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Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19

Update report from June to November 2020

January 2021

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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Introduction

This report is written in response to a request for advice from the Minister for Education in July 2020. It provides an overview of how local authorities and regional consortia have worked with schools and pupils referral units (PRUs) to promote learning and support vulnerable pupils during the COVID-19 period between June and November 2020, that is the period after the initial lockdown when schools were reopening. It captures the ways local authorities and regional consortia have adapted their work to respond to the challenges resulting from COVID-19. The work was carried out before all schools returned to remote learning in January 2021 but will be helpful to inform current ways of working.

The intended audience for this report is the Welsh Government, local authority and regional consortia officers and staff in schools and PRUs. It draws on the evidence base in appendix 1 including interviews, survey feedback and documentary evidence. Due to restrictions associated with COVID-19 we were unable to visit schools and PRUs to gather first hand evidence about the quality of provision. The quantitative feedback from the surveys issued can be found in appendix 2. We have also provided detailed feedback to individual local authorities and regional consortia to support their own self-evaluation for improvement. The report is part of a series of publications by Estyn to share learning and support the education system's continued response and recovery (Appendix 3).

The report features 'cameos' from local authorities and regional consortia. These are not case studies as we are unable to evaluate the impact of the work because of restrictions on our activities due to COVID-19. The cameos are included to exemplify points raised in the report, giving a flavour of the work that has taken place across Wales.

Background

In the foreword to his Annual Report 2019-2020, Meilyr Rowlands HMCI (Estyn, 2020, p.4) stated that 'the last months of the 2019-2020 academic year brought challenges to Welsh education the like of which we have not seen in generations. The challenges were many, complex and unexpected. The COVID-19 pandemic changed people's lives, had a huge impact on economies, and caused major disruption to education systems worldwide and in Wales'. His foreword offers an initial account of how schools and other education and training providers coped with the initial lockdown period and strived to support pupils while providing continuity of learning for them remotely. For further information on this initial lockdown period see the Annual Report 2019-2020.

This thematic report focuses on the period from late summer to late autumn. A timeline of significant events during this period can be found in appendix 4.

In late June, nearly all schools reopened to pupils to provide an opportunity for them to 'Check in, catch up and prepare for summer, and September'. In July and August, the Welsh Government published guidance to support schools to reopen to all pupils, on supporting learning and on supporting vulnerable learners (Welsh Government 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Schools and PRUs reopened to pupils in September, with a transition period leading up to all pupils attending by 14 September 2020. Almost immediately, schools began to experience their first positive COVID-19 cases among pupils and staff, reflecting the situation in their communities, and the first of a series of local restrictions to reduce transmission was announced. During September and October, individual pupils, classes or whole year groups were required at times to self-isolate, leading to the need for remote learning provision. The length of self-isolation periods varied from one day to 14 days depending on the reason and personal circumstances[1]. Positive COVID-19 cases continued to rise and the Welsh Government announced a two-week firebreak lockdown from 23 October 2020. Schools and PRUs were closed for half-term during the first week of the firebreak. During the second week primary schools re-opened for face-to-face learning while many secondary-aged pupils reverted to distance learning from home.

In early November, around 90% of pupils were in school. The proportion of pupils in school fell to around 80% by the end of November and to around 70% by mid-December, as increasing numbers of pupils were required to self-isolate or their school was closed due to an insufficient number of staff available to supervise pupils on site. Towards the end of the autumn term, an increasing number of parents chose not to send their children to school, even if their school remained open, often due to concerns about being able to meet family or friends at Christmas. The national attendance figures mask considerable variation across schools and local authority areas, as in the local authorities worst affected by COVID-19 only around 50% of pupils were in school towards the end of the term. The national figures also mask considerable variation across age groups, with older secondary school age pupils having the lowest attendance at school.

The scope of this thematic report includes the extent of the support provided to schools and PRUs by local authorities and regional consortia during this period. Although the scope does not include post-16 or pre-school providers, we refer to aspects of these sectors' work where helpful. The report focused specifically on two aspects:

- Promoting learning – the quality of the learning offer and how has this been supported through further guidance and professional learning?
- Supporting vulnerable pupils – how did the local authority targeted services and support to vulnerable pupils to support them to engage in learning? What barriers still exist?

[1] The maximum self-isolation period was reduced to 10 days from 10 December 2020.

We also considered the early planning and implementation for the 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme' grant across schools and PRUs and the next steps for this work.

At the time of our engagement with schools in October, very few pupils needed to receive blended learning. Most pupils were able to attend school and benefit from face-to-face teaching. Where pupils were required to isolate or shield, schools provided distance learning until they were able to return. A blended learning approach would involve a cohesive, intentional plan for pupils' learning to involve a combination of learning in school and at home which was not required in most schools during the autumn term. At the time of publication in January 2021, all schools have returned to providing remote learning for pupils, with some face-to-face provision in school for vulnerable pupils and those with parents who are key workers.

Main findings

1 Local authorities and regional consortia have worked closely together and with the Welsh Government to respond to the evolving context caused by the pandemic. Through the Association and Directors of Education Wales (ADEW), senior leaders have provided good support for each other and collaborated to create shared approaches and resources.

2 Local authorities provided valuable support to enable their schools and PRUs to reopen successfully to all pupils in September. Particular strengths were the practical support around health and safety and on communicating with parents and learners. For example, local authorities, working with health care partners where appropriate, supported risk assessments, including for vulnerable pupils and developed welcome packs providing information for parents, carers and pupils. School leaders welcomed the direction from local authorities and regional consortia to focus on pupil wellbeing and felt this was appropriate.

3 During the initial lockdown and the autumn term, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all pupils, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to these needs. In other local authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. The enhanced use of digital communication also contributed to more efficient multi-agency working within local authorities.

4 During the initial lockdown, teachers had to respond quickly to the need to provide distance learning materials for pupils. This provision improved though the summer term. As the need for a number of pupils to learn away from the classroom continued in the autumn term, it remained a priority to further improve and embed distance and blended learning provision. Regional consortia and local authorities have developed helpful guidance, playlists of videos featuring good practice and a range of professional learning. However, schools', local authorities' and regional consortia's oversight of the quality of provision is underdeveloped.

5 Pupils' learning experiences in the autumn term varied widely across and within schools. This is partly due to the varied impact of the pandemic in different areas and also as a result of the different policies and practices adopted by local authorities in relation to close contacts and the different ways that schools have organised groups and cohorts of pupils. These factors have resulted in considerably unequal learning experiences for pupils who have received most of their autumn term education in school and those who have been taught at a distance for extended periods.

6 In his recent Annual Report, the Chief Inspector's noted that 'despite considerable effort by schools, local authorities and central government to provide additional equipment and support, a minority of learners were disadvantaged by lack of access

to suitable computers or adequate connectivity.' The barriers to learning at home identified in the summer term, including access to digital technology, remained in the autumn term.

7 The pandemic has had a greater impact on certain groups of pupils and magnified challenges that already existed. For example, school leaders have told us that pupils eligible for free school meals made slower progress in their learning during the initial lockdown than their peers, with some pupils returning to school with weaker language and numeracy skills than before the initial lockdown started.

8 The pandemic has exacerbated some challenges that local authority and regional consortia had already been working with schools to address. Pupils across Wales have experienced the pandemic in very different ways as a result of their home circumstances. The necessity for pupils to work at home for periods of time in the autumn term has highlighted the need for pupils to be able to work independently successfully and for schools to focus on supporting pupils to improve learning resilience.

9 Local authorities and consortia have recognised the potential longer-term impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of children and young people. All have offered enhanced professional learning for staff from schools and PRUs on supporting wellbeing, including on bereavement and adverse childhood experiences. Children and young people already challenged because of adverse childhood experiences prior to the pandemic have faced further challenges. Children and young people in stable family environments with very few or no prior adverse childhood experiences may also have been affected by the pandemic. For example, time away from friends caused by lockdowns, isolation periods or having to remain in tight bubbles at school can have an adverse impact on pupils' social development and their mental health.

10 In most cases, local authorities have ensured that statutory processes for pupils in relation to special education needs (SEN), including assessments and annual reviews, have continued during the autumn term. Where there have been delays, this has most commonly been due to the capacity of educational psychology services and other specialist services, caused by staff absence or challenges in delivering services remotely.

11 Regional consortium and local authority officers continued to support teachers' and school leaders' digital competence during the autumn term. The increased effective use of digital communication has had positive consequences for facilitating more agile, efficient and frequent interactions between and within learning communities across Wales. School and PRU leaders have valued the flexibility of online professional learning opportunities provided by local authorities and regional consortia.

12 School leaders across Wales have mixed views about the effectiveness of support they have received from their local authority and their regional school improvement consortium during the pandemic. School leaders in south west Wales are most satisfied with the support they have received from their local authority, while school leaders in north Wales are most satisfied with the support they have received from their regional consortium.

13 Local authorities made appropriate early adaptations to the governance arrangements but a few local authorities were too slow in resuming their scrutiny functions. By the middle of July 2020, most councils had begun to hold Cabinet meetings online, but only half of councils had held virtual meetings of their scrutiny committees. As a result, decisions about re-opening schools and providing support for learners in the summer were not scrutinised in half of councils. By the autumn, all council Cabinets were meeting online, and scrutiny committees in most councils were also meeting online.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:

R1 Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity

R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs

R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionally affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils

R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

Leadership

Decision-making and governance

14 Local authorities and regional consortia have worked closely together and with the Welsh Government to respond to the evolving context caused by the pandemic. Through ADEW – the Association of Directors of Education in Wales – directors of education have worked co-operatively to support each other through the pandemic. Directors have reduced the burden on themselves, their officers and staff in the regional consortia by identifying aspects of work that they can agree to work on collaboratively or on behalf of each other. ADEW has supported national work with Welsh Government such as guidance relating to the continuity of learning.

15 Audit Wales has published several reports on how councils' governance arrangements have been affected by the pandemic. Early during the initial lockdown period, councils had to use emergency governance arrangements, meaning that typically 'responsibility for decisions about how councils use public money and provide services fell to senior council officers in consultation with a much smaller number of senior councillors than would usually be involved in decision-making – sometimes just the leader of the council.' (Audit Wales, 2020).

16 Some councils were slow to use new regulations that came in to force in April 2020 that made it easier for councils to meet virtually. As Audit Wales noted, 'in some of those councils there is no comprehensive record available online of the decisions taken since lockdown. This makes it difficult for the public to see and understand the decisions their council has taken during lockdown, and who is accountable for them' (Audit Wales, 2020).

17 By the middle of July 2020, most councils had begun to hold Cabinet meetings online, but only half of councils had held virtual meetings of their scrutiny committees. As a result, decisions about reopening schools to all pupils and providing support for learners in the summer were not scrutinised in half of councils. By the autumn, all council Cabinets were meeting online, and scrutiny committees in most councils were also meeting online.

18 When important decisions are being taken about education services, local authorities should usually take account of the views of school leaders as well as other stakeholders where relevant. Our survey of school leaders across Wales carried out in October 2020 found that the majority of them agree that their local authority involves them effectively in discussions about local education services. However, a few school leaders do not feel involved enough. Local authorities have continued to build on the range of fora they have with school and PRU leaders to communicate, consult and in a few cases, co-construct approaches.

Working together to support schools and PRUs

19 School and PRU leaders in south-west Wales were considerably more positive about the work of their local authority than leaders were about their local authority in the

other three regions. For example, they were more positive about the timeliness of advice and guidance from the local authority, how well their local authority communicated with them, and the support provided to enable their school or PRU to re-open successfully to all pupils in September 2020. They were also more positive about how well their local authority involves them in discussions about education services. South-west Wales is the only region where challenge advisers are directly employed by local authorities, rather than by regional consortia, and this may partly explain why leaders are more positive in this region.

