learning environment to develop their learning, for example by loaning books to parents and carers
- regularly review how well the school is working with parents and carers, identifying areas for improvement

Examples of interventions and support at different stages ([see Boonk et al](#), at page 24) include the following:

Primary

- Reading at home.
- Parents' high expectations and aspirations.
- Academic encouragement and support.
- Appropriate environment.
- Supportive homework help.

Secondary

- Parents' high expectations and aspirations.
- Academic encouragement and support.

- Reinforcing learning at home.
- Discussions between parents and carers and their children.

All schools must pay due regard to national improvement priorities, including reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment, when setting their improvement priorities. Furthermore, the **School Development Plan must contain details of how the governing body will work** with the wider school community, for example parents or carers of learners at the school, local residents, other schools, agencies and businesses. We know that greater engagement with families has been shown to tackle the impact of poverty on attainment and therefore we would expect schools to have improvement priorities which align with **Community Focused Schools guidance**.

A case study on Community Focused Schools can be found in the Case studies section.

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care has a crucial role to play in tackling the impact of poverty on child development, including attainment, at an early stage.

Early years settings, primary schools and practitioners will find the following documents useful for further information on using PDG (and EYPDG) funding:

- **'Early Years Pupil Development Grant: guidance'** (Welsh Government)
- the EEF's **Early Years Toolkit**

A case study on Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care can be found in the Case studies section.

Developing high aspirations through strong relationships

Supporting the aspirations of learners living in low-income households and their families is of critical importance in tackling the impact of poverty on attainment. To this end, it is important that the views of these learners are listened to, are acted upon and that they receive feedback.

Useful information on this area can be found in:

- Estyn's '[Supplementary guidance: listening to learners on inspection - September 2021](#)'
- the Children's Commissioner for Wales' guide '[Participation: How? What? Why? A guide for professionals](#)'
- the EEF's '[Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning](#)'

A recent 'review of [the relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic achievement](#)' by Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel shows that parents' expectations and aspirations for their children play an important role in determining levels of academic achievement. It also shows that family engagement, which is a key element of Community Focused Schools, can help strengthen this.

It is also important that learners growing up in low-income households receive high-quality, independent advice ('[Good Career Guidance](#)', Sir John Holman) on future educational pathways and careers. This supports:

- the raising of aspirations
- the making of informed decisions
- the raising of awareness of opportunities which young people may not have considered

[Careers Wales](#) can support schools with this. [EEF multi-country research](#) also

provides further information on the benefits of certain interventions on social, economic and education outcomes. These interventions include:

- mentoring
- work experience
- information
- advice
- guidance
- work-related learning

A case study on developing high aspirations through strong relationships can be found in the Case studies section.

Health and wellbeing of children and young people

Social, emotional and mental health issues are often seen to disproportionately impact on learners from low-income households. The Welsh Government and Public Health Wales have produced statutory guidance on the '**Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing**' for schools. This guidance also covers self-evaluation. A whole-school approach is about embedding good wellbeing through teaching and all other aspects of school life. It is an ethos that:

- values inclusion
- sees everybody working together; contributing their individual skills and resources to the collective good
- creates a supportive environment where young people are encouraged to fulfil their personal and academic potential
- creates an environment where young people thrive, learn and emotionally develop, supported by trusted adults within a culture that equally values their own wellbeing

A case study on the health and wellbeing of children and young people can be

found in the Case studies section.

Leadership

Leaders have a key role to play in tackling the impact of poverty on attainment and responsibility for planning and evaluating PDG spend. They can do this through:

- seeing tackling the poverty attainment gap as an important part of their vision for their schools
- ensuring that learning and teaching is of high quality for learners from low-income households
- providing learners from low-income households with a range of qualification pathways that interest and motivate them to achieve their aspirations
- ensuring that learners from low-income households' opinions are heard
- ensuring their schools work as Community Focused Schools
- ensuring their schools develop as **effective learning organisations (SLO)**

Estyn's supplementary guidance on reducing the impact of poverty on attainment and well-being emphasises that strong leadership requires:

- establishing a clear purpose and vision to address the impact of poverty on educational attainment (this includes an effective strategic and operational approach to this challenge)
- establishing a strong culture of high expectations for all and a shared understanding across the school that poverty will not be an excuse for low attainment
- ensuring all staff understand and demonstrate their responsibility in reducing the impact of poverty on attainment, with staff performance managed to support and improve, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching
- ensuring all decision making about strategic and operational matters considers the impact any decision will have on learners from low-income

households, for example on learner groupings, funding use or staff deployment

- establishing strong partnerships with families, the community and a range of agencies and services to help learners from low-income households meet their potential and achieve their aspirations
- collaborating with partners to support seamless transitions from early education through to college and future career
- managing financial resources (including PDG) to ensure that they are used effectively to address the impact of poverty on attainment
- ensuring access to professional learning and research about how best to reduce the impact of poverty on attainment and evaluating the impact of this learning
- systematically evaluating strategies, initiatives and core provision to consider their effectiveness and impact on the educational attainment of learners from low-income households

The **Welsh Government's 'School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability'** provides further information on what is expected of schools in terms of:

- evaluation
- improvement
- accountability
- the need to track progress on the poverty attainment gap as part of this

Estyn have also published a visual **resource to support schools on their improvement journeys** which shows the role of leadership in this. In addition, a briefing produced by the Department for Education in England provides further information on **supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils**.

