



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# **Response to the Estyn thematic report on Readiness for Additional Learning Needs reforms**

**Report title:** Readiness for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform**Report details****Background**

The Estyn report is a response to a request for advice from the Cabinet Secretary for Education on the extent to which maintained education settings are ready to implement the ALN reforms.

The report examines the extent to which maintained primary and secondary schools and education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) settings are preparing for the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the Act). It considers what effective practice currently exists in schools and settings that will support the implementation of the ALN reforms.

**Method**

The report is based on information collated from all school inspections conducted under the new inspection arrangements between January 2018 and March 2018. Inspection reports from 2015-2016 were also used to identify key characteristics of effective practice in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). In addition, 167 primary and secondary schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) across the four regional consortia areas were offered an opportunity to complete questionnaires and 35 responded. Nineteen responses were from primary and eight from both secondary schools and PRUs. All the information was used to provide indicators of the preparedness of schools for a phased transition to the new ALN system. Case studies from seven schools were used to provide examples of good practice.

**Summary of main findings****Key findings**

The key findings, which are set out more detail on pages 5-6 of the report, are:

1. Between 2015 and 2018, care, support and guidance have been good or better in over nine-in-ten primary schools, seven-in-ten special schools and secondary schools, and a third of PRUs.
2. The majority of schools have a good awareness of the changes planned under the Act.
3. Nearly all school special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs)/ALN co-ordinators (ALNCOs) have received training and support from the local authority on the forthcoming ALN system. A particular focus of training has been on the introduction of person-centred practice (PCP).
4. A majority of schools are introducing the PCP approach with staff, pupils and parents, which has generally been positively received by staff.
5. Nearly all schools acknowledge the views of pupils are important and are listened to. Many schools report that they gain a better understanding of the needs of the child when they use PCP.
6. PCP is leading to schools working more closely with other agencies involved with the family and child. For those schools who have established this process, the impact of this multi-agency approach for the pupil and parent is positive.
7. Many schools are aware of the draft ALN Code published in February 2017

and this is being used to support schools to review current provision and to begin to shape the use of PCP. In a few cases, the draft Code is being used to inform early discussions for the implementation of individual development plans (IDPs), although this is in its initial stages.

8. There are a few aspects of current practice which need to be improved for the ALN transformation agenda to achieve its intended outcomes, including assessment and tracking of individual pupils' progress; and information sharing between agencies.
9. Across Wales, teachers' knowledge and understanding of SEN in general, and of the specific needs of pupils they teach, are variable. Teachers do not differentiate or adapt their teaching approaches well enough to meet the needs of pupils with SEN or use suggested strategies contained in advice or plans.
10. Too few schools prioritise whole-school training on SEN or do enough to develop inclusive whole-school approaches and ownership of provision for pupils with SEN. They do not work closely enough with other schools to share their good practice or specialist staff and resources.
11. Schools that have adopted PCP approaches have developed good communication systems with parents.

### **Recommendation**

The report has a single recommendation:

- Local authorities and schools should remain up to date with all guidance and training materials produced by the Welsh Government to support the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs reform and transformation agenda.

### **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government welcomes the findings from Estyn's report. We acknowledge that, while there are many positive aspects of current practice which provide a strong foundation from which to implement the new additional learning needs (ALN) system, some aspects need strengthening to ensure the new system is implemented effectively.

In early 2018, four regional ALN transformation leads were recruited to work with local authorities to support them and their schools prepare for the implementation of the ALN system. As part of their role, the transformation leads will be raising awareness of the findings of the report with local authorities and working with them to ensure they are in a strong position to implement the reforms from September 2020.

A significant proportion of the £20m ALN Transformation Programme funding will be used to support activity to upskill the workforce to better meet the needs of learners with ALN. Work is currently underway to develop a professional learning offer for teachers that will support them in being able to meet the needs of all of their learners. Alongside a professional learning offer for all teachers, we are developing a specific professional learning offer for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCOs) who will provide a strategic leadership role and be the first port of call for professional advice and guidance.

The ALN Code, which will be published for public consultation in late autumn, will set out the roles and responsibilities of those with duties under the Act, including schools. To ensure all those supporting children and young people with ALN are familiar with the Code and their responsibilities, Welsh Government training on the Code will take place in early 2020.

**Publication details**

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