20 School leaders' views of the support they receive from their regional consortium varies considerably. A majority of leaders agreed that GwE had provided effective support and guidance to support learning in their school or PRU. Nearly half of leaders agreed with this was the case with EAS, but only a minority agreed this was the case with CSC and ERW. A majority of leaders also agreed that GwE had provided useful information on the differences between, and approaches to, distance and blended learning. Just over half of leaders agreed with this was the case with CSC and EAS, but only a minority agreed this was the case with ERW.

21 Just over half of school leaders told us that they feel that their local authority cares about their wellbeing. This indicates that there is room for improvement in the relationship between some local authorities and their school leaders. A majority of teachers and most support staff told us that their school cares well for staff wellbeing.

22 During the initial lockdown, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all learners, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to needs. For example, in Bridgend, the 'early help locality service model' already meant that multi-disciplinary teams worked out of three bases in the county, working in an integrated way to support families with vulnerable children and young people. These teams were well placed to work collaboratively and provide support through the pandemic. In other authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. For example, Gwynedd's education psychology service has collaborated with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to develop a new approach to supporting pupils who are absent from school because of their emotional wellbeing.

23 Local authorities have sought to support school leaders in preparing for various scenarios in the face of uncertainty about how the pandemic may affect schools through the autumn and into 2021. A majority of school and PRU leaders told us in our survey that their local authority provides effective guidance to support them to develop flexible plans in the event of further spikes in infections.

Cameo: School Business Resilience Planning

Prior to the increased operation of schools, the Corporate Director for Education and Family Support in Bridgend required all schools including the PRU to produce a business resilience plan. The local authority provided a plan template. Settings were asked to consider a range of possible scenarios and the actions they would take to ensure the continuity of learning. The local authority quality assured the plans and, where necessary required further clarification. Possible scenarios included; the self-isolation of pupils, either individually or as whole year groups; the self-isolation of staff; planning to ensure continuity of leadership. Possible solutions may include the strategic planning and mapping of blended learning; developing the capability and capacity of staff and pupils in using online platforms to support blended learning; producing pre-prepared emergency learning packs for all groups of pupils; use of Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme' grant and cover arrangements.

Delivering ongoing priorities

24 Local authorities have tried sustain as much 'business as usual' as possible while dealing with the various added needs of schools and PRUs associated with the pandemic. For example, wherever possible, work has continued to reorganise schools and improve school facilities as part of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools Programme. The workload associated with responding to the pandemic has undoubtedly slowed progress in some areas. For example, at the end of March 2020, Neath Port Talbot left the regional school improvement consortium, ERW, and three of the remaining five authorities gave notice of their intention to leave at the end of March 2021. The lack of a clear plan for school improvement services in south west Wales from April 2021 is a significant concern. Elected members and senior officers across all local authorities in the region have been slow to ensure that there is a clear vision and plan for how high quality school improvement services that meet their needs will be provided to schools and PRUs from April 2021.

25 Planning and professional learning activities focused on preparing for Curriculum for Wales that schools, local authorities and regional consortia had planned for this year have inevitably been disrupted by the pandemic. From September, we had originally planned to begin discussions with all schools in Wales about their early preparatory work to implement Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. Instead, our discussions with schools in the autumn mainly concentrated on how they are responding to the pandemic. Despite the disruption to preparatory work for Curriculum for Wales, our Chief Inspector noted in our latest annual report that the pandemic 'has presented providers with the need and the opportunity to evolve and innovate … The re-thinking that the lockdown required of schools, combined with deeper engagement with families and support services, has arguably put schools in a better place to co-create with these stakeholders a common vision for realising the Curriculum for Wales' (Estyn, 2020, p.9).

Promoting learning

Supporting schools and PRUs to reopen to all pupils

26 Prior to September, many pupils had spent only a few days in school since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, with some not having spent any time in school. In July, Welsh Government (2020c) issued guidance to schools and settings to support the full return to school in September. This set out priorities for learning emphasising the health and wellbeing of pupils and the importance of outdoor learning. Officers from local authorities ensured that they adopted the same priorities in their work with schools at the start of the autumn term. Local authority officers recognised the pressure that school leaders were under as they planned the reopening of schools and the amount of their time that they needed to give to operational matters including keeping staff and pupils safe. In order to support headteachers, most local authorities and regional consortia distilled the guidance about learning and brought relevant information together in one place, as in Carmarthenshire where officers established Y Porth website for this purpose. Many of the headteachers who responded to our survey said that they had sufficient support from their local authority to help them to re-open their school or PRU successfully. Many agreed that their local authority had provided guidance in good time. This contrasts with what school leaders told us about the guidance in the spring and summer terms, when many felt that it was received too late and that they had to put processes in place to support pupils' learning prior to receiving guidance.

Cameo: Supporting pupils' return to school

GwE developed a regional model in line with Welsh Government guidance, with local authorities and schools, to ensure that the individual needs of pupils were met, with consideration to their local context. The model evaluated the school's preparedness and approach to ensure learning for all pupils continued. It focused on three inter-related components that assess pupils' fitness for learning. These include their emotional and mental wellbeing; their health and physical fitness; and their core skills of numeracy, literacy, independence, and readiness for new learning.

The aim of the model was to support schools to assist pupils to return to 'learning fitness' and to promote learning which allows pupils to continue to make progress. Ensuring coherence for pupils between in-school and remote learning is another key element of the model including developing appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements were temporarily disapplied.

27 Through the school summer break and into the autumn term, regional consortia and local authorities built on the work during the initial lockdown to provide support and guidance to schools for ensuring the continuity of pupils' learning. In some instances, resources provided earlier in the pandemic were revised and updated to make it easier for school leaders and teachers to engage with them. For example, in

the EAS, officers listened carefully to the views of headteachers about the playlist of videos showing effective practice that officers had begun to compile at the start of the pandemic. In the summer term, schools had found the playlist useful as it drew together the national and local guidance about distance learning in one place. As the volume of materials increased, school staff found it more difficult and time-consuming to use the resource and officers responded well to this by streamlining the content into an easier to use web-based resource.

Cameo: 'Supporting Our Schools' website

In response to feedback from stakeholders, the EAS have created a new website to house their support for schools resources. The new website is easier to navigate than the playlist that the service used previously. Resources are clearly labelled and easy to scan. The website contains sections covering different topics such as governance, school improvement, guidance on using the accelerating learning grant funding and curriculum support. The website also contains a link to another new website that houses all resources related to distance and blended learning. These resources are also clearly organised under themes and there are several examples of informative case studies and presentations from schools, as well as links to helpful external resources. In order to make it easy for leaders to identify any new resources, these are signposted each week in a separate section, before being moved to the relevant themed section. The EAS staff are providing online introductory sessions to the new websites. These well-attended, informative sessions are sector specific and available through both English and Welsh. In addition to providing a demonstration of the websites, these sessions also include a choice of breakout sessions involving presentations from schools and an opportunity for discussions in small groups.

Identifying and addressing regression in learning

28 Early in the autumn term, schools leaders started to plan how they could best use the funding from the Welsh Government for the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards' programme. The Welsh Government (2020e) issued guidance for schools to support the use of the grant using the work of national and international organisations including the Children's Commissioner and the OECD to identify the impact of the pandemic on pupils' progress in learning. The government acknowledged that, while many pupils had not progressed as much as they could, there were groups of pupils for whom the impact of the pandemic was greater. These included pupils in year groups preparing for examinations, pupils who had made the transition from primary to secondary school and vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Local authorities and regions supported schools to plan for the use of the grant. For example, in GwE, officers worked with schools to try to ensure that headteachers used the funding in a sustainable way and aligned its use to local priorities, including the Welsh language strategy, to benefit pupils in the longer term. Across Wales, many schools found it difficult to recruit staff using the grant because they were drawing on a limited number of available people. A few schools employed a teacher or teaching assistant on a shared basis and many schools used the funding to increase the hours of existing staff. In smaller schools, funding was often not sufficient to be able to support recruitment. Although, it is too early for schools and local authorities to

monitor the impact of the grant on addressing pupils' skills deficits, officers from local authorities and consortia have plans in place to do this. Officers in Powys local authority provided helpful advice for governors about how to evaluate schools' use of the funds on pupil progress.

29 The impact on pupils' learning and skills from the initial lockdown period differs widely across Wales. In their study into 'Schoolwork in Lockdown', researchers from UCL (Green, 2020) found that children across the United Kingdom spent an average of 2.5 hours each day engaging in learning. Their research shows that 20% of pupils engaged with learning for less than an hour each day and only 17% worked for more than four hours (Green, 2020, p.2). This means that between March and September 2020 nearly all pupils across the UK spent considerably less time than usual learning during the pandemic. In Wales, the number of pupils engaging with learning was lower than the averages for the UK as a whole. The study found that 20% of pupils in Wales were doing no schoolwork at home or less than an hour each day (Green, 2020, p.19). Only 15% of pupils were learning for four hours each day (Green, 2020, p.19). The report highlights substantial inequality linked to deprivation and social groups. Our findings from engagement calls to schools in the October 2020 mirror these findings. Headteachers from schools in areas of social deprivation say that teachers found it more difficult to engage pupils and families with learning through the summer term. We reported on the reasons for this, including access to technology for learning and support from parents in the thematic section of the Annual Report 2019-2020 (Estyn, 2020).

Cameo: Assessing the level of learner engagement in the Vale of Glamorgan

Prior to reopening to all pupils, officers from the local authority, in collaboration with the CSC and schools, developed a matrix to assess the level of engagement of pupils and their wellbeing. Through conversations held between improvement partners and headteachers, information was collected from 55 out of 56 schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The useful report summarised the key findings, the barriers and challenges encountered by schools and effective practice across the region, and concluded by highlighting ways forward. The information gathered has been used to inform local policy and share effective practice across the local authority through a collection of case studies. In addition, support was provided to schools to help strengthen areas such as increasing the engagement of vulnerable pupils.

30 As pupils returned to school in September 2020, leaders and teachers put in place processes to identify the impact of the school closure period on pupils' learning and skills. Many schools used the national online personal assessments for reading and numeracy with pupils in Years 2 to 9 to supplement teachers' own assessments of pupils' skills. Identifying pupils' skill levels following the school closure period was a particular challenge for secondary schools as pupils moved from Year 6 to Year 7. To help schools to identify a baseline for these pupils in secondary schools across the south-east region, the EAS provided schools with funding to support pupil assessment. Generally, local authorities report that pupils have fallen behind with reading and writing skills, and headteachers reported in early October that there has also been a negative impact on the speaking and social skills of younger pupils in the

foundation phase. Local authority and consortia officers are working with schools to address these skills deficits, and are mindful of the need to ensure that schools do not focus on these core skills to the detriment of the wider curriculum.

