

Looked after children must have same educational opportunities as their peers – Kirsty Williams

The Cabinet Secretary has reported on progress to better support the education of children who are looked after and outlined her plans for action to continue to raise their educational attainment and make sure they have the same opportunities as their peers.

An annual report on the three year plan for looked after children highlights the progress being made, including an improvement in GCSE results. In 2016 23 per cent of children who are looked after achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at grade A*–C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics, a 6 percentage points increase on 2015.

The Welsh Government has also worked with Cardiff University – CASCADE to create a new online hub to share information and resources focusing on children in care to help improve their educational outcomes.

The Education Secretary has committed to:

- Looking at the training available to schools and further education colleges with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Getting local authorities to review the roles of key workers with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Working with the third sector to consider better ways of supporting children who are often difficult to engage in education.
- Making better use of the data available to help looked after children.

The Education Secretary recently announced that the Pupil Development Grant will be extended to provide support to three year old looked after children during their early years in schools. This is part of more than £90m this year to help disadvantaged pupils.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Central to our national mission of education reform is for all children to do well and reach their potential, whatever their background. Looked after children must have the same opportunities as their peers. We have seen an excellent improvement in the GCSE results of those in care and we have committed more funding to build on this, but I want to go further.

“Children often enter care come from a background of family crisis or breakdown. While we can not change their personal experiences, we will continue to support them through their education and prepare them for adulthood.

“Research shows that all too often that simply by being ‘in care’ the expectations placed on these young people reduce. We are taking action to face this issue head on and will continue to do so.”