A case study on Leadership can be found in the Case studies section.

Curriculum for Wales and qualifications

The Curriculum for Wales offers a unique opportunity to provide high-quality learning and teaching that can help to tackle the impact of poverty on attainment through improving standards and aspirations. Guidance on planning, delivery and evaluation of [Curriculum for Wales is available on Hwb](#). Key features of the learning and teaching for children from low-income households should be language development and comprehension ([Oral Statement: Children's Reading and Oracy](#)), thinking skills and self-regulation ([Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning | EEF](#)).

A wide range of academic and vocational qualifications and pathways should be offered to all learners, in line with their aptitudes and abilities. These qualifications and pathways should be underpinned by the core skills of literacy, numeracy and digital learning ([Qualifications available in Wales | Qualifications Wales](#)).

A case study on Curriculum for Wales and qualifications can be found in the Case studies section.

Supporting post-16 progression

In order to continue the progress made in tackling the impact of poverty on attainment during compulsory school years, it is most important that young people from low-income households can access a range of post-16 routes and pathways. [The Young Person's Guarantee](#), developed by the Welsh Government, sets out some of the opportunities open to young people after the age of 16.

A case study on supporting post-16 progression can be found in the Case studies section.

Taking an evidence-informed approach: a 4-stage process

In using the PDG to support work in these key areas, schools should use a cyclical 4-stage approach to ensure that their work:

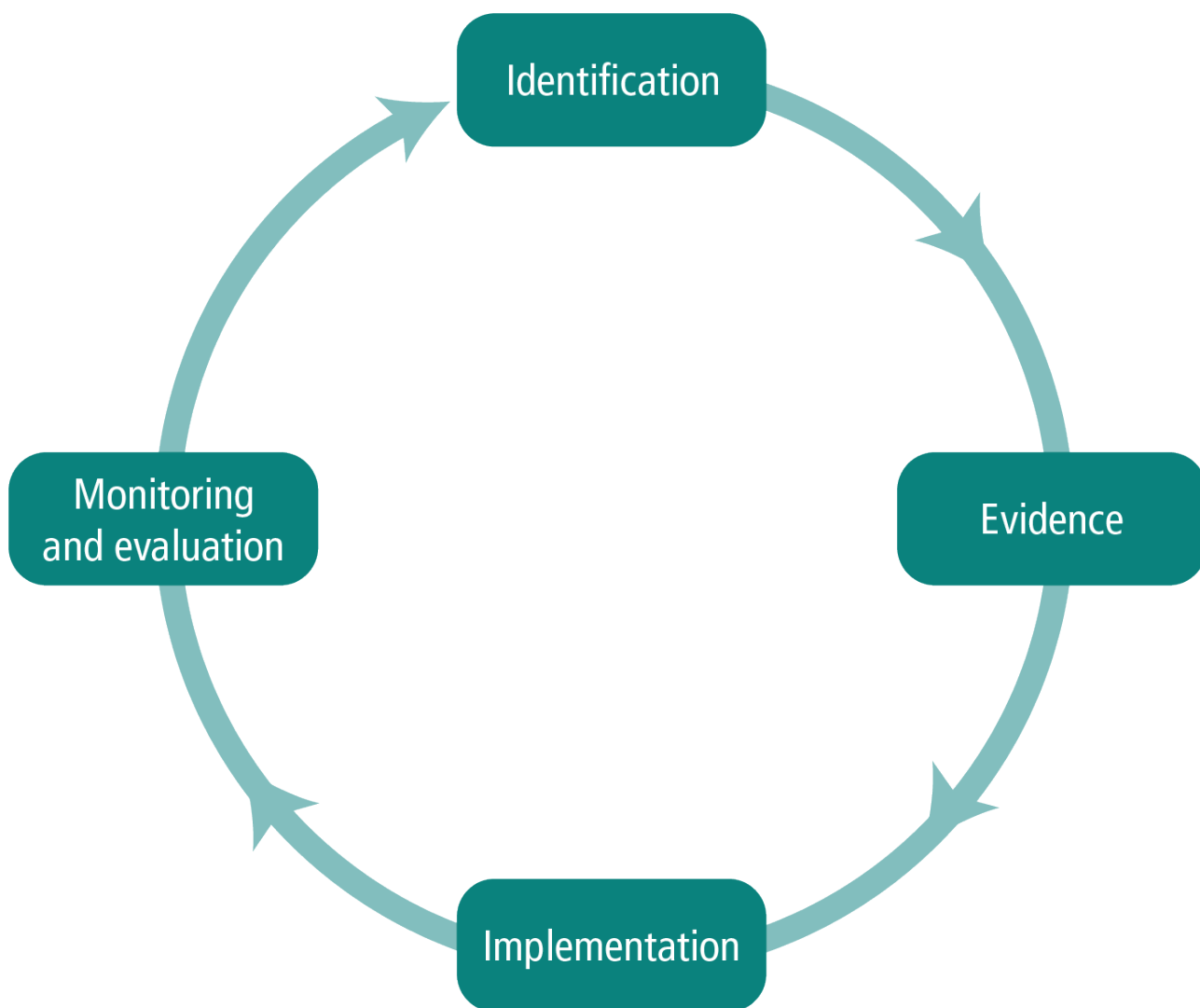
- is strongly evidence-informed
- supports the **progression** of children and young from low-income backgrounds