Supporting Welsh language skills

31 An issue identified during the summer term was the learning of pupils in Welsh-medium schools from English-speaking homes, as many of these pupils had not had the opportunity to hear or practise the language. Addressing this issue was one of the aims of the Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards programme'. As the pupils affected by this issue returned to school in September, staff were particularly concerned about the levels of pupils' speaking skills. Local authorities put a number of initiatives in place to support schools and pupils. For example in Neath Port Talbot, the Welsh advisory service developed useful resources and collaborated with Menter Iaith and the Urdd to provide support for schools. In Wrexham, officers ensured that pupils from Welsh-medium schools who have needed to self-isolate since September have received resource packs and weekly face-to-face sessions or online sessions including podcasts. Several local authorities, including Conwy and Bridgend, used their immersion facilities to provide additional support for these pupils and Cardiff increased its provision in this area to help cope with demand. Officers in the regional consortia also provided support for schools. The EAS placed members of its Welsh support team in Welsh-medium primary schools across the region during the autumn term to support staff and pupils to address the deficit in pupils' skills. In our discussions with headteachers from English-medium primary schools, many said that they valued the support for teaching Welsh from local authorities and regional consortia, in particular the resources produced by Welsh advisory team staff to support provision in school.

Cameo: Supporting pupils who are new to the Welsh language

One example of the close alignment of the work of Gwynedd and GwE is their approach to supporting schools to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. The challenge of catering for their linguistic needs when schools reopened for all pupils in September was compounded by the difficulties in running Welsh language units in their traditional form. To support primary schools, the local authority arranged for the specialist teachers to provide an outreach service on a cluster basis, while the cluster's improvement support officer worked with the schools to create and adapt Welsh schemes of work.

32 Around 1,000 parents responded to our survey question about support for pupils in Welsh-medium schools. Many of these said that they were happy with the support provided by the school to help their children make progress with their Welsh. Very few parents felt that this was not the case, but those that did said that there was a lack of support for parents who do not speak Welsh and a lack of bilingual resources to enable parents to provide support for their children at home. Most of the pupils who responded to our survey agreed that they are getting good support to help them with their Welsh language skills.

Cameo: Supporting pupils' Welsh language development

In Carmarthenshire, officers identified the need to support pupils to maintain their engagement with the Welsh language from early in the pandemic. The Welsh advisory team adapted and refined their existing resources to provide schools and PRUs with activities to share with pupils and parents. In addition, they created extra-curricular activities and micro-lessons for pupils to recall previous learning, revise grammar, and to develop their reading skills and numeracy skills. They provided worthwhile tasks based on Welsh poetry as a stimulus to learning as well as providing activities to develop pupils' Welsh-speaking skills through the 'Cynllun Clonc' and Flipgrid activities.

Social media was used well to promote Welsh language activities, for example scientific activities for the outdoors and activities on history of the local area. Homework booklets were also distributed to enable parents to support their children with work through the medium of Welsh. Local authority officers and teachers in a number of its secondary schools worked with regional consortia staff to create a wide range of valuable Welsh language resources to support pupils in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. Officers continued to develop resources for schools throughout the autumn term to support schools to improve pupils' Welsh language development.

Promoting broad curriculum experiences

33 Through Modification of Curriculum Requirements in Wales Notices, the Welsh Government temporarily modified the requirement for schools and funded non-maintained nurseries to provide the basic curriculum and associated assessment arrangements. In practice the curriculum narrowed in many schools in the autumn term. Whether the result of their own risk assessments or a misunderstanding of Welsh Government operational guidance, lots of schools determined the need to sanitise resources between uses. In schools where this was the case, it has had an impact on the youngest and the oldest pupils in schools in particular. For example, in the foundation phase pupils have had to access a limited range of resources in their continuous and enhanced provision. In secondary schools, pupils' access to equipment in practical subjects such as art and science has also become more difficult for teachers to manage.

Cameo: Supporting science teaching

ERW subject teams shared clear and helpful guidance which reassured and supported science teachers in the region. For example, the ERW science team gave examples of online sites that included video demonstrations of experiments, and useful and engaging resources that teachers could use for distance learning.

34 In a few local authorities, the delivery of shared services to schools, for example peripatetic music tuition for pupils stopped. In other local authorities, including Caerphilly and Cardiff, officers found new ways of providing these services. In Ceredigion, the authority's information technology team provided support to the

music service to enable them to teach virtually. This has enabled pupils to continue to receive instrumental lessons. This way of working has removed tutors' travel time and contributed to maintaining pupils' standards.

Cameo: Caerphilly music service

Local authority officers have worked to ensure that the schools' music service was able to resume its work more fully from September 2020. The local authority has provided clear guidance to music service staff and schools on how this service can be delivered safely in schools. It has also provided detailed guidance and protocols on how the service can be delivered remotely. The guidance covers a range of issues and scenarios, including lessons for individuals and classes, live and recorded sessions and safeguarding considerations. The guidance also provides clear information as to how the Welsh Government's guidance should be followed in the context of the Caerphilly music service.

35 In November 2020, the Minister for Education confirmed that, for qualifications in 2021, there will be no end of year examinations for pupils taking GCSE, AS level or A levels. The Minister established a Design and Delivery Group to advise on the process of awarding qualifications without examinations. Plans for this process were again being reviewed as term started in January 2021 with all pupils learning from home due to another national lockdown. Although it is understandable and necessary that plans for awarding qualifications have had to change again this year, these changes, especially in-year changes, can cause great stress and anxiety for pupils, as well as teachers.

36 Pupils in key stage 4 following alternative curriculum courses are a particular concern to many schools. There is a great deal of variation in how easily these pupils can access their alternative and off-site provision and this has proved to be a considerable timetabling challenge for schools. A large number of more practical courses such as hair and beauty have not been able to run. As a result, a few pupils who usually access provision of this kind, particularly those who were previously at risk of exclusion, are displaying challenging behaviour or are disengaging. Even when these courses are accessible, often it is with a reduced timetable because the provider cannot allow pupils from one school to mix with another. In Powys, officers engaged with all post-16 pupils through the Powys Learning Pathways website during the summer holidays. This helped pupils to feel supported and engaged after a period of disruption to their learning. At the same time, local authority officers made helpful bridging units available to pupils about to start post-16 courses. These units together with the contact have helped pupils transition to their post-16 studies. During the autumn, pupils had to remain at their own school for all learning as it was not possible to visit other campuses, even if their subject teachers were based elsewhere. Supported by officers in the local authority, subject teachers streamed lessons live so that all pupils could access them. As the local authority had already used remote learning through their 'e-sgol' programme, the transition to online learning was comparatively seamless and schools and pupils are familiar with how to make the best use of it.

37 Providers of post-16 education have developed contingency plans for local lockdowns or outbreaks of COVID-19 and continue to amend aspects of the delivery of teaching, training and assessment across the sectors. Where venues for pupils to receive face-to-face teaching or training have had to close, the restrictions on access to pupils' workplaces continue to be a major barrier to learning. Providers offer online activities to maintain learner engagement and interest, however a key challenge on vocational programmes and courses is maintaining the engagement and motivation of pupils during periods of lockdown or self-isolation. These pupils selected practical-based courses and with the current crisis this aspect is often paused or significantly reduced. Providers report that higher level pupils on higher level programmes, even those undertaking academic courses and programmes, may not make the progress that was initially expected due to family reasons such as childcare restricting their study time.

Promoting more effective distance and blended learning

38 In her research commissioned by the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee, Dr Sofya Lyakhova of Swansea University (2020) found that, although many pupils fall behind in their academic learning without access to teachers and support from their parents, a small proportion may make gains in learning, particularly in reading. These are pupils who have the ability to self-regulate or as John Hattie (2020) says, 'they know what to do when they do not know and there is limited help available'. Lyakhova's research emphasises the need for pupils' emotional health and wellbeing to be strong in order for them to be able to able to learn independently. School improvement advisers have noted that building resilience and developing independent skills have become more evident as school priorities since pupils returned to school in the autumn. Local authority and regional consortia officers are aware of the need for a greater focus on teaching and learning strategies that accelerate the development of pupils' abilities in these areas.

39 The need for schools to act quickly to address the need for pupils to learn at home became more urgent as the autumn term progressed. It became clear in September 2020 that schools were going to be affected by positive COVID-19 cases and that pupils would be required to self-isolate at home for periods of time. In our survey, many governors said that their schools and PRUs had sound plans in place to ensure that teaching could continue if pupils were away from school because of another lockdown or the need to isolate. A majority of headteachers agreed, saying that local authorities had provided effective guidance to support schools and PRUs to develop flexible plans to deal with further outbreaks of COVID-19 infection. In practice, pupils' experiences as a result of these outbreaks have varied widely across Wales due to the varied impact of the pandemic in different areas and also the different policies and practices adopted by local authorities in relation to close contacts and the different ways that schools have organised groups and cohorts of pupils. This has resulted in further inequity in the learning experiences between pupils who have received their autumn term education in school and those who have been taught at a distance, in some cases for a significant proportion of the term. Where this happens, the barriers to learning at home identified in the summer term, including access to digital technology and parental support, remain. When we surveyed school leaders in October 2020, many headteachers felt that local authorities had been proactive in providing information technology resources and internet connectivity for those pupils

without access to these at home. Teachers and governors were less positive about this support. Around half of governors said that local authorities had provided effective support in this area. Although many teachers from primary schools and PRUs and a majority of those from special schools said that schools were helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning at home, only around half of the secondary school teachers and a minority of the teachers from all-age schools who responded to our survey agreed with this.

40 In November 2020, the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) spoke to pupils from Years 9 to 13 to identify any differences in their learning experiences between the summer and autumn terms, in particular the period where all pupils in these year groups were working at home because of the national firebreak. The pupils involved in this work said that there had been improvements in their experiences of distance learning. Their days were structured in a similar way to a school timetable, and teachers had checked that all pupils had access to digital devices and were provided with feedback on their work online in a timely manner. In some schools, pupils had been asked to complete surveys about their learning experiences and, as a result, teachers had made adjustments to suit pupils. For example, some schools provided recordings of lessons that pupils could use at a time that suited them. The issues raised by pupils included the amount of work provided, which meant that they were working long hours, and the inconsistency of provision between different subject areas. They also shared concerns about the lack of support from parents who do not have the skills to support them and the lack of digital skills of some teachers. Many said that they missed interacting with teachers and other pupils and that, although the distance learning offer had improved, it still does not compare well with learning at school. The importance of remote peer interaction was one of the findings from the EEF's Rapid Evidence Assessment (2020). Across the studies that EEF researchers reviewed, they found a range of strategies to support peer interaction, including peer marking and feedback, sharing models of good work, and opportunities for pupils to participate in live discussions of content. The evidence from pupils and schools indicates that this is an area of distance learning that needs development.

41 Across Wales, regional consortia and local authority officers have seen the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to focus on developing the ethos and principles of the Curriculum for Wales, for example the focus on health and wellbeing in schools at the start of the autumn term. In Powys, challenge advisers are promoting the use of the pedagogical principles to enrich pupils' learning. In Flintshire, officers provided training on using the outdoor environment as a way to develop pupils' resilience and perseverance in problem-solving. The training was provided for non-maintained settings, nursery and primary schools and PRUs with pupils of primary school age. Across the GwE region, officers recognise that many secondary schools have had to change their approach and plan lessons in thematic blocks due to pupils being in 'bubbles'. Officers and elected members see this as a strength as it links clearly with the authority's vision for implementing the Curriculum for Wales. Many secondary schools have made use of resources provided through GwE's new online 'support centre', including multi-disciplinary units of work that fit well with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Despite this positive work, there is also a recognition that the pandemic has slowed the progress that schools were making in addressing the implementation of the new curriculum.

