

Drive to improve science and technology in schools begins

The network for excellence will target the improvement of teachers' skills in science and technology and improve pupils' experience of the subjects while they are at school.

More than £4 million is being invested through the network which will play a key role in the Welsh Government's national mission to raise standards in schools through education reform.

The network involves schools, colleges, universities and the four regional education consortia working together to improve the teaching and learning of science and technology in Wales.

The new network will:

- draw together cutting edge knowledge for teaching practice in science and technology for 3 to 18 year olds.
- co-ordinate the development and delivery of recognised science and technology professional development for teachers, based on global and local evidence of what works.
- improve pupils' experiences of science and technology in schools across Wales.
- enable schools to work together to develop courses, teaching resources and class-based research.

Kirsty Williams said:

"The new science and technology network will play a crucial role in our national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence.

"The PISA results were clear that we must improve the teaching of science in our schools. With new qualifications and the shift away from Science BTEC, we are confident that the new network will play a key role in driving up standards in the classroom.

"This new network will bring together higher education, colleges, regional education consortia and lead schools, capturing the best knowledge, expertise and experience for the benefit of our young people."

Chair of the national network, Prof Tom Crick, said:

"I am delighted to Chair the science and technology network for

excellence. It provides the framework for universities and other key stakeholders to work with regional consortia and practitioners to ensure we embrace and adopt research informed and evidence-based practice from across Wales and internationally in support of Wales' exciting education reforms."

You're not too old to go for gold: 'OlympAGE Games' helps keep older people healthy and active

The Minister for Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, will attend the launch of the games, saying that it's vital older people keep healthy and active as part of efforts to help maintain their independence and reduce social isolation.

The 'OlympAGE Games' which will see older people and disabled people competing in Rio-inspired team-based competitive activities.

Older people and disabled people are less likely to meet the recommended levels of physical activity than the general population.

There is a clear link between physical activity and improved mental health and well-being; increasing levels of physical activity can improve both quality and length of life.

Speaking ahead of the games, Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"It's great to see events like the OlympAGE games taking place. It's a fun way of encouraging older and disabled people to stay active.

"As well as fostering better physical health, this initiative helps improve the mental well-being of those involved by supporting them to be more socially active. It's also great to see students from Bridgend College helping those taking part in the games, bringing the generations together.

"So my message to older people across Wales is – take part in physical activities that you like and are interested in, and show people you're not too old to go for gold!"

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[Minister congratulates super-recycler](#)

school

Blaengwrach Primary, located in Neath-Port Talbot, was one of two Welsh schools that saw 100% of their pupils take part in a UK-wide home recycling challenge during the summer holidays.

Developed by Recycle for Wales and Wastebuster, the [Home Recycling Challenge](#) aimed to educate pupils about what can be recycled in their homes and the benefits of recycling.

The challenge was figure-headed by Welsh TV presenter Gethin Jones and children's TV presenter Maddie Moate along with recycling expert Captain Busta, Wastebuster's popular mascot. Pupils were given a take-home worksheet to find out what can be recycled from around the home by using the [Recycling Locator](#) and schools were ranked by the percentage of pupils that returned the completed worksheet.

In total, 59 Welsh schools registered to undertake activity. The winning school was selected at random from the twelve schools across the UK that had 100 per cent of their pupils submit worksheets.

The Minister said:

"Wales leads the rest of the UK with a 64% recycling rate and it's fantastic to see young people demonstrate so much enthusiasm towards recycling. If we are going to achieve our ambition of a 70% recycling rate by 2025 it is vital our future generations are on board.

"Congratulations to the pupils of Blaengwrach Primary School for taking part in the home recycling challenge and for becoming the recycling expert in their home. They have certainly earned the title of "super-recyclers". I hope all of our Welsh participants found this an exciting challenge."

Mrs Sam Sharp, Headteacher of Blaengwrach Primary added:

"Ensuring pupils are aware of the part they can play in recycling and sustainability is very important. We have a very proactive eco committee that monitors our waste, our meter readings and supports initiatives to inform the local community as well as the pupils of the importance of being eco friendly. We're very proud of the work they do and the strength of pupil voice in the school."

Carl Nichols, Head of WRAP Cymru, said:

“It’s fantastic to see the Minister supporting Recycle for Wales’ Home Recycling Challenge. Wales ranks third in the world at recycling, with more and more of us recycling in the country – and we’d like to be top of the leader board! By engaging school children with recycling, they can in turn inspire their families and help them to understand how best to recycle at home.”

Final exam results do not yet show full picture, says Education Secretary

Responding to the publication of today’s [final examination results for 2016/17](#), Kirsty Williams said:

“It is our national mission that every child, no matter their background, has the opportunity to succeed. Our Pupil Development Grant, which provides extra support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is a vital part of our plans and we’re already seeing the benefits.

“It’s important to have data which you can compare like-for-like, year-on-year, to see where performance issues need to be addressed. But today’s final exam results do not yet provide us with that kind of comparison.

“We have introduced a number of changes to the examination system in Wales over the past year. There have been two new Maths GCSEs, new linear English and Welsh Language GCSEs, and schools are moving away from science BTEC which was failing to properly equip our young people.

“All these changes are linked to raising standards and all were necessary but they mean we’re now essentially dealing with two different sets of data.

“Evidence shows that the Pupil Development Grant is making a difference in breaking the link between poverty and attainment that has dogged our education system. That’s why, earlier this year, I announced plans to extend the grant and why I will continue to do everything within my power to make sure we’re reaching the learners that need this invaluable support.”