

Latest categorisation reveals improvement in school performance

Introduced in 2014, the National School Categorisation System places schools into one of four colour-coded support categories to demonstrate the level of support they need – green, yellow, amber and red.

There are now more schools in the green and yellow categories when compared to last year. Green schools require just four days of support and yellow schools receive up to 10 days of support.

This year sees a small change to the factors that decide a school's category. Instead of just looking at areas such as performance, including GCSE results, there is now a much broader assessment that considers areas such as teacher assessments from other subjects, wellbeing and the quality of teaching and learning.

The purpose of including a broader and more sophisticated range of factors is to understand the kind of support needed by a school and to give parents a better picture of how a school is performing.

Out of over 1,500 schools across Wales only 4 appealed against their category.

In summary:

- 85.3 per cent of primary schools and 68.3 per cent of secondary schools are now in the green and yellow categories. This increase from last year continues the upward trend since 2015.
- There has been a very small rise in the proportion of red schools – those identified as needing most support – by 0.4 percentage points in the primary sector and 2.9 percentage points in the secondary sector.
- 45 per cent of special schools have been categorised as green, and needing less support, with no schools categorised as red and in need of most support.

Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams said:

“I'm pleased to see that more schools are now in the green and yellow categories, which continues with the upward trend we have seen over the past few years.

“These schools have a key role to play in supporting other schools to improve by sharing their expertise, skills and good practice.

“Last September, I announced that to further raise schools standards we would make changes to the school categorisation system following advice from the OECD.

“As well as taking into account a much broader range of factors about a school’s ability to improve, categorisation now places more of an emphasis on discussions about how the school could improve – leading to a tailored programme of support, challenge and intervention.

“I’m confident that the changes we have made to the categorisation process are in the best interests of pupils and will help ensure schools are given the right support at the right time.”

Wales bans the intimate piercing of under 18s

The new law, coming into force today is making it an offence for piercing practitioners to arrange and/ or carry out an intimate piercing on under 18s.

The aim of the new law is to protect children and young people from the potential health harms which can be caused by an intimate piercing.

The change will come under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, prohibiting the intimate piercing of persons under the age of 18 in Wales. It will also be an offence to ‘make arrangements’ to perform an intimate piercing on a child or young person under the age of 18 in Wales.

The intimate piercing of children and young people under 18 could also be considered a child protection issue. By undergoing an intimate piercing procedure, young people under the age of 18 may be placed in a vulnerable position.

During a visit to Frontier Tattoo Parlour in Cardiff to discuss the new law, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Frank Atherton said;

“In line with The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, this new law is in place to ensure we can protect children and young people’s health and wellbeing.

“It’s concerning that a third of young people with intimate piercings have reported complications following a procedure. The child protection issues that could also arise from this scenario highlight even further, the importance of implementing such a law.

“I hope this piece of legislation will help to reduce these issues, and that practitioners understand the importance of obtaining proof

of age beforehand”.

The Chief Dental Officer for Wales, Dr Colette Bridgman said:

“Tongue piercing can lead to lasting damage to teeth and gums, and can cause serious swelling in the mouth that can affect breathing. Many dentists in Wales have seen patients who have permanent harm following piercing and dental teams in Wales really welcome this new law”.

A study in England found that amongst individuals aged 16-24 complications were reported with around a third of all body piercings. The same study found a higher incidence of complications in connection with certain types of body piercings, including intimate piercings. Problems were most likely to be reported in the case of tongue piercing (50%), followed by piercings of the genitals (45%) and the nipples (38%).

As young people continue to grow during their teenage years, an intimate piercing performed at a young age could result in further complications arising as their bodies develop. Young people may also be less likely to have the experience or knowledge of how to clean or maintain an intimate piercing, leading to an increased risk of infection.

Local authority enforcement officers and Police Officers have received training in advance of the new law coming into effect to enable them to enforce the new legislation effectively.

Intimate piercing practitioners operating in Wales are encouraged to ensure they have a rigid system in place to help them confirm proof of age, and to obtain signed consent for each procedure to avoid prosecution and a fine.

[Fly-grazing incidents down following Landmark Act](#)

Three years on from the introduction by the Welsh Government of a law to address “flygrazing”, a new report shows it has had a positive impact in reducing the number of horses reported and removed due to fly-grazing straying or abandonment.