Professional learning

42 Regional consortia and local authorities increased the range of professional learning opportunities to address the additional need caused by the pandemic. Much of their work in the autumn term focused on supporting schools to understand and develop approaches to distance and blended learning, building on the work they started in the initial lockdown. As schools identified pupils' needs on their return to full-time schooling, officers in local authorities and regional consortia responded by tailoring their learning offer to support teachers to address pupils' specific needs. GwE offer a wide range of opportunities for schools to participate in specific professional learning opportunities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and accelerated learning strategies. In Swansea, officers adjusted their learning offer as their understanding of the impact of distance learning on pupils developed. They worked with schools to provide the best fit model for individual circumstances. For example, the local authority supported teachers to design paper materials for distance learning following evidence that pupils do not learn as well in front of a screen when compared with on paper. Officers in Swansea also provided support for schools to develop their approach to assessing pupils' work through virtual platforms. They offered virtual training on approaches that include using mini quizzes, giving feedback using the live-chat facility on platforms like 'Microsoft Teams', using video recordings to explain new tasks and to identify misconceptions and offering whole-class feedback on common misconceptions. A few local authorities, including Cardiff, collaborated with organisations such as the Open University to support professional learning in schools. In Cardiff, schools and the Cardiff and Vale College worked with the Open University to deliver a programme of interactive online workshops, focused on pedagogy and effective learning design.

Cameo: Using evidence from communication with schools to inform professional learning

Officers in Swansea carried out a survey with primary headteachers, seeking information on specific training needs during the pandemic. They analysed the responses and came up with a list of items for future webinars. These included developing the use of live sessions, how to use the tools available via Hwb and other useful platforms/apps and suggestions for easy-to-use tools for teachers to help them when designing online/distance learning activities. As a result, the local authority produced a comprehensive programme of webinars to address these.

43 Officers from local authorities and regional consortia used the initial lockdown period to engage with national and international research, to identify effective practice to share with schools. In Bridgend, school improvement partners collated evidence about learning from the Education Endowment Foundation (2020) whose findings include that the quality of teaching is more important than how it is delivered. This has helped schools in the local authority to think about their approaches to distance and blended learning. In Carmarthenshire, officers used the work of Michael Fullan as a basis for moving learning from a distance learning model used during the school closure period to a model that could be used as schools re-opened fully for the autumn term. In the EAS, officers adapted the approach of Simon Brakespear to help school leaders to see their response to the pandemic in phases and to identify what was important and different at each phase.

44 Officers from local authorities and regional consortia have started to put plans in place to evaluate the impact of their support for schools on pupils' learning. In Gwynedd, officers recognise that it is not yet possible to draw meaningful conclusions about schools' approaches to distance learning. However, following the first case of a school having to send home a significant cohort of pupils in the autumn term, officers evaluated the distance learning provision. They created a case study for other schools, outlining the implications and the factors that leaders and teachers need to consider when planning for pupils to learn remotely. Following cluster meetings with the regional school improvement service to discuss distance and blended learning, one school in Wrexham trialled using a digital distance learning approach while pupils were in class. One group of pupils completed activities and tasks online while the teacher used direct instruction with other pupils. This allowed teachers to support pupils to use software and upload work to a digital platform while they were in school. It also allowed the school to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and tasks set as distance learning. The school is adapting its approach following feedback from this process. The EAS carried out a survey to gain leaders' perceptions of their learning offer. Local authorities within the region are using this information to help them to develop an overview of their schools' provision. Across Wales it is too early to be able to evaluate fully the impact of this work on schools and pupils as processes to evaluate the quality of learning offers including distance learning are in the early stages of development.

45 Training to support teachers' digital competence continued in the autumn term. Officers in ERW provided a series of webinars for primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs that give an overview of the tools available through Hwb to support blended and distance learning, complementing their earlier work. The sessions included specific themes for school leaders, such as what to consider when experiencing individual year group isolation. These webinars also included recordings and live discussions with school leaders from around the region, which school leaders found reassuring when considering how best to implement their own plans. In addition, the team shared online safety and self-review tools, as well as curriculum support for specific areas, for example to develop teachers' practice with coding. A Google Classroom set up specifically for teaching assistants to develop their online skills has attracted over 200 participants. In our engagement calls with schools, headteachers identified the improvement in teachers' ICT skills and their confidence in the use of technology to support pupils' learning as a positive impact of the pandemic on schools. The need for teachers to put what they had learned into practice quickly made the professional learning immediately relevant to their needs.

46 Most consortia and local authorities found that, as professional learning moved online, more practitioners have taken up learning opportunities as they no longer involve full days out of school and materials can be accessed at any time. A majority of the support staff who responded to our survey said that they had received effective professional learning to support them to make a successful return to school. Despite the opportunities available for professional learning, our survey also found that 22% of teachers who responded do not feel that they have had sufficient opportunities to support their understanding of distance and blended learning.

47 The period since March 2020 has delivered many challenges for local authorities and regional consortia in their work to support schools. It has also provided opportunities

to think differently and to work in different ways. Officers are aware of the need to learn from the experience and are keen to maintain and build upon the new ways of working that have had a positive impact. The use of digital platforms to hold meetings and as a way of delivering professional learning has been both time and cost effective and has enabled more education staff to participate in these more frequently. In the spring and summer terms 2020, teachers had to respond quickly to the need to provide distance learning materials for pupils. This provision improved though the summer term and as the number of pupils needing to learn away from the classroom has increased in the autumn, the need to further improve and embed distance and blended learning provision remains a priority. The pandemic has reinforced issues that local authorities and consortia had already been working with schools to address. These include the impact of poverty on families and in particular on children's learning. Pupils across Wales have experienced the pandemic in very different ways as a result of their local and home circumstances. The initial lockdown period and the necessity for pupils to work at home for periods of time in the autumn term have highlighted the need for pupils to be able to work independently successfully and for schools to focus on supporting pupils to improve learning resilience.

Supporting vulnerable pupils

Preparing for pupils to return in September

48 Having briefly welcomed pupils back to their school or PRU at the end of the summer term, leaders' attention turned to supporting vulnerable pupils during the summer holiday as well as preparing for the autumn term. Local authorities organised various summer activities, often led by youth workers. These usually targeted the most vulnerable pupils, such as children looked after by the local authority and those whose behaviour in their community was a concern, and provided a range of useful activities to support personal and social skills as well as their wellbeing.

49 Many support services for vulnerable pupils continued through the summer holiday too, such as online counselling, welfare visits to families in need, helplines for those needing support. In Merthyr Tydfil, a local authority officer maintained contact through the summer holiday with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families to support them to remain engaged in learning, with schools reporting that a good proportion of these pupils returned to school in September 2020. In Torfaen, education welfare officers identified pupils who did not engage with the 'Check in, catch up, prepare for summer and September' sessions in schools at the end of the summer term (Welsh Government, 2020d). The officers then worked closely with families to support pupils to return to school in September.

Cameo: Re-engaging pupils through summer activities

Officers in Denbighshire recognised that some vulnerable pupils would benefit from additional input in order to successfully re-engage with learning. They secured grant funding to deliver engaging and enriching activities to target vulnerable young pupils and those from economically disadvantaged areas. The Education and Children's Services worked in partnership with the Youth Service and external partners to provide a summer holiday activity programme over five weeks. This helped to bridge the gap between the initial lockdown period and the full reopening of schools to all pupils in September by inspiring young people through sport, music, drama, team building and craft activities. Activities included lessons on African drumming, a drama workshop hosted by a West End star, and team games on a beach. All participants received free lunch and bus passes in order to facilitate attendance.

50 While scientists warned of the potential for a 'second wave' of COVID-19, this was unpredictable both in terms of timing and scale. The Welsh Government committed to returning all pupils full-time in the autumn, with scope for a staggered start in September. Local authority officers, and sometimes regional consortium officers, worked closely with school and PRU leaders across Wales to ensure that school sites were safe for pupils. In some cases, health and safety officers jointly carried out risk assessments with school and PRU leaders. In other cases, leaders carried out their own assessments and these were sent to officers to be checked. Local authorities have helpfully held drop-in online meetings or used a digital forum for headteachers to discuss health and safety issues with officers.

51 Where relevant, individual risk assessments were carried out for vulnerable pupils with special educational needs and those requiring extra support, and often local authority officers supported this process and assisted with any resulting concerns. For example, officers in Caerphilly worked with parents and school staff to discuss the use of PPE when a child with autistic spectrum condition spits when distressed. Officers provided staff in another school with surgical respiratory protection masks for when working with pupils who require aerosol or suctioning procedures.

52 Schools and PRUs across Wales prioritised pupils' wellbeing at the start of the autumn term. Regional consortia and local authorities provided professional learning, guidance and resources to help staff think through the potential issues. Much of the professional learning offered to leaders, teachers and support staff across Wales focused on understanding how trauma can affect children and young people, and how staff can identify those who are struggling and support them. For example, GwE offered a 'Return to school trauma-informed schools programme', which included practical strategies and key teaching and learning principles and models. In EAS, teaching assistants were offered training in delivering a 'coping and connecting' six-week intervention programme to support targeted vulnerable pupils settle back to school life. In Powys, existing school-to-school support continued, with staff at the PRU training school staff across the local authority on supporting pupils' behaviour and readiness to learn on their return to school.

53 Professional learning also focused on the importance of relationships, with schools and PRUs encouraged to give time to this at the start of the autumn term. For example, CSC purchased access to the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) for all schools, and ERW commissioned Professor Robin Banerjee to deliver professional learning to develop staff understanding of self-efficacy and connection as key to supporting wellbeing.

54 Some local authorities provided parents and carers with information and advice to support pupils' return to school. For example, Carmarthenshire created a 'Welcome back' pack that explained what pupils might experience when using school transport and practical suggestions on how to support their child's wellbeing.

Cameo: Supporting vulnerable pupils' wellbeing needs in preparation of the return to school

In collaboration with the Educational Psychology team, leaders and teachers in Carmarthenshire provided a 'One Page Profile' via Microsoft Forms for all pupils to complete before the 'Check-in, catch-up, prepare for summer and September' period. This was an effective approach to gain direct, individual information from pupils regarding their wellbeing during the initial lockdown. This information served as a guide for teachers to plan more diverse and bespoke provision on their return, especially for specific vulnerable groups such as pupils with SEN.

55 Most pupils were happy to return to school in September 2020, for the social contact with friends as well as to progress their learning. Many headteachers we contacted commented on how engaged most pupils were, and how positively they were accepting new routines and procedures. Our survey of pupils in October 2020 found

that 77% agreed or strongly agreed that felt safe in school. Prior to the pandemic, 89% of pupils, on average, told us they felt safe in their school when they surveyed as part of their school inspection. This indicates the anxiety that a few pupils were feeling on returning to school, despite the protective measures that were in place. In particular, pupils expressed concern about the unsafe behaviour of a very few pupils who did not follow their school's rules and put others at risk. Some school leaders have noted that enforced changes to how the school operates, such as staggered break times, zones for different year groups and one way systems, have had a positive impact on pupils' behaviours and they are considering which changes may be useful to continue when the pandemic is over.

56 Pupils who were moving to a new class within their school or PRU or a new school or PRU in September 2020 had missed out on usual transition activities, including visits to familiarise themselves with the site and staff. Schools and PRUs made up for the lack of visits and opportunities to meet new staff in the summer term through helpful video tours and staff introductions alongside information on websites to help pupils prepare for their transition. In our survey, 92% of pupils moving to a new class in September felt that teachers helped them settle, with only a very few disagreeing.

57 Some primary schools have commented that young children starting school for the first time in September 2020 are less ready for school than is usually the case. They also noticed that children that who had their first year in school disrupted by the initial lockdown had regressed in their readiness for learning. For example, schools identified weaknesses in the development of these pupils' social and communication skills, and more children than normal are unable to toilet and feed themselves. This is making it harder for young pupils to settle, and is stretching the resource of staff to support them.

