



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

National School Categorisation System

A guide for parents and carers



What is the National School Categorisation System?

In order to raise the standard of education in Wales and support all schools to continue to improve, we need to have a clear picture of how well schools are doing now and be able to identify what they need to do to improve.

The National School Categorisation System aims to provide a clear structure to review how well a school is performing. It takes into consideration how effectively the school is led and managed, the quality of learning and teaching, and the level of support and challenge it needs to do better.

The system helps identify the schools that need the most help, support and guidance to improve. It also identifies those that are doing well but could be doing better and those that are highly effective and could help and support others to do better.

Each primary and secondary school is placed into one of four colour-coded support categories which trigger a tailored support package.

The system is not about labelling schools or creating league tables. It is about helping schools identify what factors contribute to their progress and achievement, and what areas to focus on in order to develop.

We would like to encourage all parents and carers to take an active interest in the performance and progress of their child's school and to support the school on its improvement journey. Whatever category your child's school is placed in, this system helps to make sure that the school will receive the help, support and guidance it needs to secure the very best outcomes for every one of its learners.



Your questions answered

Why do we need a categorisation system?

The categorisation system gives a clear and fair picture of how well your child's school is performing compared with other schools across Wales. It also helps to identify the schools that need the most help, support and guidance to improve.

The Welsh Government and regional consortia have developed the system together. The main purpose of the system is to identify, across Wales, the schools that need the most support. The colour category of support given to a school will trigger a tailored support programme.

The system is based on three simple steps. It is not driven by figures and takes into account the quality of leadership and learning and teaching in our schools.

What is the three-step process and how does it work?

Outcome indicators

Step one

Up until 2017, the Welsh Government used a set of information (such as GCSE results and information on attendance) to analyse schools' performance and place them in one of four standards groups. From 2017, the Welsh Government stopped publishing a standards group for schools. Instead schools now use a broader set of performance information to evaluate how they are doing, which takes into account their local context. This forms the starting point of discussions with their regional consortium challenge advisor about their performance and areas for improvement.

This change was made as a result of our work to change accountability within our education system and make sure that schools, and their learners, are given the right support at the right time so they can fully achieve their potential.

Step two

Improvement capacity

Challenge advisers from regional consortia evaluate the school's capacity to improve, taking account of evidence about the standards achieved and the quality of leadership and learning and teaching. They also use information from the Welsh Government to inform this evaluation and discussions with schools. Schools are placed in one of four groups, A to D. Schools where the judgement is an A show the greatest capacity to improve along with the ability to support other schools. Those where the judgement is D need the most support.

Step three

Support category

The outcomes from step two are used to decide on each school's final support category. The final categorisation is a colour code that shows the level of support a school needs – green, yellow, amber or red.

What is the role of a challenge adviser?

Regional consortia employ challenge advisers to lead on school improvement. There are four regional consortia across Wales (one based in each of the Welsh regions) – GwE in North Wales, ERW in Mid and West Wales, EAS in South East Wales, and CSC in South Central Wales. The challenge advisers are responsible for helping schools to improve their outcomes for learners and support and challenge school leaders to develop their strategies for leadership and learning and teaching. The support for each school is tailored to meet the school's individual needs.

What does each support category mean?

Each category has been given a colour – green, yellow, amber or red. The categorisation colour shows the level of support a school needs (with the schools in the green category needing the least support and those in the red category needing the most intensive support). Each school will receive a tailored programme of support, challenge and intervention based on this category.



What information is used to categorise schools?

A wide range of information is used to categorise schools. This includes information on how a school is led and managed, the quality of learning and teaching, and the level of support and challenge needed to improve. Other information, such as teacher assessments, attendance and examination results, is also included and this sets the background for discussions between schools and their challenge advisers.

Why are attendance figures important?

Improving attendance is a national priority. We aim to improve attendance and in doing so improve learners' achievement. If children are not in school, they lose valuable opportunities to learn. We want to make sure children make the most of their education by being in school and getting the best start in life.

When are support categories published?

We publish information about each school's support category and make it available to parents and carers every January on the My Local School website at **mylocalschool.gov.wales**



Where do I get information if I am concerned about the support category of my child's school?

If you have any questions about your child's school or the category it has been placed in, your headteacher or chair of governors should be able to help.

Are special schools and pupil referral units included?

Yes, the categorisation system focuses on primary, secondary and special schools. In each local authority a support category is given to both special schools and pupil referral units.

Will this system replace Estyn reports?

No, Estyn will continue to inspect schools. You can see Estyn reports on the Estyn website www.estyn.gov.wales/ or via a link from your school's page on the My Local School website.



Your headteacher or chair of governors
will be able to answer any questions
about your school.

Please send any other questions to

Education-BusinessPlanningGovernance@gov.wales

Facebook: **facebook.com/beginsathome**

Twitter: **@edubeginsathome**

#SchoolCategorisation

Website: **www.gov.wales/schoolsinfo4parents**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.



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