Thursday 01 February 2018

The report by Equiventus Ltd shows a clear link between the reduction in this behaviour and the approach taken to the problem in Wales, including

the swift introduction of the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014.

Other key interventions include an increase in education programmes for horse owners, a rise in public awareness of the problem and improved communication and collaborative working between the key agencies involved.

Welcoming the publication of the report, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said

“Last year I commissioned Equiventus Ltd to evaluate the value and effectiveness of the Control of Horses (Wales) Act and to consider whether this had resulted in benefits for communities across Wales.

“It is positive news indeed the Act has played such an important role in reducing the number of horses reported and ultimately removed due to fly grazing, straying or abandonment. It is clear from the report’s findings that the Act has made a positive impact on reducing behaviour that has caused so many difficulties for the communities affected and for the animals involved.

“However, while the report by Equiventus Ltd is very good news we should not let our guard down and must continue with the partnership approach, with local authorities, the Police, landowners and welfare organisations to deliver on the report’s recommendations. I am determined to continue to do what’s needed to combat the blight on communities caused by incidents of fly grazing, straying and abandonment of horses and ponies.”

A copy of the report and the Welsh Government’s response can be found on the Welsh Government [website](#).

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Minister sees how Welsh Government schemes are helping people into work

The Minister met with the delivery teams of both programmes and local residents who have benefitted from the schemes. Both programmes are supported by the EU and will operate until 2020. Combined, they will provide over £83 million in employment services across Wales.

Delivered in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions through Job Centre Plus, Communities for Work is a community based advisory service, supported by the European Social Fund. It works with people in the most deprived communities across Wales to increase the employability of 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and economically inactive and long-term unemployed adults who have complex barriers to employment. The programme has so far supported over 13,000 people and helped almost 4000 into work up to December 2017

PaCE helps economically inactive parents into work by covering the cost of childcare while parents undertake training to gain the skills they need to get a job. Across Wales, 43 PaCE advisers work in community settings to help people find a variety of solutions to overcome childcare barriers so that they can move towards and into sustainable employment. Jointly delivered by the Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions, the programme builds upon services offered via Flying Start and Families First and complements other projects such as Communities for Work. The scheme has helped over 750 parents into work so far

The Minister said:

“I found the visit to the Noddfa Centre both interesting and inspiring. It was a pleasure to meet those who have benefitted from both the Communities for Work and PaCE schemes and to hear how they have overcome their difficulties to find work and training opportunities.

“Sustainable employment is still the best route out of poverty. These programmes combined support the most deprived communities as well as rural areas across Wales and provide a real opportunity to help people achieve their aspirations.”

Project gives Welsh speaking throat cancer sufferers a voice

The *Lleisiwr* project, which has received £20,000 from the Cymraeg 2050 grant fund, develops technology which builds personal synthetic voices for Welsh speakers at risk of losing their ability to speak due to diseases such as throat cancer. It is being developed by Canolfan Bedwyr at Bangor University, in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and, once ready, will be available across Wales.

Currently, patients who have lost their voices only have access to English medium synthetic voices which impacts on their ability to converse with friends and family with whom they have always spoken Welsh.

The Cymraeg 2050 grant is a key element of the Welsh language strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It provides small grants of up to £20,000 each to fund innovative, short-term projects which aim to increase people's daily use of the language and to promote technology which supports the use of Welsh. Twenty-six projects were approved in the first round of funding last year while a second round of funding will open for applications later this year.

The Minister said:

"Today's visit has been both informative and very inspiring. I have built a career on my ability to speak so know maybe more than most how devastating it would be to lose that ability through illness. A far greater loss would be to lose the ability to speak to my family and friends in the language we use every day so I am delighted Bangor University and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board are working on the Welsh Voices project and proud the Welsh Government is contributing to the project."

Following the visit, Head of the Language Technologies Unit at Canolfan Bedwyr, Delyth Prys, said:

"It was a pleasure to welcome the Minister for the Welsh Language and to showcase this project. This hugely exciting project gives us an opportunity to apply our Welsh language speech technology in a way that benefits patients. We look forward to the feedback from patients as they're referred to us by the National Health Service, and to further developing this technology in the future."