Cameo: Sharing a school's approach to supporting skills in the early years across Monmouthshire

One primary school in Monmouthshire noticed that the sudden ending of school in March had a significant negative impact on pupils in the reception class. From March, many of these young pupils made less progress in relation to their personal, social and learning skills than would have normally been expected. To help address this, leaders, teachers and support staff worked with parents to create a framework of skills to tackle this deficit. The local authority noted that the school's strategy seemed to be successful and shared the learning from this with other schools..

58 While almost all pupils returned to school or PRU in September 2020, a very few did not and some parents opted to educate their child at home. The number of pupils being educated at home has been steadily rising in recent years, but there has been a sharper increase this year. Around half of local authorities report that the number of families choosing to educate their children at home has increased as a result of the pandemic.

59 The Welsh Government postponed the introduction of statutory guidance and regulations on elective home education due to COVID-19, so local authorities

continue to have limited responsibilities and powers in relation to ensuring that every child's right to an education are upheld. Local authorities have varying degrees of success in their efforts to encourage these families to engage voluntarily. For the large proportion of families that are willing to engage, local authorities offer varying extent of support to parents and carers of children educated at home. For example, in Anglesey, officers established an elective home education forum to help to strengthen the procedures around home education and in Neath Port Talbot inclusion officers worked with schools to provide guidance to parents of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

60 A very few pupils did not return to their school or PRU because of specific health and safety concerns that meant the risk to themselves or staff was too great. This included, for example, pupils with severe health conditions and those with extremely challenging behaviour. In these rare instances, local authorities have worked with schools and PRUs to ensure that these pupils can continue to learn from home as much as possible.

61 Local authorities often proactively supported vulnerable young people to return to school in September 2020. For example, in Ceredigion a team of youth specialists was attached to each secondary school. Youth workers, specialist behaviour workers and youth justice workers supported pupils who were known to be at risk of not engaging in their education. This support, in addition to that provided by the schools themselves, contributed to high attendance rates for these pupils.

Supporting wellbeing

62 For children and young people already challenged by several adverse childhood experiences, the pandemic may have magnified the challenges they face and taken a heavy toll on their wellbeing. Even children and young people in stable family environments with very few or no prior adverse childhood experiences have been significantly affected by the pandemic. For example, time away from friends caused by lockdowns, isolation periods or having to remain in tight bubbles at school can have an adverse impact on pupils' social development and their mental health. Indeed, schools and local authorities noted that some of the pupils they had become concerned about were not pupils that they would previously had recognised as vulnerable.

63 During the initial lockdown, schools and local authorities refined their approaches and systems for identifying and monitoring vulnerable pupils and sharing information between agencies. In Cardiff, for example, the local authority set up a new data system for collecting information on vulnerable pupils. The information was reviewed weekly by a 'joint vulnerable pupils panel', which planned a co-ordinated response across services.

64 During the initial lockdown, local authority services had to respond rapidly to support the wellbeing of all pupils, and particularly those known to be vulnerable. Where local authorities already had effective joint working across services and external agencies, this was evident in the efficiency with which they responded to needs. In authorities where collaboration is less well established, the pandemic has been a catalyst to strengthen joint working. For example, Gwynedd's education psychology

service has collaborated with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to develop a new approach to supporting pupils who are absent from school because of their emotional wellbeing.

Cameo: Multi-disciplinary working – sharing information and providing solutions

A key feature of Bridgend's ability to adapt and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people, particularly those identified as vulnerable, has been the strong connections that exist across and within service areas. For example, the pre-existing 'early help locality service model' across the borough helps to ensure that professionals share relevant information with one another. Multi-disciplinary staff are co-located at three sites across the borough. Discussions and solution-focused work with families involve different specialist services. This integrated approach helps to ensure also that support is prioritised and allocated appropriately.

The development of the multi-agency safeguarding hub, in place for the past two years, has also contributed to a sharing of intelligence around safeguarding concerns for individuals. Colleagues from South Wales Police, the local health board and local authority are co-located and provide a single point of contact for agencies to refer into.

65 In the summer term 2020, school leaders often noted that they had been inundated with information, guidance and suggested resources and activities to support pupils' wellbeing and to support vulnerable pupils. This was a reflection of how all agencies, including local authorities, regional consortia, health services, police and justice services, local and national voluntary organisations, were keen to support children, young people and their families. Taking account of feedback from senior leaders, agencies helpfully rationalised their communication with schools during the autumn term.

66 In most cases, local authorities have ensured that statutory processes for pupils in relation to special education needs (SEN), including assessments and annual reviews, continued during the autumn term. Where there have been delays, this has most commonly been due to the capacity of educational psychology services and other specialist services, caused by staff absence or challenges in delivering services remotely. In Wrexham, the local authority has employed a locum educational psychologist to boost capacity in their service and help complete outstanding assessments. Local authority services, schools and PRUs have adapted so families and professionals involved with their child's education can meet online where necessary to facilitate statutory processes. During the autumn term, services gradually resumed face-to-face work to support assessment of pupils with SEN, although headteachers were frustrated by inconsistent approaches across agencies to returning to face-to-face work.

67 Local authority services to support pupils with special educational needs have found ways to continue support for pupils. For example, in Caerphilly, the regional SENCOM service for pupils with sensory difficulties has worked remotely with pupils through video conferencing technology and provided bespoke training to school staff so that they can support pupils with hearing or visual impairments.

68 Our survey of parents and carers in October 2020 found that the majority of those with children who receive additional support agreed that the school or PRU is considering their child's needs and providing appropriate resources, support and guidance for them. A similar proportion felt that the school or PRU makes appropriate arrangements for their child to discuss their feelings, health and wellbeing or concerns. On both matters, a few parents disagreed. Where parents and carers had concerns, these related to poor communication about how their child's needs would be met, support outlined in a statement for special educational needs not being provided, reduced support for pupils with autistic spectrum condition, and general concerns about the usual support not being provided.

69 The Welsh Government gave local authorities additional funding this year to increase the capacity of counselling services. These services are provided directly by some local authorities, although more commonly the service is commissioned from an external provider. In some cases, the funding has been used to extend access to Year 4 and Year 5 children as local authorities are only required to provide a service for Year 6 children in primary school. In the Vale of Glamorgan, the local authority has employed a play therapist to provide support to younger children in primary schools, to complement the counselling service. Lots of counsellors have completed additional training in counselling online. While some counselling services resumed face-to-face sessions with children and young people during the autumn term, others continued to provide sessions online or over the telephone as they did during the initial lockdown. Young people around Wales have mixed views about counselling via video or telephone calls: some find it easier to talk to a counsellor this way whereas others have not engaged and are waiting for face-to-face sessions to resume.

70 Some local authorities and consortia are supporting schools to use their 'Recruit, recover, raise standards' programme grant from the Welsh Government to increase capacity to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils. For example, in Ceredigion, schools have used the funding to increase the hours of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, working under the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service 'In-Reach' pilot.

71 Safeguarding work with children, young people and families continued online through the autumn term when circumstances meant that this was the best option. While the rate of children placed on the child protection register was a little lower than usual during the initial lockdown period, the rate rose through August 2020 and peaked in September before dropping again through the autumn term. The peak rate was not a significant increase compared to typical fluctuations or the long term trend for rising numbers of children being placed on the register nationally. There is no clear correlation between the local authorities seeing the highest increases in the rate of children placed on the child protection register and the incidence of COVID-19 in the community.

72 Young people have often spent more time online than usual due to periods of self-isolation and restrictions on activities that they would usually be involved in. In Monmouthshire, the local authority recognised the increased safeguarding risk associated with this. Local authority officers worked with their schools, the PRU and the Home Office to hold more frequent Channel Panels to review concerns about pupils relating to extremism or radicalisation.

73 School attendance was understandably affected by COVID-19 in the autumn term. After pupils gradually returned at the start of September 2020, attendance peaked at 88% at the start of October. Attendance dropped through October as the incidence of COVID-19 began to rise sharply in some parts of Wales. Attendance was 90% in the first week after the firebreak in November, which included half-term, before dropping through the rest of the autumn term. Attendance in the autumn term is highest for pupils in primary schools, with the exception of nursery pupils. Pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13 have the lowest attendance. Much of the absence is explained by pupils having to self-isolate. Although recorded as authorised absence, schools provide distance learning for these pupils, although for logistical reasons there is often a delay of a day or so before the full distance learning offer is in place for self-isolating pupils. School leaders report that pupils often make slower progress in their learning when self-isolating.

74 There is a close correlation between school attendance rates and local COVID-19 rates. Through the autumn term, pupils were affected unequally as enforced self-isolation due to close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case affected certain parts of Wales more than others. Some pupils experienced several weeks of distance learning during the autumn term due to self-isolation, whereas other pupils were in school every day.

75 The 'Test, Trace and Protect' (TTP) strategy in Wales is a partnership between the Welsh Government, local authorities and NHS organisations. The purpose of the strategy is 'to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so' (Welsh Government, 2020f). The strategy appears to have been implemented slightly differently across Wales when a positive COVID-19 case has been confirmed in a school. In some local areas, much larger groups of pupils have been regarded as a close contact compared to other areas despite schools having similar protective measures in place. This has particularly affected older pupils in secondary schools, with some of these pupils having several weeks away from school in self-isolation during the autumn term. The local variation in implementation of the TTP strategy has impacted pupils' progress and wellbeing unequally across Wales.

76 When pupils are required to self-isolate, some local authorities work with schools to share this information across services and with partners so that vulnerable pupils can be offered additional support. For example, in cases where a pupil is on the child protection register in Denbighshire, officers make contact on the first day of self-isolation to ensure that support is in place. When several hundred pupils from a school serving an area of high deprivation were required to self-isolate, Denbighshire's Youth Support Team worked constructively in partnership with local police officers to support young people who were gathering outside during the day instead of self-isolating.

77 Schools, PRUs and education services sometimes reported that they had noted a rise in concerns about pupils' mental health. All local authorities have sought to ensure that schools and PRUs are aware of all the support that is available for pupils struggling with their mental health.

Cameo: Guidance on supporting learners' mental health and wellbeing

From the outset, Swansea has prioritised the health and wellbeing of learners and staff. The improved sharing of information across the local authority and with external agencies during the pandemic, allowed officers to focus on common issues affecting learners across Swansea. In particular it became evident that there could be an increase of learners self-harming, suffering from anxiety and depression or attempting to take their own lives. As a result, the local authority produced timely guidance for schools to support their learners and information on where to seek further help. The guidance was also shared with a neighbouring local authority to help support their learners.

Supporting vulnerable pupils

78 Schools have found it particularly challenging to support all their vulnerable pupils. Our survey of support staff found that many of them feel that they have been providing effective support to vulnerable pupils, with hardly any disagreeing. In the same survey, just over half of teachers felt that they were able to meet the needs of their vulnerable pupils, with around two-in-ten teachers disagreeing.

79 Children and young people who are Gypsy, Roma or Travellers often miss more school than most pupils for cultural reasons. Local authorities have worked hard to maintain contact with families and encourage them to return to school in September. For example, officers in Carmarthenshire used an existing WhatsApp support group to keep families engaged and as a platform for offering support where needed. This authority is also providing these families with access to a tailored package of activities to support language skills as this was identified as a common concern.

80 Pupils with English or Welsh as an additional language are particularly vulnerable to making little progress when they are expected to learn from home, as was the case during the initial lockdown and periods of self-isolation in the autumn term. Often these pupils' parents or carers do not understand English or Welsh and therefore find it difficult to support their child's learning. In Newport, the Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS) continued to support pupils at home during the autumn term. Multi-lingual staff in GEMS kept in regular contact with families affected, to support pupils to continue learning as well as to monitor their wellbeing.

