

Welsh Government Supplementary Guidance 2015 / 2016

Introduction

This supplementary guidance provides schools, consortia and challenge advisers with advice concerning how the judgement relating to the improvement capacity and the decision relating to the support category should be applied in cases where contextual and other factors may need to be considered.

The list of factors highlighted is not necessarily exhaustive. This guidance may be updated and further developed as implementation of the national categorisation system evolves.

The guidance will be supplemented by annexes dealing with:

- the lines of enquiry that should be used when considering potential rare exceptions; and
- other risk factors that may affect a school's improvement capacity and support category.

1. Use of terminology

The following terminology should be used to describe the outcomes of each step of the categorisation process:

Step 1: the outcome will be a **standards group** for each school (1-4)

Step 2: the outcome will be a judgement about a school's **improvement capacity** (A-D)

Step 3: this will lead to a **support category** for each school (green, yellow, amber, red)

2. Potential rare exceptions

In the vast majority of cases the national school categorisation matrix will allow for an accurate identification of a school's support category.

However, in a few cases designated as "rare exceptions" contextual factors may require further consideration to be given to establishing the most appropriate support category. Consideration will be given to the factors outlined below in determining the schools support category.

For Primary / Infant / Junior schools:

- Schools where 50% or more of pupils over the last 3 years are in receipt of free school meals.
- Schools with an average cohort of five or less pupils in an individual key stage or both key stages (in the case of a primary school) over the last three years.
- Schools with a registered learning resource base where a deeper analysis of data over a three-year period indicates performance is in FSM Benchmark group quarter 1 or 2 (Estyn guidance for the inspection of primary schools September 2014 – Annexe 7).
- Schools where at least 15% of pupils whose stage of English language acquisition is judged to be A, B or C on the agreed National Language Acquisition Model.

For secondary schools:

- Schools with a registered learning resource base where a deeper analysis of data over a three-year period indicates performance is in FSM Benchmark group quarter 1 or 2 (Estyn guidance for the inspection of secondary schools September 2014 – Annexe 7).
- Schools where at least 8% of pupils whose stage of English language acquisition is judged to be A, B or C on the agreed National Language Acquisition Model.

Schools that receive consideration as potential rare exceptions will need to demonstrate that:

- Pupils, including those in the identified groups, make good progress;
- The school's capacity to secure further improvement is at least good.

The lines of enquiry provided in the additional guidance materials should be used by schools and challenge advisers to determine whether a school should be designated as a rare exception. Careful consideration will need to be given to the school's improvement capacity and in particular the quality and impact of learning and teaching.

Where a school meets the conditions necessary to be identified as a rare exception it will be possible within the matrix to override the outcome that would otherwise be established to ensure that the support category is the most appropriate.

3. Other Circumstances where the matrix may be overridden

As outlined in Annex 2 a range of other risks where they occur will need to be considered when making a judgement about a school's improvement capacity and a decision about their support category. These risks will need to be weighed carefully when making these judgements and may need to be applied irrespective of the standards group.

Any school considered as a potential rare exception or other circumstances that override the matrix will be considered through the Regional Moderation process.

4. Performance of e-FSM pupils

Where the proportion of e-FSM pupils achieving the L2+ threshold in a secondary school is below the agreed national floor target of 30% (for 2014/2015) the school cannot be treated as an exception to the matrix. However, this will ensure that an appropriate level of support is provided to meet the needs of the learners.

5. New and amalgamated Schools

For new and amalgamated schools the data would be produced for Step 1 but not published for the first year of a school's operation. Step 2 and Step 3 will be carried out by the Consortia using Step 1 to inform the process.

Step 2 and Step 3 will be published on My Local School Website.

6. Changes to a school's support category in year

The National School Categorisation process will be carried out on an annual basis. The outcomes will be communicated to the Welsh Government in December each year for Primary / Infant / Junior schools and mid January for Secondary schools for publication at the end of January. However, it will be possible for each region to review a school's categorisation at any point during the year in response to changes in circumstance. These changes will not be published nationally.

Circumstances that may necessitate a review include:

- Schools that are making very good progress.
- Schools that become subject to a higher degree of risk (see risk factors in annexe 2)

7. Schools in inspection follow up

The National School Categorisation system is not contingent on the outcomes of an individual school's inspection. Where school self-evaluation and monitoring of schools' performance are effective this should result in appropriate action that will support a school's self-improvement and avoid the need for inspection follow-up activity.

However, where a school requires follow-up as a result of inspection the associated degree of risk, and the need to provide evidence of a school's progress against its recommendations, will need to be weighed carefully when determining a judgement about a school's improvement capacity and making a decision about its support category.

8. Schools requiring significant improvement or special measures

In normal circumstances the improvement capacity of a school requiring **significant improvement or special measures** should not normally be higher than D and the support category red in the first instance. As a school addresses the recommendations from its inspection, evidence about its progress should be weighed carefully and professional judgement applied when reviewing the school's support category.

9. Schools requiring Estyn or local authority monitoring

Local authorities and consortia will need to be satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to support schools requiring Estyn or local authority monitoring and to monitor and report their progress. When agreeing a school's improvement capacity and support category consideration should be given to the inspection's recommendations and degree of risk. Professional judgement should be applied when reviewing a school's support category taking account of evidence about a school's progress as it addresses the inspection's recommendations.

10. Nursery, special schools and pupil referral units

Nursery, special schools and pupil referral units will not be placed in a standards group. Nevertheless it will be important that challenge advisers discuss and agree with the school strengths and areas for improvement in relation to standards using the school's self-evaluation as the starting point. The outcomes of steps 2 and 3 will not be published on My Local School.

11. Schools catering for pupils aged 3 to 16

In some instances a school may cater for an age range that spans the age ranges associated with both a primary and a secondary school.

In these cases, the school will be allocated two standards groups – one relating to its provision for pupils aged 3-11 and one relating to its provision for pupils aged 11-16. However, there will be only one judgement made about the school's improvement capacity and only one relating to its support category.