

Improving Schools Programme

School Categorisation

The national framework for the categorisation of schools is based on a three-stage process.

Judgements on the overall category of support are based on a four-colour model, green, yellow, amber, and red, with “green” denoting the category where least support is needed.

The Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme focuses particularly on those schools which need to secure improvement in schools categorised as Amber and Red.

In the case of schools categorised as Amber, the school’s Challenge Adviser works with the school to create a Single Plan i.e. the school development plan which defines the support available through the Local Authority and the Education Achievement Service (EAS). Regular half-termly School’s Causing Concern meetings are held in each school with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, EAS representatives and LA Representative. During these meetings the school is provided with the opportunity to present the progress it has made and to consider the appropriateness and impact of the support provided. Following the meeting there is a determination as to the extent of the progress made by the school and consequently the next steps to be taken by all parties represented at the meeting.

In the case of schools categorised as Red, the school’s Challenge Adviser works with the school to create a Single Plan i.e. the school development plan, which defines the support available through the Local Authority and the Education Achievement Service (EAS). Unlike with schools categorised as Amber, this could include interventions made under the Local Authority’s formal powers as detailed in School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. In cases where such schools have been placed by Estyn in the categories of either requiring significant improvement or special measures then the School Development Plan will be replaced by a more formal LA Statement of Action and Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)

In the schools requiring such improvement regular half-termly Schools Causing Concern meetings (SCC) are held, which may be chaired by the Executive Member for Education and are attended by the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Director of Education, Strategic Education Improvement Manager, Principal Challenge Adviser and EAS representatives. During these meetings the school presents and evidences the progress it has made, and the panel also considers the appropriateness and impact of the support and intervention provided. The panel considers and evaluates the extent of progress the school is making against the action points set out in the School Development Plan or Post Inspection Action Plan, (if the school is in an Estyn Category). Following each meeting, the Schools Causing Concern Panel evaluates the progress which the school has made and determines the next steps which should

be taken in relation to supporting the school. This can include the invocation of formal powers of intervention should that be considered appropriate.

Statutory Responsibility

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 consolidates, clarifies and reforms the law in relation to intervention in schools causing concern. The Welsh Government's statutory guidance for schools causing concern (February 2014) details the local authority powers of intervention in schools causing concern, the grounds on which those powers can be invoked and the procedures governing the intervention process. The guidance also summarises the powers of Welsh Minister to intervene in schools where the local authority has failed to do so or has done so inadequately. This includes the Welsh Ministers' powers to direct the local authority to close a school.

The statutory guidance defines a "school causing concern" as one which is:

- Subject to a Warning Notice issued under the 2013 Act.
- Not subject to Warning Notice but meets one or more of the six grounds for intervention and there is a related risk to the health and safety on any person that calls for urgent intervention
- Deemed by Estyn to require significant improvement.
- Deemed by Estyn to require special measures.

Under the terms of the Act, a school will be "eligible for intervention" where one of the following six grounds for intervention exist:

- Ground 1: The standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low.
- Ground 2: There has been a breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed.
- Ground 3: The behaviour of pupils at the school or any action taken by those pupils or their parents is severely prejudicing, or is likely to severely prejudice, the education of any pupils at the school.
- Ground 4: The safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise).
- Ground 5: The governing body or head teacher has failed, or is likely to fail, to comply with a duty under the Education Acts.
- Ground 6: The governing body or head teacher has acted, or is proposing to act unreasonably in the exercise of any of its or his or her functions under the Education Acts.

Should the LA determine that grounds for intervention exist, the LA must issue a warning notice to the school governing body setting out:

- the grounds for intervention,
- the reasons why the LA is satisfied that the grounds for intervention exist,
- the action which the governing body is required to take
- the period in which the action is to be taken by the governing body
- the action the LA is minded to take should the governing body not take the required action or make sufficient progress.

In the case of a foundation, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school the LA will work in partnership with the relevant bodies.

A school is also eligible for intervention where:

- the school has been deemed by Estyn to require significant improvement or special measures. (In both these cases there is no requirement to issue a warning notice prior to intervention.);

and/or,

- one or more of the grounds 1- 6 exist and/or there is a related risk to the health or safety of any person that calls for urgent intervention.

Local Authority powers of intervention

Under Section 5 of the Act, the LA is able to intervene in schools causing concern in the following ways:

1. Direct the governing body to secure advice or collaborate with another school
2. Appoint additional governors and nominating a new Chair
3. Appoint an Interim executive board
4. Suspend the delegated authority for the governing body to manage the school's budget
5. Direct the governing body to take certain action or to desist from taking certain action.