This is similar to the Welsh Government approach for undertaking **school self-evaluation and development planning** and **assessing learner progression within Curriculum for Wales**. It also reflects the approaches to professional enquiry by teachers within the '**National professional enquiry project**'.

Schools will find the following resources useful in further developing the 4-stage approach:

- **Effective use of data and research evidence, Welsh Government**
- **Guide to Undertaking Professional Enquiry**, Welsh Government
- 'Progression', **Developing a vision for curriculum design: Hwb (gov.wales)**
- **Guide to the Pupil Premium (April 2022), EEF**

The 4 stages are as follows:



1. Identification

The first step is for schools to identify the poverty-related gaps in learning they are aiming to address. To do this, schools will need to use available data and evidence about the progress and wellbeing of learners. As part of this diagnostic assessment of need it is important that schools look at trends in the evidence, including in relation to progression from primary school.

Broadly, schools should consider how well learners from low-income households:

- make progress across the school, since starting school, from one phase to another, and during the school year
- recall previous learning, acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills
- apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to new situations both in and out of the classroom
- are affected by other factors that could have an impact on their learning and progress (for example, additional learning needs, being care-experienced or looked after children, LGBTQ+, being more able and talented or from a minority ethnic group)

The identification of need should also consider information on:

- the wellbeing and mental health of learners
- attendance
- exclusions
- feedback from teachers
- learner voice

In doing this, schools should identify the specific barriers to progress experienced by learners from low-income households. These might be related to, for example:

- teaching
- learner grouping
- access to appropriate learning experiences
- attendance
- other factors which have a negative impact on progress

Schools should also look at whether current improvement programmes,

interventions and strategies are succeeding by evaluating their impact.

The National Evaluation Improvement Resource (NEIR) and the **Estyn Supplementary Guidance on inspecting approaches to reducing the impact of poverty provide** examples of questions which could support this. It is particularly important that the views of learners are sought as part of this. Through Family Engagement Officers and wider Community Focused School work, the views of parents and carers should also be sought and considered.

As of September 2022, headteachers of maintained schools are under a duty to make arrangements to provide information to parents about a learner's progress as part of Curriculum for Wales. This requirement around sharing information recognises the important role parents can play in:

- bridging the gap between school and home
- supporting learners to make progress

See '**Family and community engagement toolkit**' and '**Annex 3: Developing family engagement in Community Focused Schools**' for more information.

