



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Response to the Estyn thematic report on
supporting more able and talented pupils –
How best to challenge and nurture
more able and talented pupils: Key Stages 2 to 4**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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Report title:

Supporting more able and talented pupils - How best to challenge and nurture more able and talented pupils: key stages 2 to 4 (March 2018)

Report details:

The Estyn report, '*Supporting more able and talented pupils. How best to challenge and nurture more able and talented pupils: key stages 2 to 4*' was published in March 2018 in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government. The report examines standards, provision and leadership in meeting the needs of more able and talented pupils in primary and secondary schools in Wales. It provides an evaluation of progress against the recommendations for schools and local authorities in Estyn's previous survey reports on supporting more able and talented pupils in 2011 and 2012.

The report identifies how primary and secondary schools across Wales challenge and nurture more able and talented pupils successfully in key stages 2, 3 and 4. The report includes case studies of effective practice for schools to consider. It is intended for the Welsh Government, headteachers and staff in schools, local authorities and regional consortia.

Summary of main findings:

The report highlights the main issues and shares examples of effective practice across four areas:

Standards

Where outcomes for more able and talented pupils are strong, the pupils are fully engaged, independent thinkers. Core skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are used effectively and creatively. Pupils are very self-aware with respect to their progress and where their skills and knowledge need improving.

By the end of key stages 2 and 3, teacher assessments show that pupils' achievements at the higher than expected levels have improved year-on-year since 2012. At key stage 4, the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-A GCSEs (or equivalent) has increased in 2017.

However, in around a third of schools, more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should or use their skills to a level that matches their ability. In primary and secondary schools, more able girls perform better than boys at the higher levels and more able pupils eligible for free school meals do not perform as well as other pupils who are more able.

Provision

Pupils excel where staff provide a valuable range of enrichment and extra-

curricular activities. In schools that are most successful in challenging the brightest pupils, teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. Where schools place a strong emphasis on nurturing more able and talented pupils, staff provide regular opportunities and structured support for pupils to share any concerns, challenges or barriers that they face.

Most primary and secondary schools have an appropriate, shared understanding of how they define 'more able and talented' pupils within their individual schools. They have clear and systematic procedures for identifying pupils' particular strengths using a wide range of information. Most schools track the progress of more able pupils well and partnership working is a strength.

However, too many teachers do not ensure their more able and talented pupils are sufficiently challenged. Appropriate provision for the brightest pupils is dependent on the skills and resources of individual schools rather than being a systematic reality across Wales. Often schools do not develop processes to evaluate the impact of joint projects or partnership working on outcomes for these pupils well enough. There has not been enough progress in around half of primary and secondary schools to build on transition arrangements in key stage 3 and, generally, too many secondary teachers do not provide sufficient continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Where effective leaders place an appropriate emphasis on improving standards and provision for more able and talented pupils, schools have developed highly successful whole-school approaches. For example, they use grant funding such as the pupil development grant (PDG) and lead creative schools scheme to support and nurture these pupils to achieve well. In these cases, school staff participate effectively in professional learning experiences to support more able and talented pupils. They also engage well with external organisations such as NACE Cymru to develop aspects of their practice.

Where there are shortcomings in provision for more able and talented pupils, leaders do not ensure that strategic planning pays good enough attention to supporting staff to meet the needs of these pupils. As a result, practices for challenging and nurturing their progress vary too much between classes in primary schools and by class and department in secondary schools. In around a third of primary schools and in a majority of secondary schools, processes for improving quality are weak. Too few schools monitor and evaluate how well their provision meets the needs of more able and talented pupils rigorously enough.

Support and challenge for schools

Where schools have used training materials developed by the Welsh Government and NACE Cymru, these have supported the development of provision for more able and talented pupils well. The Welsh Government's 'Education in Wales: Our national mission 2017-21' action plan places valuable emphasis on the need to improve the quality of teaching through

professional learning to meet the needs of Wales' most able learners.

However, Welsh Government and NACE training materials have had little impact on local authority and regional consortia's work with schools. Education consortia have over-emphasised a focus on improving academic outcomes at 'expected' attainment thresholds in response to national performance measures. Positively though, recent Estyn monitoring of the consortia indicates that there is now greater emphasis on the whole range of performance indicators when considering outcomes of pupils.

Recommendations:

There are no new recommendations identified within this report. It considers progress against the recommendations for schools and local authorities in Estyn's previous reports on supporting more able and talented pupils in 2011 and 2012.

Welsh Government response:

The Welsh Government welcomes the findings from Estyn's report. We acknowledge that, while there are many positives on which to build, further work is required to ensure that effective practice is embedded across all levels of our education system. These ambitions are identified within 'Education in Wales: our national mission'.

To further support this aim, on 27 February 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced up to £3 million of funding to support:

- development of a new national approach for identifying and supporting our more able and talented learners. Challenge and support for schools from regional consortia, local authorities, national networks of excellence, along with Estyn, will help take this work forward;
- an expansion of the successful Seren Network, so that more pupils will benefit and from a younger age; and
- a strengthening of the evidence base of what works and use of research in this field.

More widely, evidence from this report will be considered as we take forward delivery of our education reform agenda in Wales.

Publication details:

The report was published on Estyn's website on 22 March 2018:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/supporting-more-able-and-talented-pupils-how-best-challenge-and-nurture-more-able>