A school remains eligible for intervention by the LA until one of the following events takes place:

- the authority gives notice that it is satisfied that the grounds for interventions that have been dealt with or that using its powers of intervention would not be appropriate for any other reason;
- the Welsh Ministers determine that the power to intervene is no longer in effect and give notice in writing to the local authority and the governing body of their determination.

Performance Information and Data

All schools are categorised on an annual basis in accordance with the National Model for Categorisation. The process takes place at a regional level and for the last 3 years national moderation has confirmed that the regional process is robust.

School Categorisation January 2017

Overall, National School Categorisation in January 2017 indicated an improvement when compared with the previous year. In January 2017:

- 2 schools were categorised as Red (Abertillery Learning Community and Ebbw Fawr Learning Community);
- 4 schools were categorised as Amber (St. Joseph's RC Primary, St Mary's RC Primary, Ysgol Bro Helyg and Canolfan yr Afon). A further 2 schools were re-categorised from yellow to amber due to the need to provide additional support (Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary and St Illtyd's Primary);

- 14 schools were categorised as yellow; and
- 4 schools were categorised as green (Beaufort Hill Primary, Deighton Primary, Georgetown Primary and Tredegar Comprehensive School). This was an improvement on the year before.

School Categorisation January 2018

Overall, National School Categorisation in January 2018 indicated an improvement when compared with the previous year in terms of the number of green schools:

- The number of Red schools remains the same. One school remains categorised as Red (Abertillery Learning Community), one school (Ebbw Fawr Learning Community) moved to Amber, but one school (Brynmawr Foundation) moved from Yellow to Red;
- 4 schools were categorised as Amber (The River Centre, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary and St Illtyd's Primary);
- 11 schools were categorised as yellow; and
- 8 schools were categorised as green (All Saints RC Primary, Beaufort Hill Primary, Deighton Primary, Georgetown Primary, Glanhowy Primary, Pen-y-Cwm Special, St Mary's CiW Primary and Tredegar Comprehensive School). This is again an improvement on the previous year.

School Categorisation January 2019

Overall, National School Categorisation in January 2019 indicated an improvement when compared with the previous year in terms of the number of green and yellow schools:

- The number of Red schools remains the same (**2**). Two schools remain categorised as Red (Abertillery Learning Community and Brynmawr Foundation School).
- **2** schools were categorised as Amber (One school Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary remained as Amber with Brynbach Primary School being categorised from yellow to amber due to the need to provide additional support. Overall this represented a reduction of 2 schools compared to the previous year).
- **10** schools were categorised as yellow (CoedyGarn Primary, Glyncoed Primary, St Joseph's Primary, St Marys RC Primary, Sofrydd Primary, Ysgol Gymraeg Brohelyg, Ystruth Primary with a further 3 schools moving from Amber to Yellow - River Centre, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and St Illtyds Primary).
- **11** schools were categorised as Green (All Saints RC Primary, Beaufort Hill Primary, Deighton Primary, Georgetown Primary, Glanhowy Primary, Pen-y-Cwm Special, St Mary's CiW Primary and Tredegar Comprehensive School with a further 3 schools moving from Yellow to Green Blaenycwm Primary, Cwm Primary and Willowtown Primary). This is again an improvement on the previous year and over a three year period represents a significant improvement in the percentage of schools categorised as either Yellow or

Green and demonstrates the improved capacity and leadership within our schools.

Schools in the Red and Amber Categories, that have made positive progress (2017 to 2019)

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community (Red to Yellow)

In September 2015, the school was issued with a pre-warning notice on the grounds of insufficient improvement in standards and concerns regarding the quality of teacher assessment. Following the Estyn Inspection in February 2016, and the school being placed in the statutory category of significant improvement, the Local Authority issued the school with a warning notice to improve. In April 2016, the Local Authority invoked its powers of intervention by appointing additional Governors to the Governing body and securing a new Chair of Governors. A new Headteacher was appointed to the school in the summer term 2016 and took up his appointment in September 2016. A Local Authority Intervention Panel was established to monitor progress. An Estyn monitoring visit in Spring 2017 recognised the positive progress that had been made, particularly in relation to pupil well-being. The Warning Notice was removed in July 2018 prior to the notification of a revisit from Estyn. The school was revisited by Estyn in July 2018 and removed from the statutory category of requiring significant improvement due to the sustained and strong progress secured by the school. The school is now categorised as yellow in recognition of the level of support that they require.

