



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# National School Categorisation System

A guide for parents and carers



mae addysg  
yn dechrau  
yn y cartref  
education  
begins  
at home

# What is the National School Categorisation System?

If we are going to raise the standard of education in Wales and support all schools to continue to improve, we need to have a clear picture of how well schools are doing now and be able to identify their capacity to improve.

The National School Categorisation System aims to provide a clear structure to review how well a school is performing for all its learners, taking into consideration how effectively it is led and managed, the quality of learning and teaching, and the level of support and challenge it needs to do better.

The system helps identify the schools that need the most help, support and guidance to improve. It also identifies those that are doing well but could be doing better and those that are highly effective and could help and support others to do better.

Each primary and secondary school is placed into one of four colour-coded support categories which trigger a tailored support package.

National School Categorisation is not about labelling schools or creating league tables. It is about helping schools identify what factors contribute to their progress and achievement and what areas to focus on in order to develop.

We would like to encourage all parents and carers to take an active interest in the performance and progress of their child's school and to support the school on its improvement journey. Whatever category your child's school is placed in, this system helps to make sure that the school will receive the help, support and guidance it needs to secure the very best outcomes for every one of its learners.



# Your questions answered

## Why do we need a categorisation system?

The National School Categorisation System gives us a clear and fair picture of how well your child's school is performing compared with other schools across Wales. It also helps us to identify the schools that need the most help, support and guidance to improve.

The system has been developed collectively between regional consortia and Welsh Government. Its main function is to identify, across Wales, the schools that need the most support. The colour category of support allocated to a school will trigger a tailored support programme.

The system is based on three simple steps. It is not purely driven by figures and takes into account the quality of leadership and learning and teaching in our schools.

## What is the three-step process and how does it work?



### Step one

#### Standards group

We use a range of information to analyse the school's performance. Schools are placed in one of four standards groups, numbered 1 to 4, which identify how well they are performing against a set of agreed measures. Standards group 1 is the group that performs most strongly against the agreed measures.



### Step two

#### Improvement capacity

Regional consortia challenge advisers evaluate the school's capacity to improve, taking account of evidence about the standards achieved and the quality of leadership and learning and teaching. Schools will be in one of four groups, A to D. Schools where the judgement is an A show the greatest capacity to improve along with the ability to support other schools. Those where the judgement is D need the most support.



### Step three

#### Support category

The outcomes in step one and step two are combined to decide on the school's support category. The final categorisation is a colour code that shows the level of support a school needs – green, yellow, amber or red. [See overleaf.](#)

## What is the role of a challenge adviser?

Challenge advisers are employed by the regional consortia to lead on school improvement. There are four regional consortia across Wales, one based in each of the Welsh regions – GWE in North Wales; ERW in Mid and West Wales; EAS in South East Wales; and CSC in South Central Wales. These challenge advisers are responsible for helping schools to improve their outcomes for learners and will support and challenge school leaders to develop their strategies for leadership and learning and teaching. The support for each school is tailored to meet the school's individual needs.

## What does each support category mean?

Each category has been given a colour – green, yellow, amber or red. The categorisation colour shows the level of support a school needs (with the schools in the green category needing the least support and those in the red category needing the most intensive support). Each school will receive a tailored programme of support, challenge and intervention based on this category.

### Support for improvement

Least

Most



Least

Most

## What information is used to categorise schools?

A wide range of information is used based on the school's performance over a three-year period. For primary schools we use four groups of data based on teacher assessment and attendance. For secondary schools we use four groups of data, based on examination results and attendance.

## Why are attendance figures important?

Improving attendance is a national priority. We aim to improve attendance and in doing so improve pupils' achievement. If children are not in school they lose valuable opportunities to learn. We want to ensure children make the most of their education by being in school and getting the best start in life.

## When are support categories published?

We publish information about each school's support category and make it available to parents/carers every January on the My Local School website at <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>



## Where do I get information if I am concerned about the support category of my child's school?

If you have any questions about your child's school or the category it has been placed in, your headteacher or chair of governors should be able to help. Or, you can go to the Welsh Government website, where you will find more information at <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/raisingstandards/schoolcategorisation/?lang=en>

## Are special schools and pupil referral units included?

The National School Categorisation System currently focuses on primary and secondary schools. However, in each local authority a support category is given to both special schools and pupil referral units.

## Will this system take the place of Estyn reports?

No, Estyn will continue to inspect schools. You can see Estyn reports on the Estyn website [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk) or via a link from your school's page on the My Local School website.



Your headteacher or chair of governors will be able to answer any questions about your school. Please send any other questions to **SMED1@wales.gov.uk**

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