2. Evidence

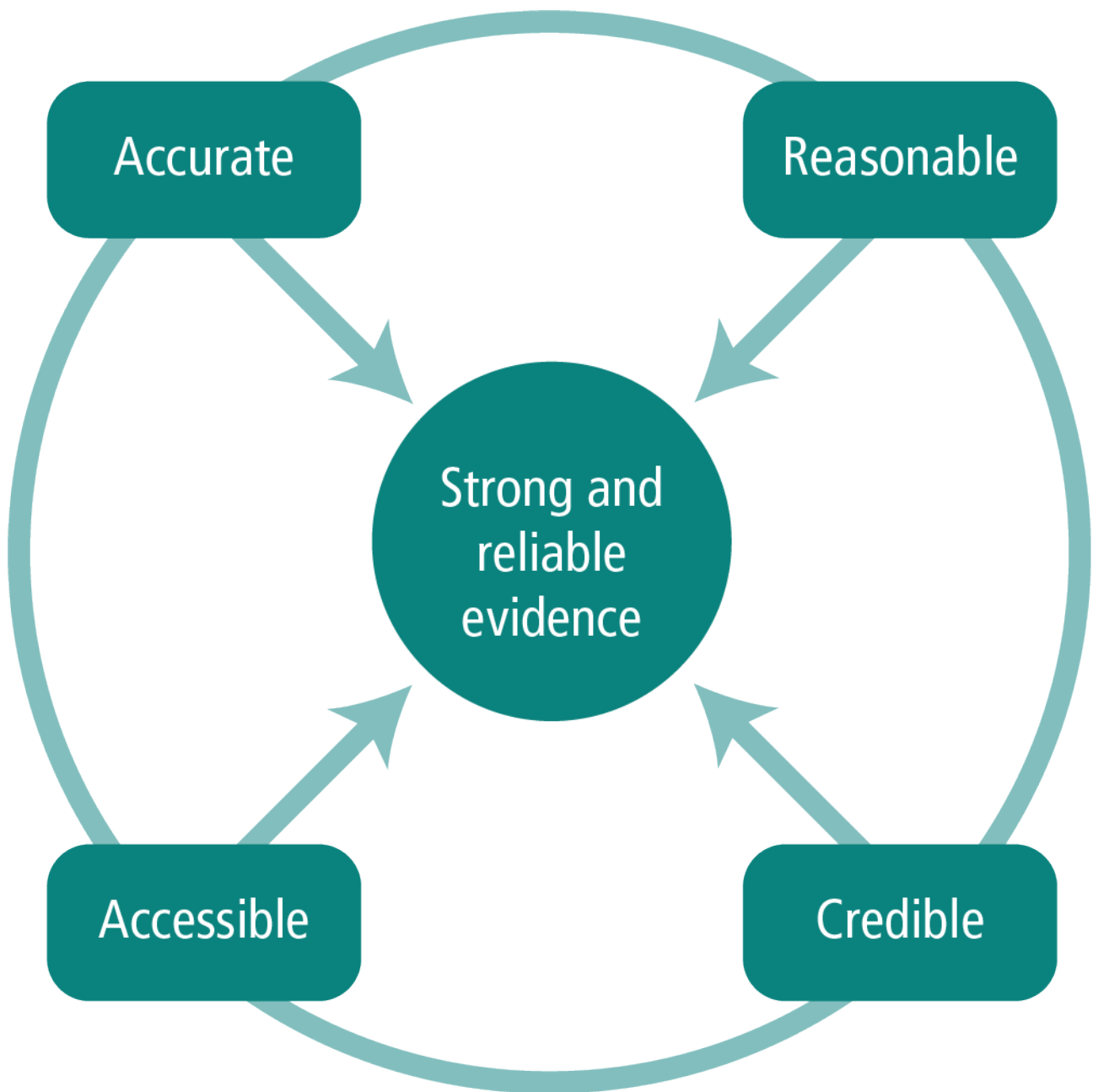
Once schools have assessed and identified challenges to learner progress, they should decide what support, including tailored interventions, they will put in place to address them. They should draw upon approaches for which there is strong evidence so that they can demonstrate their use of the PDG is evidence informed.

If, for example, they have identified that learners are facing specific language difficulties or issues associated with health and wellbeing, they can look for high-quality, recent and relevant evidence such as that to be found on the **EEF website** or examples of **effective practice case studies that have been**

collected by Estyn.

How schools can judge whether the evidence available is strong and reliable

Following this model will help schools decide whether evidence is strong and reliable:



(Adapted from [Coaching and Mentoring English \(ioe.ac.uk\)](https://www.ioe.ac.uk/))

With regards to each element, schools should consider the following:

Accessible

- The overall quality of the material (whether from websites, articles or oral presentations).
- Evidence should be presented in a clear, easy-to-follow style, with arguments or findings well expressed.

Accurate

- The evidence should demonstrate internal consistency within the data.
- Supporting references need to be clear, without any obvious gaps.
- Accuracy of details such as dates, numbers and people is sensitive to change so it is important to check when sources were published and whether details are up to date.
- Surveys may be based on small samples and low response rates which may mean results are not representative.

Reasonable

- The evidence should draw on sound information and avoid sweeping generalisations (for example, 'boys do not have the same level of concentration as girls', or 'children from ethnic minorities underachieve').
- Are the views one-sided, or advocating a particular cause, and if so, how does this compare with other views?

Credible

- The evidence should come from an authoritative source.
- Materials produced by reputable educational publishers, peer-reviewed journals and official sources (for example government reports, websites with suffixes .gov and .ac.uk) are generally credible because they are subject to

rigorous internal quality assurance processes.

- Most reliable sources indicate the background, remit and the author's credentials, while most credible websites include 'About us' sections.

The **EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium** also provides useful guidance on accessing, appraising and interpreting strong and reliable evidence.

3. Implementation

Having identified the needs of the learners targeted by the PDG and considered what evidence will inform the tailored support or interventions to be put in place, schools should decide how these will be implemented. This will, of course, be a continuous process and not a one-off event.

Practical questions that should be considered in implementation plans include:

- are there existing learning and teaching approaches, tailored support or specific interventions being undertaken in this area (for example, improving the emotional and mental wellbeing of learners)? If so, is the new support or intervention(s) replacing these or are they supplementing them? If so, how will this be done?
- if they are replacing previous approaches intended to reduce the impact of poverty, was this because they had little or no impact? If so, why was this the case and how will this influence the implementation of the new approaches?
- will the implementation of the new approaches require professional learning for the staff (teachers and support staff) who will use them? If so, should this be undertaken before the interventions are used?
- will the interventions or tailored support require dedicated teaching time, or can they be embedded in existing learning and teaching approaches? Are there other staffing or timetabling implications?
- do the interventions or tailored support need to be aligned with other

strategies and plans currently in place in the school? This might include the school development plan, the plan for realisation of the Curriculum for Wales, **Additional Learning Needs strategies**, and how the **Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing** is being implemented?