81 Operation Encompass is a relatively new scheme where police services commit to contacting key staff in relevant schools before the start of the next school day if they have been called to an incident of domestic abuse at a child's home. This early information enables schools to offer immediate support to pupils affected. As lots of schools remained in contact with vulnerable families during the school summer holidays and the two-week firebreak in the autumn term, authorities such as Cardiff worked with police services to extend the scheme to operate through these periods too.

82 Children and young people looked after by local authorities are among the most vulnerable in Wales, both in terms of their wellbeing as well as their education outcomes. Local authorities have often added in extra checks and support for these

children and young people during the pandemic. For example, in Bridgend local authority officers visited care placements weekly, which helped them to identify potential placement breakdowns and be proactive in providing additional support where needed rather than waiting for placements to fail. In Gwynedd, the local authority provided looked-after children with a laptop to enable them to continue learning at home during lockdown or self-isolation periods.

83 Pupils in work-based learning have faced redundancy or anxiety related to potential redundancy during the autumn term. Some vocational courses, such as hair and beauty, have been significantly affected by the pandemic. This has disproportionately affected vulnerable pupils who are more likely than their peers to follow vocational routes at ages 14-19. For example, older secondary-aged pupils in Merthyr could not continue with junior apprenticeships run by the local college. This caused considerable disappointment for these young people, the vast majority of whom returned to school full-time while the local authority had to make alternative provision for the rest.

Cameo: Local authority support for vocational provision

In one secondary school in Pembrokeshire, leaders had already planned to evaluate and review its vocational provision during the last academic year. They worked with a local authority officer to carry out this evaluation. The school no longer employs an external vocational provider and has created its own vocational provision. It has employed three staff from the previous provider and a qualified teacher to supervise the provision. This has resulted in a significant financial saving for the school as well as allowing leaders to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the provision more closely. Around 230 learners currently access the vocational provision as part of their curriculum. The school has worked with the local authority so pupils from other providers can also access this provision. Through its vocational courses, the school now provides a crèche, nursery, and a motor vehicle workshop that serves the local community.

84 It is difficult to assess the impact of the pandemic on the proportion of young people in Wales who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Work to monitor and support young people to secure a suitable destination at the end of Year 11 into the autumn was significantly affected. Given the pandemic's national impact on employment and training generally, it is not surprising that early information from some local authorities suggests that more young people are NEET at age 16 this year than in recent years. In Swansea, pupils that schools and the PRU had identified at risk of becoming NEET were prioritised for support in the summer 2020. The young people were referred to multi-agency early help hubs for support and guidance on their next steps, and local authority officers continued to monitor their progress in the autumn term and provide support where necessary. As a result, nearly all of these vulnerable pupils have been engaged in some form of education, employment or training during the autumn, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Cameo: Supporting disengaged pupils

Wrexham local authority planned a programme to target Year 9 learners who have become increasingly disengaged with education during the COVID-19 period or have become vulnerable due to their COVID-19 experiences. The programme includes 15 weekly sessions where between 10 and 15 pupils from six secondary schools take part in activities and challenges to develop their engagement with learning and resilience. Activities include problem-solving workshops, outdoor activities, workshops with motivational speakers and support from Careers Wales delivered online.

85 Pupils eligible for free school meals have poorer outcomes than their peers. The pandemic has hampered the efforts of the education system to support these pupils to achieve better outcomes than their predecessors. Headteachers have told us that this group of pupils made slower progress in their learning during the initial lockdown, with some pupils returning the school with weaker language and numeracy skills than before the lockdown started. In addition to the annual Pupil Development Grant, the Welsh Government has provided schools with additional funding through the 'Recruit, recover, raise standards' grant. Local authorities and regional consortia have advised schools on how this grant could be used to fund suitable strategies to support pupils eligible for free school meals to catch up on their learning during the autumn term and beyond. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the local authority has worked with the Child Poverty Action Group to strengthen its support for pupils living in poverty. For example, a cluster of schools has focused on identifying the local barriers to learning that exist because of poverty currently and is working with the Action Group and local authority to address these.

86 Rising obesity in children and young people is a national concern as it leaves them susceptible to poor physical health. Obesity is primarily caused by what children and young people eat and drink and how physically active they are. It appears that pupils have had fewer opportunities to be physically active at school during the autumn term than would usually be the case. In our learner survey, 77% agree they have enough chance to exercise, which is lower than the average response from inspection surveys where 86% of pupils agree. A lot of schools have reduced the time pupils have for lunch breaks in order to protect bubbles of pupils using facilities, meaning that pupils have less time to play and be physically active. Very few schools ran any after school clubs during the autumn term that involved physical activity, and the usual sports competitions between schools have not taken place. Local authorities have taken different approaches to access to outdoor play equipment and parks, and leisure facilities and gyms have been forced to close locally and nationally at times due to government restrictions.

87 Local authority youth workers played a significant role in supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families during the initial lockdown and have continued to provide support through the autumn term. Youth workers are often highly skilled at building relationships quickly with young people, gaining their trust and finding creative ways to support young people, especially those who are at risk of disengaging with their education. Youth workers already used technology to communicate with young people, and have built on this during the pandemic by

setting up more online spaces where young people can connect safely with each other and with youth workers to socialise and discuss issues that interest or concern them. Some of these spaces were set up for specific groups, for example for young people wishing to chat online in Welsh or for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.

88 Youth workers have struggled to maintain contact with a very few vulnerable young people who do not have regular internet access or do not like to use online tools. Despite the effectiveness of online communications, young people often regret the lack of in-person social interaction they have had this year. Where safe to, youth workers have re-established opportunities to meet with young people in person. For example, youth workers in Powys have visited the key market towns between 5pm and 7pm during the autumn to engage with young people informally, which has provided useful opportunities to check on their wellbeing and help them to access support if required.

89 Despite having extremely heavy workloads, some local authority services have created space to consider what is working well and how they could improve the way they are supporting vulnerable pupils and their families.

Cameo: Evaluating family experiences

The ALN and Social Inclusion team in Conwy is eager to learn more about the effect of this pandemic on vulnerable learners and their families. As a result, officers are involved in a project that is based on 'Evaluating family experiences during lockdown', including focus on COVID-19 bereavement support and enhanced counselling support. This has been supplemented by training for individual schools delivered by the Educational Psychology Service on request. This is in preparation for another possible lockdown situation.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

As part of the work we engaged in discussions with 340 schools and PRUs across Wales and held meetings with staff in every local authority and regional consortia.

We issued surveys to seek the views of:

- leaders
- teachers
- support staff
- governors
- parents/carers
- learners in key stages 2 and above

In addition, we looked at a range of documentary evidence provided by local authorities and regional consortia as well as nationally available guidance, data and research.

Appendix 2

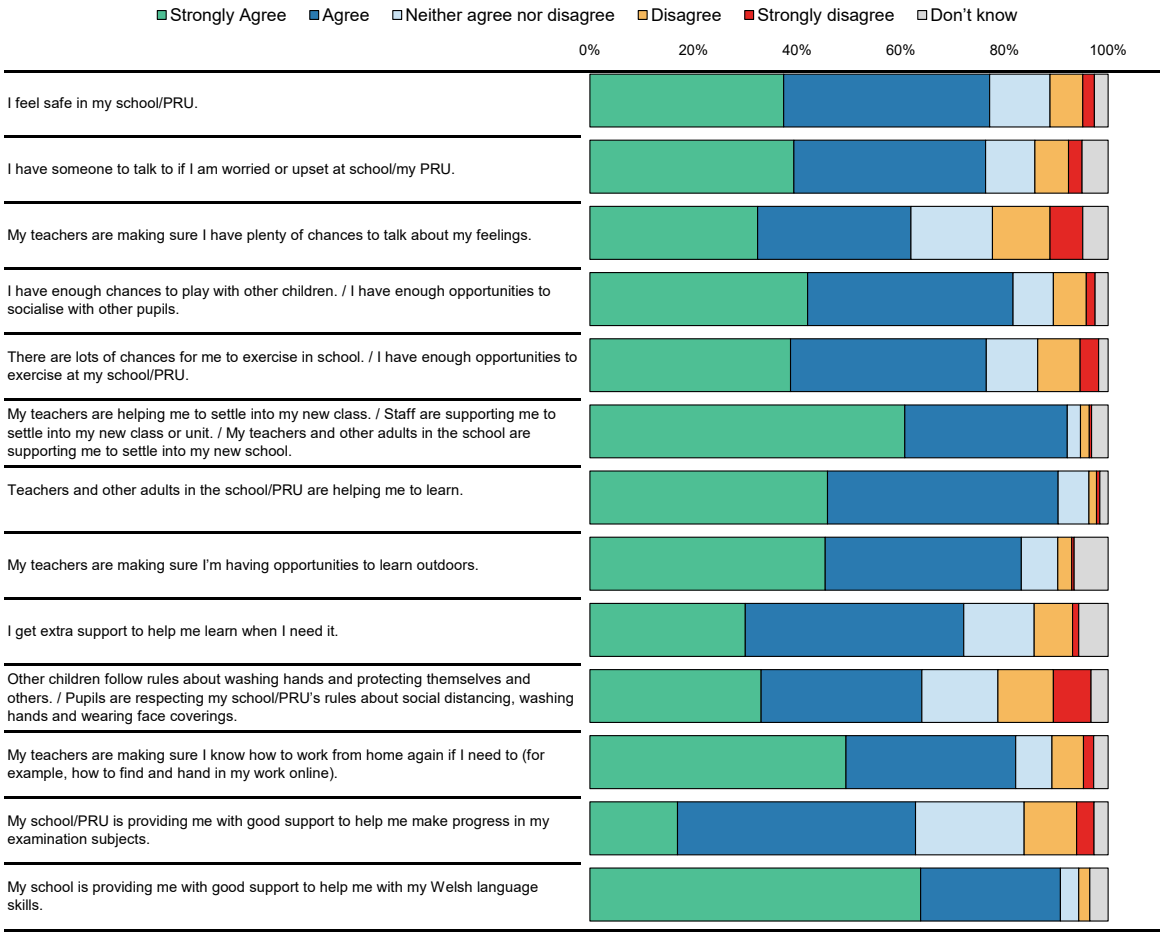
In addition to the calls to schools and LA, we issued and promoted surveys to stakeholders.

We had individual surveys for learners, parents or carers, school or PRU leaders, teachers, support staff and governors or members of PRU management committees. Some of the questions were directed at specific groups within those populations, so not all questions have been responded by all participants.