St Joseph's RC Primary (Amber to Yellow)

In 2014 St Joseph's primary school was categorised as an Amber school, with particular concerns about the capacity for leadership and quality of governance. In the Autumn 2015, the school categorisation remained as Amber. The school had an acting Headteacher, having failed to secure the appointment of a substantive Headteacher on a number of occasions. Under the national categorisation process 2016-17, the school remained in the Amber support category, reflecting the continuing temporary leadership arrangements. The acting Headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in September 2017 and a new Chair of Governors also established. The school was categorised as Yellow in the 2017-18 national categorisation process. The school was inspected by Estyn in January 2018 and was judged to be good in all 5 Inspection Areas.

St Mary's RC Primary Yellow (in year) to Amber to Yellow)

In 2015 and 2016 St Mary's RC Primary school was categorised as a Yellow school. The school was inspected by Estyn in June 2016 and was placed into Estyn monitoring because of the need to improve standards in skills and in teacher assessment and tracking. Because of the adequate judgements for current performance and prospects for improvement, the school was re-classified in year to Amber. Following very strong progress against the recommendations the school was categorised as Yellow in the 2017-18 national categorisation process. The school was revisited by Estyn in December 2017 and removed from Estyn monitoring.

Rhos-y-Fedwen (Yellow Amber (in year) to Amber)

The school was placed in Estyn Review in March 2017, and was subsequently re-categorised in year as Amber. Formal acting Headteacher arrangements were put in place shortly before the inspection. There are effective working relationships across the senior leadership team. The governing body has recently been strengthened although the recruitment of governors remains a key challenge for the school. The main issues during inspection were inaccuracy of teacher assessment at end of KS2 in reading and writing which have since been addressed. This had an impact on the quality of self-evaluation judgement. A new Headteacher was appointed and EIB processes reported that good progress was being made against all recommendations. The school was revisited by Estyn in June 2018 and was removed from Estyn monitoring.

Schools who are in receipt of additional support 2018 to 2019

Brynbach Primary School (Yellow to Amber)

In January 2019 the school was categorised as Amber in 2019 in recognition of the additional support required by the recently appointed Headteacher. Throughout the year EIB processes have reported that progress against the school development plan priorities are Good.

Schools in Receipt of a Statutory Warning Notice

Abertillery Learning Community (Red)

Standards of performance in Key Stage 4 have been sustained from 2018 performance but are still in need of improvement, whilst at primary level performance has declined. The school is currently subject to a LA warning notice to improve and a programme of intervention. LA appointed school Governors are in place as well as an LA nominated Chair of Governors and Vice Chair. An extensive programme of support is now in place across the setting.

The Local Authority and EAS are working closely with the school and Governing Body to improve the school and recently held an Improvement Conference to jointly plan targeted, bespoke support to enable significant improvement across the setting.

The school was inspected in February 2018 and was placed in the statutory category of requiring significant improvement. A follow up visit was held in July 2019 and Inspectors noted the progress that had been made in respect of many of the recommendations for action from the inspection, although noted that many of the improvements are at an early stage of development and as such confirmed that the school will remain within an Estyn category. Following a successful period of leadership by two established Headteachers the Governing Body have successfully recruited a suitably experienced Headteacher to the permanent position of Headteacher.

Brynmawr Foundation (Amber to Yellow, to Red)

In December 2013 Brynmawr Foundation School was inspected by Estyn and placed in Estyn monitoring; with an adequate judgement for its current performance and prospects for improvement. Recommendations included improving the school's performance and improving quality in teaching and learning. The school was categorised as Amber in 2014 and 2015. The school was issued with a statutory Warning Notice in 2015 to improve standards, particularly in Maths. Support was put in place and Key Stage 4 outcomes improved significantly in 2016. The Warning Notice was subsequently lifted.

Due to the improvement secured, in 2016 the school was classified as Yellow, having made strong progress against Estyn's recommendations and with improved performance at the end of KS4.

However, following an unexpected decline in KS4 performance in 2017, particularly in Maths and the outcome of an EAS review of the effectiveness of leadership and management at the school, the school was categorised as Red in the 2017-18 in the national school's categorisation process. The school continues to be subject to a LA statutory warning notice to improve and after a period of support, intervention is now in place. Governance has significantly improved and the additional Governors that had been appointed have been removed evidencing the cultural growth that is now demonstrable within the Governing Body. The Governing Body have appointed both a new Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher, who will continue to set the direction of leadership and management across all areas of the school. Performance in Key Stage 3 improved which bodes well for future performance. Performance at Key Stage 4 in the Capped 9 in 2019 also improved. However, understandably at this stage of the schools' improvement journey, the impact of changes at leadership level are still at a very early stage of development and do not yet provide an accurate evaluation of significant and sustained improvement.