Implementation could follow a phased approach based on:

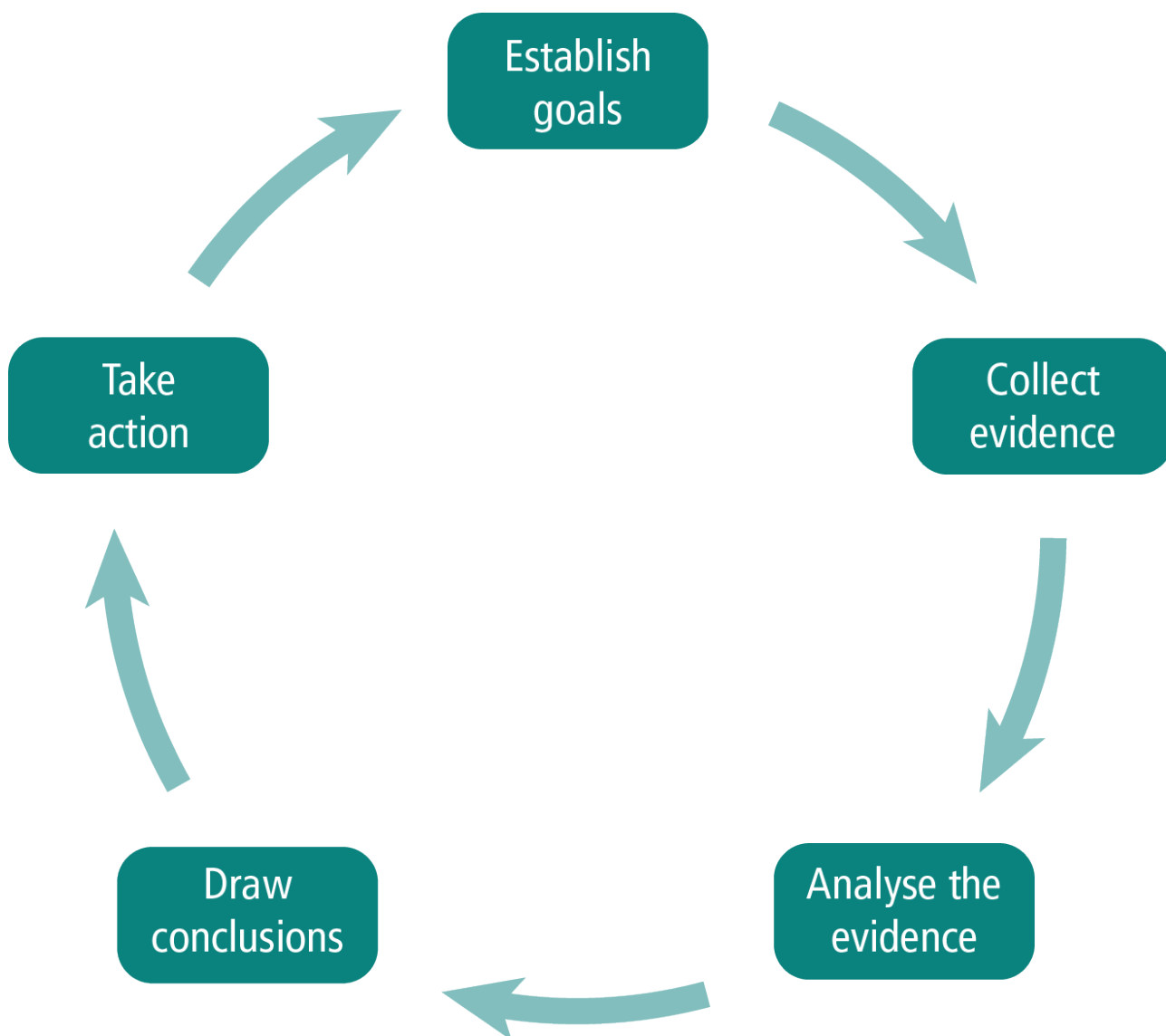
1. preparation
2. planning
3. trialling
4. full implementation

4. Monitoring and evaluation

School leaders and other staff will demonstrate effective monitoring and evaluation of use of PDG:

- through an ongoing and continuous process of monitoring and evaluation, aligned to wider school improvement
- by focusing on progress towards achieving agreed goals for learners
- by drawing upon a range of indicators of progress with attainment being the most important
- by using a wide range of evidence including learner voice
- by establishing what has worked well, not so well, not at all well, and what has led to these outcomes
- by establishing what can be learnt from this process to inform future work

Teachers often find that the **National Professional Enquiry Project's** professional enquiry approach is the best way of doing this. The approach is shown in this diagram:



Schools will also find it useful to look at:

- Estyn's **Supplementary guidance: inspecting the approaches taken by schools and local government education services to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment and well-being**
- **School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability: Hwb (gov.wales)**

Roles and responsibilities

PDG funding and its use by schools and settings is a key way of tackling the impact of poverty on attainment. Schools and settings, local authorities and regional consortia all play a role in the effective use of the grant.