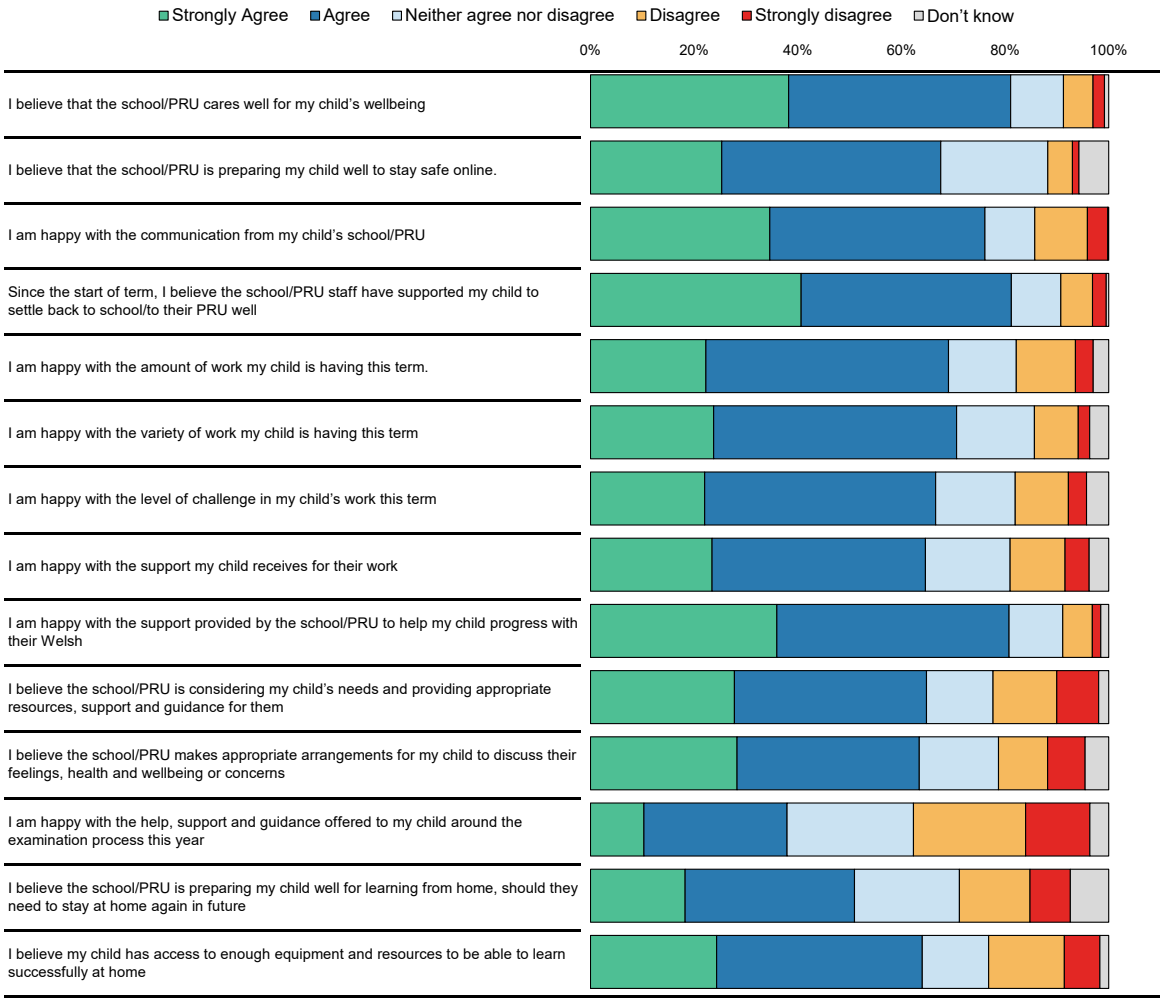
The responses are summarised below.

Stakeholders were also able to leave a comment to explain their answers or provide additional information. These were analysed and the information used to inform this report.

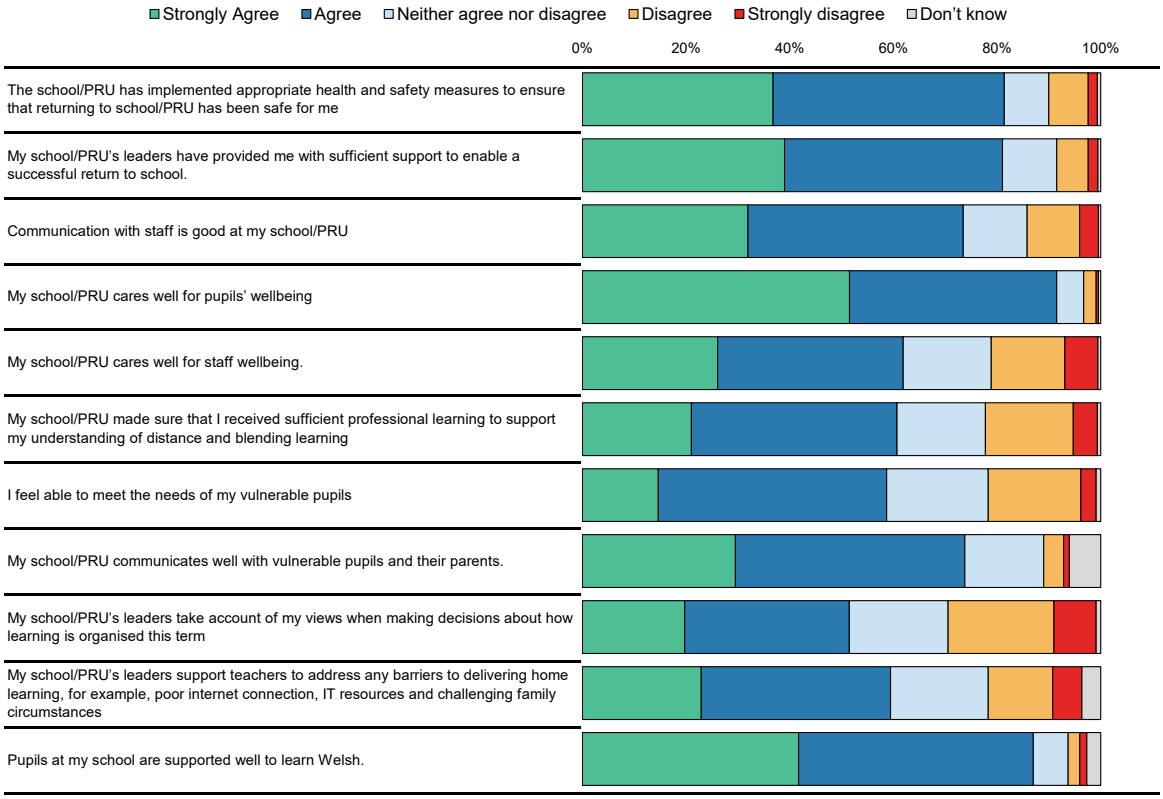
Learners (760 responses)



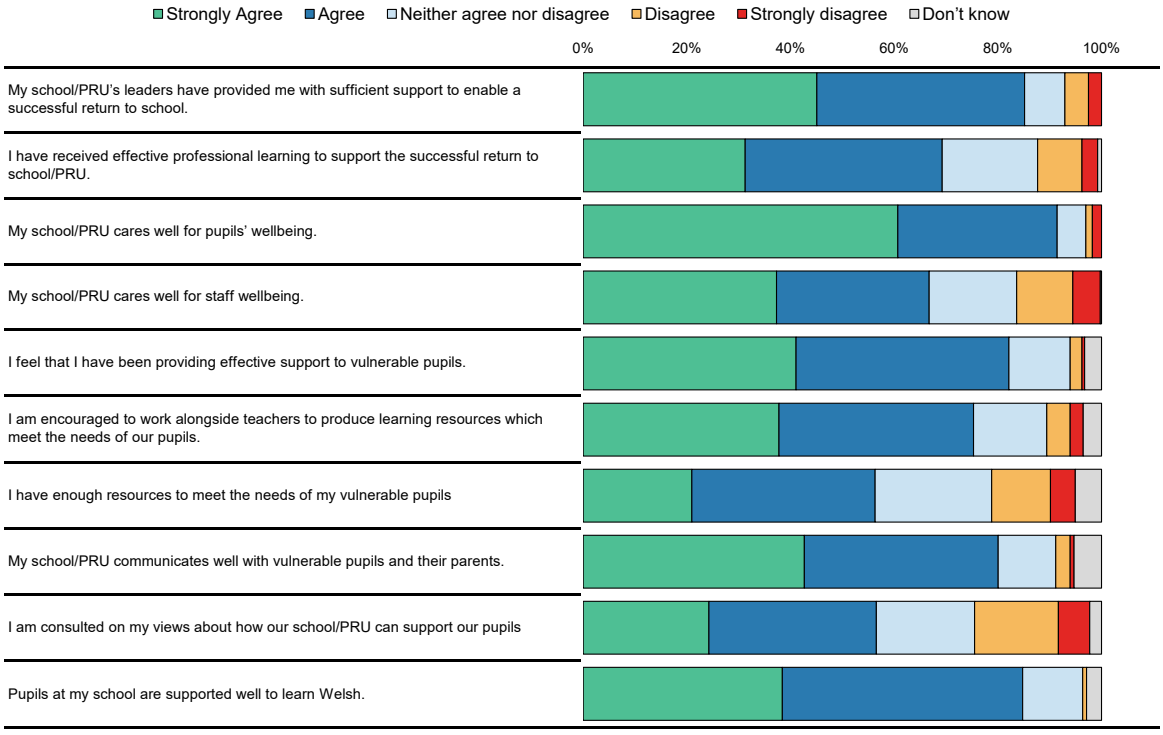
Parents and carers (3620 responses)



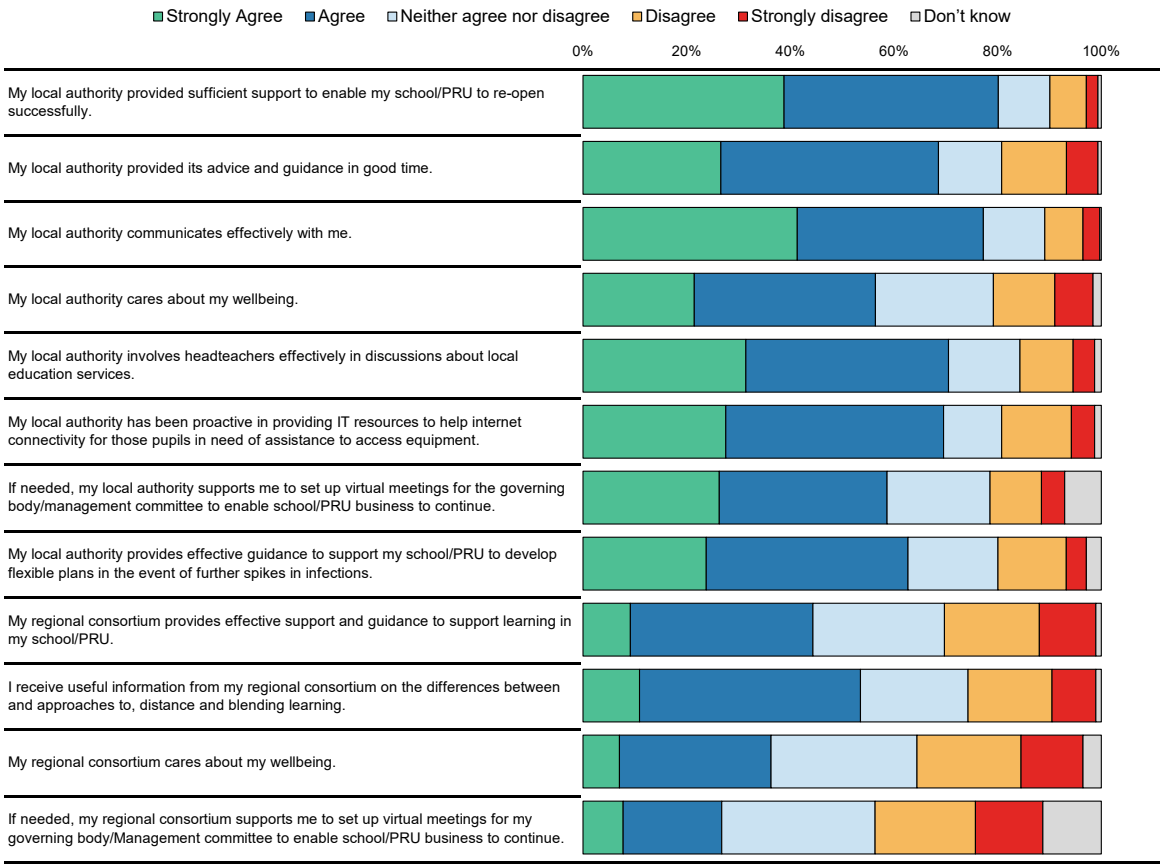
Teachers (908 responses)



