

# Stakeholder event – School improvement and learner attainment

2 October 2025

## 1. Introduction

1. This note provides a summary of the main issues discussed during the Committee's stakeholder event for its work on School Improvement and Learner Attainment.
2. Representatives from local government, schools and teaching unions participated both virtually and in person.

## 2. Future of school improvement arrangements and how partners work together

3. There are a number of different local models emerging as the system transitions away from regional consortia. These include services being brought fully-in house by some local authorities, whilst others are working in hybrid partnerships.
4. Some of strengths of the new arrangements include; closer relationships with headteachers, bespoke support, and clearer governance. However, possible weaknesses could include: loss of subject-specialist capacity, uneven access to expertise across Wales, and risks of inconsistency between 22 local authorities.



**5.** Stakeholders emphasised the importance of collaboration over competition and the value of purposeful school-to-school improvement, backed by effective information-sharing. Self-evaluation should be collaborative and manageable, focusing on a small number of priorities.

**6.** There was a call for creating a national definition of “what good looks like”. It was not felt this would be onerous and could be done quite quickly, but leadership and ownership was needed to deliver. These conversations needed to include representatives from across the education sector. It was felt there was an opportunity currently to ensuring the right things were being measured in a new progression curriculum.

**7.** A clear call was for concise, up-to-date school improvement guidance being made available in one place, rather than current piecemeal arrangements. It was suggested that Estyn thematic work and inspections should align with the shared view definition of good.

### **3. Educational outcomes and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils**

**8.** There was agreement that current indicators rely too heavily on Key Stage 4 measures and do not adequately capture progression across the school career of a child. It was felt KS4 measures were too late. Stakeholders advocated for clear, staged progression measures aligned to the Curriculum for Wales, enabling earlier identification of risk and more targeted support.

**9.** Improving early years readiness and parental engagement (for example, reading at home) were cited as important factors for improving outcomes and narrowing gaps. However, this needed careful messaging which are framed positively and shared in channels parents use.

**10.** Stakeholders noted variability in practice between clusters and regions, which can widen inequities.

## 4. Factors impacting progress (absence, deprivation, funding, workforce capacity)

- 11.** A common theme was the impact of funding pressures. Many schools are running deficits leading to difficult choices. Often this can include reducing non-statutory but important roles (e.g., attendance/pastoral support).
- 12.** Recruitment and retention challenges including shifts in NQT and supply patterns also affect capacity for school-to-school improvement and coaching.
- 13.** The increasing complexity of ALN in mainstream classes elevates the importance of early intervention and need for sustained support for teachers and TAs.
- 14.** Stakeholders also described schools absorbing wider social issues, with a need for clearer multi-agency responsibilities (health, social care, policing) so that schools can focus on core teaching and learning. Practical suggestions included protecting time and funding for classroom-facing improvement work and setting minimum expectations around attendance and pastoral capacity given their direct link to attainment.