Schools and settings

To ensure the effective use of the PDG, schools and settings have responsibilities to:

- spend the PDG in line with the terms and conditions of the grant
- focus on the key areas for tackling the impact of poverty on attainment set out above, with a particular focus on high-quality learning and teaching and Community Focused Schools
- focus on whole-school approaches where appropriate
- designate a lead for PDG-eligible learners in your school or setting. This could be an equity or wellbeing lead or someone in a pastoral role. It is important to note that the PDG should not be used to fund this role. The designated lead should be an established member of the school community who is familiar with their cohort
- engage positively with PDG Advisers in the relevant regional consortia or local authority in their role to provide robust and constructive challenge to schools, ensuring that they use evidence-informed approaches
- engage the support of PDG Advisers in provision of tailored support to enable headteachers and governing bodies to improve the outcomes for learners living in low-income households and care-experienced children
- engage and work proactively with your regional consortia or local authority to identify support needs, measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of support and interventions
- engage and work proactively with regional consortia or local authority to

identify and share best practice, and work collaboratively with other schools and settings

- publish annual PDG school strategy statements on your website on the use of PDG and its impact (see [Annex 1: Pupil Development Grant School Statement template](#))

Regional consortia (or local authorities not part of consortia)

To ensure the effective use of the PDG, regional consortia (and local authorities not part of consortia) have responsibilities to:

- appoint PDG Advisers to support schools and settings to use evidence-informed practice in the use of PDG funds, reporting regularly to the Welsh Government on their activity and the impact of PDG funding
- provide strategic oversight of the use of the PDG in line with the key areas
- provide schools and settings with the necessary support to use the grant in the most effective way, with a particular focus on high-quality learning and teaching, and Community Focused Schools
- provide robust and constructive challenge to schools ensuring that they use evidence-informed approaches for the use of PDG funds
- provide high-quality support to enable headteachers and governing bodies to improve the outcomes for learners from low-income households
- support collaboration between schools and between schools and settings
- support sharing of effective practice
- monitor the strategy statements that schools need to publish on their use of the PDG and its impact
- ensure there is a designated 'PDG Lead' for PDG eligible learners in each school and setting in receipt of PDG funding
- build networks through the identification of key PDG Leads within every school and establish local and regional 'networks of leaders'

Local authorities

To ensure the effective use of the PDG, local authorities are required to:

- passport PDG funding in full to schools and settings in line with the terms and conditions
- ensure schools and settings are informed of the PDG terms and conditions, including the need to target spend on the key areas set out above, with a particular focus on high quality learning and teaching and Community Focused Schools
- support engagement of schools and settings with PDG Advisors in planning and evaluating PDG spend

Case studies

The case studies show how schools and local authorities are developing their approaches to reducing the impact of poverty in each of the key areas. They are edited versions of reports and case studies published by Estyn on school and local authority-based practice and have been anonymised.

Learning and teaching

Context

The proportion of learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) in this secondary school is slightly above the national average for the sector. The community it serves is socio-economically diverse and located in a large town.

Case study

Nearly all teachers know their pupils well and use information to adapt their teaching to the context of each class. They foster positive working relationships with learners and manage their classrooms effectively.

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm. They have high expectations of what learners can achieve and provide support that encourages active participation in learning. These teachers plan lessons effectively, organising knowledge and skills into sequential steps that build logically on each other. They have clear, appropriate learning intentions, which are shared with and understood by most learners.

In many cases, teachers use a variety of highly effective questioning strategies to check learners' understanding and develop their thinking. They create a culture in which learners are not afraid of making mistakes or expressing opinions. They are good role models in the way they speak and use erudite language to communicate with learners. Many support their learners well through thoughtfully designed resources and targeted individual assistance. They demonstrate clearly what learners are required to do so that they understand what is expected of them. In these lessons, teachers withdraw the level of support skilfully to develop learners' independence.

A few teachers ensure that all learners make rapid progress in their learning. These teachers have very high expectations of all learners. They teach with pace and rigour, explaining complex concepts in ways that are readily understandable to learners.

Community Focused Schools

Context

The proportion of eFSM learners in this primary school is considerably above the national average. The school hosts a Flying Start setting and specialist teaching facilities for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) drawn from other schools in the cluster. The school is in a semi-rural community with limited access to wider services nearby.

Case study

The school has established a very strong and trusting partnership with families in the community. This open access approach breaks down barriers by helping parents and carers feel welcome in the school. The school is more than a place where children learn. It is also a facility that benefits the families and community.

In addition to providing a range of support and activities for parents and carers, the school houses specialist provision in the co-located services hub. This includes:

- a domestic violence support service
- a health visitor
- a Flying Start Community Advisory teacher
- a strategic commissioning and programme manager
- the social services Early Years Help team
- a support worker from the charity Action for Children

These providers work together seamlessly with the school staff to provide holistic support for the children and families. In a few cases, this interaction has

helped parents and carers improve their skills and develop their confidence to attend college courses. Some of these courses are held at the school and run by partner further education establishments.