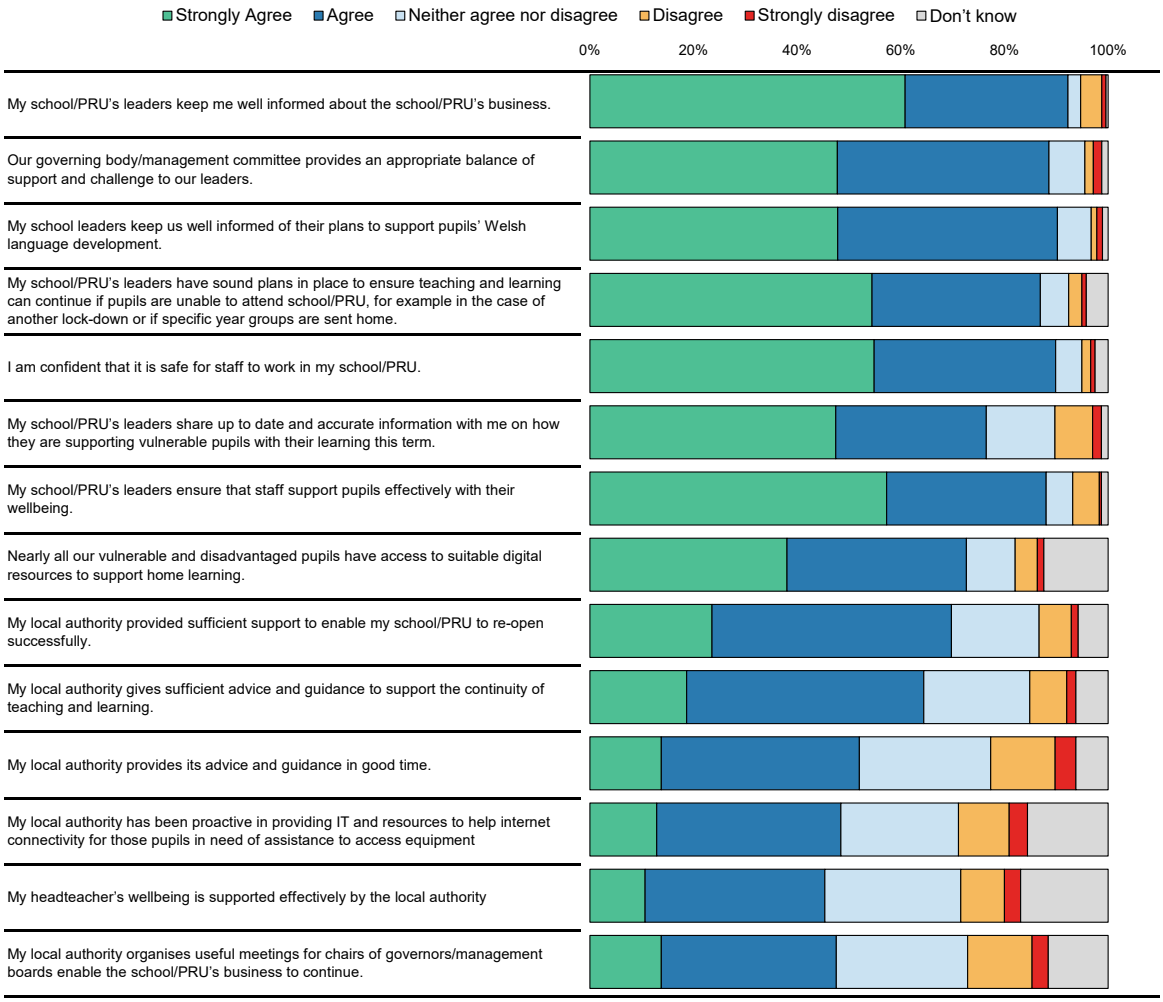
Support staff (397 responses)



Leaders (312 responses)



Governors (245 responses)



Appendix 3: Estyn publications

Guidance

- Advice for school and PRU leaders and governors on how to continue with school and PRU business during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Arrangements for September 2020 Planned approaches across maintained schools and PRUs
- Cameos and ideas for continuity of school business during Covid-19
- Cameos and ideas from schools and PRUs on continuing with school business
- Key principles to support the continuation of school and PRU business
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from adult learning in the community partnerships
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from further education colleges
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from primary schools
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from PRUs
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from secondary schools
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from special schools
- Supporting wellbeing and learning during COVID-19 – approaches from work-based learning providers
- Engagement work: Primary sector update – autumn 2020
- Engagement work: Secondary sector update – autumn 2020
- Engagement work: All-age school sector update – autumn 2020
- Engagement work: Maintained special school and pupil referral unit (PRU) sector update – autumn 2020
- Engagement work: Post-16 sector update – autumn 2020

Thematic reports

- Community schools: families and communities at the heart of school life thematic report and training materials
- Insights into how independent schools and specialist colleges have responded during the COVID–19 pandemic
- Learner resilience – building resilience in primary schools, secondary schools and pupil referral units thematic report and training materials

Blog posts

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) - how can schools support children and young people who live in difficult circumstances?
- Is your school one that puts families and communities at the heart of its work?
- Now learners have returned to schools and colleges, what part have we played and how will our role change in the future?
- Our support for Welsh education and training in the current climate
- What can schools and PRUs do to strengthen pupils' resilience?
- Working together to support teaching and learning during COVID-19

Appendix 4: Timeline

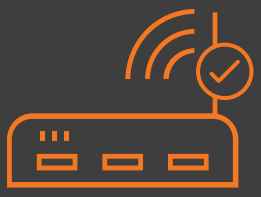
March 2020

- Chief Inspector for Wales announces immediate suspension of all of Estyn's inspections.
- Minister for Education announces that schools will close for statutory provision of education by 20 March. Also, announces suspension of GCSE and A level examinations for summer 2020.

April 2020

- Suspension of the Childcare Offer for Wales. Funding to be used to support vulnerable children and the childcare costs of key workers.
- Welsh Government announces £1.25 million for additional mental health support for children who may be experiencing increased stress or anxiety as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak. They announce £3 million for local authorities to purchase hardware and secure internet connectivity to ensure learners in Wales are not 'digitally excluded'.
- Estyn release advice for school and PRU leaders on how to continue with school and PRU business. In collaboration with Welsh Government, regional consortia and ADEW we release 'Developing Approaches to Support Distance Learning'.
- The Minister for Education sets out five key principles for when and how schools would return.

May 2020



- Welsh Government announces £3.75 million of funding to support mental health in schools and publishes a COVID-19 Resilience Plan for the post 16 sectors, including further and higher education, apprenticeships, employability and adult learning.

June 2020

- Further education colleges and work-based learning providers begin to re-open for face-to-face learning for a priority groups of learners.
- Minister for Education announces that she will use the Coronavirus Act 2020 to disapply temporarily basic curriculum requirements for Wales.
- Most schools re-open to pupils to provide an opportunity for them to 'Check in, Catch up and prepare for summer, and September'.

July 2020

- Estyn publishes several thematic reports and sector specific insights to support Wales to keep learning. In conjunction with the four regional consortia we also release 'Models of blended Learning' guidance to help from September.
- Welsh Government introduces the Curriculum and Assessment Bill to provide a legislative framework for the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. They announce the 'Recruit, recover and raise standards' scheme to employ 900 extra teaching staff in schools.
- Welsh Government announces additional funding of over £50 million for universities and colleges to maintain jobs in teaching, research and student services, invest in projects to support economic recovery, and support students suffering from financial hardship.

August 2020

- Wales's Childcare Offer is re-established. Working parents are again able to access 30 hours of early education and care.
- Estyn releases 'Planned approaches across maintained schools and PRUs', to capture a variety of approaches in response to common challenges across different education sectors.
- Welsh Government pledges an additional £4 million to support childcare providers affected by COVID-19 and further funding of up to £264m for local authorities to support a range of services, such as social care, education and leisure.
- Education Secretaries for Wales, England and Northern Ireland announce that exam results will be based on teacher assessment.
- Minister for Education guarantees that learners' final A Level grade will not be lower than their AS grade. Published GCSE and revised A-level results based on teachers' assessments show a notable increase in grades over previous years.
- The Minister for Education announces an independent review of the arrangements for awarding grades for the 2020 summer examinations.

September 2020

- All pupils return to school, phasing in during the first two weeks of term.
- Minister for Education announces a commitment to provide free face coverings for all learners in secondary school and further education settings.
- Minister for Education announces that all pupils eligible for free school meals will continue to receive provisions if they are shielding or have to self-isolate.
- Estyn begins engagement calls to schools, PRUs, and post-16 settings on request from the Welsh Government to carry out a thematic review of the extent and impact of local authorities' and regional consortia's approaches to supporting schools, their school communities, governing bodies and learners. Estyn also opens a survey for learners, governors, parents and school staff to share their experiences.

October 2020

- The Education Policy Institute (EPI) publishes a report that describes the way the Welsh Government provided laptops and wi-fi devices to address the lack of access to online learning caused by the coronavirus pandemic as 'commendable'. The report states that, in contrast to other UK nations, the Welsh Government was able to draw on 'well established infrastructure to act quickly following the closures'.
- Minister for Education publishes an updated action plan setting out the next steps in Wales' reform journey, ahead of the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales in 2022. The action plan, known as Our National Mission, shows the steps the Welsh Government has taken in response to the coronavirus pandemic and its response to the independent report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Minister for Education announces that "there will be an uplift of pay to reward our highly skilled and hardworking teachers in Wales." This includes an agreement in principle to accept all of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's recommendations for 2020/21.
- Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services announces £12.5m package of funding to support vulnerable children and families.

November 2020

- Pupils in Years 9-13 remain at home for the week after half-term as part of the national 'firebreak'.
- Minister for Education announces that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels in 2021. In place of exams, the Welsh Government intends to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher managed assessments, including assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.
- Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services launches the new 'Parenting. Give it Time' campaign providing information, support and advice for parents. The new campaign covers issues reflecting parents' concerns during the pandemic, including how to understand and respond to children's behaviour.

December 2020

- Estyn publishes its insight reports on the immediate effects of the pandemic on schools, PRUs and all age settings. These reports summarise the findings made from the engagement calls carried out during September and October.
- Estyn publishes the Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 2019-2020. This annual report reviews the standards and quality of education and training in Wales from September 2019 to March 2020. It also offers an initial account of how schools and other education and training providers supported pupils and students during lockdown while providing continuity of learning for them remotely.
- Minister for Education decides that all secondary schools and colleges in Wales will move to online learning for the last week of term, with local decisions to be made about whether or not other schools would be open that week.

Glossary

Distance learning	Where work is set and/or lessons broadcast (live or pre-recorded) to learners at home. This means that they are not required to attend school to access.
Blended learning	Where learners are provided with a combination of face-to-face learning provided in school, which is complemented by cohesively planned distance learning tasks and activities
CSC	The regional consortium for school improvement for central south Wales
EAS	The regional consortium for school improvement for south east Wales
ERW	The regional consortium for school improvement for south west Wales
GwE	The regional consortium for school improvement for north Wales

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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