

Kirsty Williams announces £3 million of support for Wales' brightest and most talented pupils

In a statement to the National Assembly this afternoon the Cabinet Secretary will set out three key principles to drive improvements:

- better identification and support at school, regional and national levels
- opportunities that will inspire the highest levels of achievement
- the development of evidence to support further investment and work.

The Cabinet Secretary announced the new funding and support on a visit to Y Pant Comprehensive in Pontyclun. The school has worked with NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) to achieve a NACE Challenge Award. This recognises school-wide high quality provision for more able and talented learners.

The funding announced today will support a new national approach for identifying and supporting more able learners, backed with comprehensive new guidance. This will include a new definition for more able learners, supporting schools in this work.

The Cabinet Secretary also announced that the successful Seren Network, which supports Wales' brightest sixth formers gain access to leading universities, will be expanded to target younger learners.

From September, the Network will begin targeting learners before their GCSEs – connecting learners from different schools and communities and building on Seren's existing links with leading global universities.

The £3 million investment will also include funding to further develop the Welsh Government's policy for more able and talented learners, ensuring that any future measures are based on the most reliable evidence.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Further encouraging a culture that supports high aspirations for all learners, teachers and schools is crucial to the delivery of our national mission for education.

“It is clear from PISA, previous Estyn reports, Sutton Trust and UCL research that Wales must do more to identify, support and stretch our more able learners.

“The investment I'm announcing today means that we will be able to reach these learners at a much earlier stage, ensuring they have the support and opportunities to reach their full potential.

“The Seren Network already makes a hugely positive contribution to raising aspirations, boosting confidence and encouraging post-16 students to be ambitious.

“Expanding the programme will help us to build that confidence in our younger learners and show them that there are opportunities they may not yet be aware of.

“We have to look at this as a long-term investment; this is about how we create the next generation of entrepreneurs, teachers, scientists and public servants that will drive Wales’s future prosperity and success.

“Getting it right for these learners, and those with the potential to be these learners, therefore means getting it right for everyone.”