Flying Start provision is completely integrated into the day-to-day life of the school. The organisation of classrooms means that Flying Start groups learn alongside learners receiving nursery education. This means that:

- transition for the learners and their parents or carers into the primary school provision is highly effective
- the school builds relationships with parents and carers at an early stage

Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care

Context

The childcare provider in this example is situated close to a city centre. The provision includes wraparound childcare for children at the nursery and playgroup and a crèche that provides emergency or temporary childcare.

Case study

Parental engagement sessions give parents and carers the opportunity to see what their children do at nursery and help them become more involved in their learning and development. The sessions give parents and carers confidence and a better understanding of different things they could do to support their children's learning at home. Staff provide good opportunities for parents and carers to get to know them better, as they discuss what happened when they were doing the home tasks and share ideas for other activities and next steps in learning. The sessions help to promote continuity in children's learning

experiences between the home and the setting. This adds to the impact of activities children enjoy in the setting and strengthens their learning. There is also an opportunity for children to show parents, carers and families what they have been learning throughout the term.

Practitioners have noticed that parents and carers become more involved in the sessions as their confidence improves, and they use their new-found confidence to continue to practise the skills with their children at home. At the end of each session, staff ask all parents and carers to complete a feedback form, detailing what they enjoyed, what could be improved, and ideas for future sessions. Practitioners listen well to suggestions from parents and carers and consider their observations of children's interests carefully. They make the most of parents and carers' skills and staff expertise wherever possible.

Health and wellbeing of children and young people

Context

The proportion of eFSM learners in this 11 to 16 inner-city secondary school is significantly above the national average. The school has a specialist teaching facility for learners with speech, language and communication needs.

Case study

The school has developed a system of tracking which includes:

- predictions
- targets for each learner to raise aspirations
- outcomes of an online wellbeing survey to provide an overview of wellbeing
- standards including learners' reading ages and attendance rates

Teachers contribute to the system regularly sharing information about academic progress and each learner's attitude to learning (ATL) on a 4-point scale. Staff use the information from this system proactively to provide bespoke support and challenge. For example, the system enables the school to hold meetings where 15 to 20 colleagues, including teaching and non-teaching staff, discuss no more than 4 Year 9, 10 and 11 learners.

Together with wellbeing information, this approach allows staff to agree on specific intervention for specific learners which include:

- small group or individual literacy and numeracy support
- bespoke wellbeing interventions, including mentoring groups
- the involvement of outside agencies where necessary

Developing high aspirations through strong relationships

Context

The youth service in this example is in a local authority where the proportion of eFSM learners is slightly higher than the Wales average. The proportion of learners from ethnic minorities is considerably higher than the Wales average. The proportion of children looked after by the local authority is higher than the Wales average.

Case study

Youth workers work mainly, but not exclusively, with economically and socially disadvantaged and marginalised young people. Their aim is to increase young people's self-esteem and develop their aspirations. They use online activities to stay in contact with many young people. Doing this helps to engage with a

growing number of young people who might not be comfortable with more traditional methods but are more confident in an online environment.

Online activities range from craft and cooking to gaming clubs. Youth workers engage and develop young people's confidence through taking part in a specific activity. A digital youth work project is a good example of this. A group of experts in the digital world, who were not previously engaged with youth work are now developing accessible and relevant online content and services for all young people. This includes:

- blogs
- vlogs
- podcasts
- campaigns to reach out to all young people

This work is led by the young people who also work with youth workers and web developers to create a bespoke young person friendly website for the youth service. They worked with partners and chose the content and, importantly, the most appropriate digital platform for online activities. Young people have said that both their online and in-person contact has improved:

- their skills
- their confidence
- their self-esteem
- the range of life possibilities open to them

Curriculum for Wales and qualifications

Context

The proportion of eFSM learners in this example is slightly higher than the

national average. It includes pupils from parts of a nearby town and from a number of the outlying villages.

Case study

To encourage learners to be responsible for their own learning and be more able to assess their own work, the school introduced a series of strategies. These included allowing learners to take ownership of their own learning and skills development. This enables them to recognise what they need to do when they come across something they don't know and to have appropriate strategies to progress with their learning.

Learners were also encouraged to seek feedback from their teachers and respond to it effectively. More importantly, they were encouraged to give feedback to staff about their teaching. This meant that they became active in their own learning.

Learners are also able to use a range of meta-cognitive strategies developed through a shared language of learning. They are encouraged to see learning as challenging work, with a growth mindset and a desire to succeed. They are also supported to understand what the learning intentions are and the importance of being challenged by the success criteria. They can use effective tools for self-assessment and challenge themselves well to improve, using effective assessment for and of learning.

The highly flexible curriculum allows learners to choose a pathway suited to their needs. In commencing their chosen pathway in Year 9, learners get to trial their choices to ensure they are a good match. At Key Stage 4, learners can choose to follow 3 different pathways:

- extension
- enhancement

- enrichment

The balance of time and choice of options vary according to the pathway a pupil follows. The option process is heavily learner led. Learners can choose the subjects they would like to study, with options reflecting both academic and vocational experiences. Choices are not restricted to one pathway and the school gives equal value to both. A careful support network is in place to provide learners with the appropriate guidance to ensure successful outcomes. An extensive range of subjects is offered and supported through a highly successful partnership with post-16 providers that contribute to delivering a range of carefully selected vocational courses.

Leadership

Context

The proportion of eFSM learners in this primary school is considerably above the national average. The school also has a high proportion of learners with ALN. The school hosts a pupil inclusion assessment centre for learners from across the local authority with behavioural difficulties.

Case study

The headteacher's highly effective leadership has transformed the life and work of the school. His enabling leadership style facilitates effective continuous improvement and supports the development of a strong team culture.

Significant strengths of the leadership at the school include:

- a consistent emphasis on developing and maintaining positive relationships

across the whole community

- the capacity to bring the best out of people

The school has developed and implemented a clear vision that meets the needs of learners, families and the local community particularly well. This ensures that staff:

- work with a shared sense of purpose to promote high expectations for learners' progress and wellbeing
- ensure that they develop a sense of belonging to the school and the local community

Initiatives, such as the development of the family-centred approach to learning, show how the school turns its vision into action through effective strategic leadership. The school works effectively to raise learners' aspirations, for example by inviting high profile personalities from the world of sport, science and Welsh politics to the school. This provides learners with valuable opportunities to identify the characteristics they may need to develop to achieve their own life goals. The school is effective in:

- distributing roles and responsibilities
- developing leadership capacity

Senior leaders use staff experiences and skills effectively to improve provision, progress and outcomes for learners. For example, the leadership of the school's family support provision by its Family Engagement Officer is exceptional.

This work is extremely beneficial to the lives of learners and families in the locality in many ways. For example:

- it provides pre-school support to parents and carers
- it makes it easier to engage with a network of vital support services

The school's commitment to tackling poverty and social disadvantage is at the

heart of all its work.

Leaders engage purposefully with research and with educational settings from the UK and the United States to inform decisions about provision, for example to shape the family support strategy. They use the PDG well to fund skilled staff to implement a sustainable whole-school approach to wellbeing, to support learners' development of skills and to provide access to experiences.

Supporting post-16 progression

Context

This provision is provided by a local authority where the proportion of eFSM learners is slightly higher than the Wales average. The proportion of learners from ethnic minorities is considerably higher than the Wales average. The proportion of children looked after by the local authority is higher than the Wales average and the proportion of learners with ALN is lower than average.

Case study

To address economic disadvantages within the community, work takes place in partnership with local organisations to address the educational and training needs of Somali heritage youth and other groups to increase their educational qualifications and enhance their employment potential. As part of the project, participants can develop as sports leaders, or take part in breaking down barriers to apprenticeships for peers.

Wherever possible, the project uses peer facilitators and trainers to deliver its workshops. This work helps local young people to grow in confidence and progress into education, employment and training.

As a direct result of his work, one former member of the group joined a football youth academy, where he successfully completed a trial and was signed on-contract for the club. Another, who represented Wales at the British athletics finals, has now started a 2-year football and education scholarship. Building upon the success achieved as a member of the group, another learner was able to use project funding to join a youth and community work access to higher education course and is now studying for a BA (Hons) in nursing.

Phase 2 of the project will tackle the situation of Somali heritage youth by addressing some of the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage in the community. It will look in particular at the lack of vocational qualifications and social isolation from wider Welsh society. The aim is to work with local further education colleges and work-based learning providers to access vocational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Useful links and resources

The links and resources listed are not exhaustive and many are referenced throughout this guidance.

- Education Endowment Foundation: [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#)
- Education Endowment Foundation: [Early Years Toolkit](#)
- [Supporting Vulnerable Learners through effective teaching and learning](#): Professional Learning materials for teachers and education staff, available for all schools in Wales until February 2025.
- [Visible Learning: Information About What Works Best For Learning](#), Professor John Hattie
 - [Community Focused Schools Guidance](#)
 - [Annex 1: Links between Community Focused Schools and other policies](#)
- [Annex 3: Developing family engagement in Community Focused](#)

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Schools

- **Family and community engagement toolkit**
- **Curriculum for Wales: Hwb**
- **School improvement guidance: Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability: Hwb**
- Estyn - **Supplementary guidance: inspecting the approaches taken by schools and local government education services to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment and well-being**
- Estyn - **Leadership and School Improvement: A practical guide to support school leaders and staff in their school improvement journeys**
- **Children in Wales: Price of Pupil Poverty resources**
- **Child Poverty Action Group, the National Education Union Cymru and Children North East: Tackling Poverty Together: Creating compassionate services to support families in poverty at school**

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