

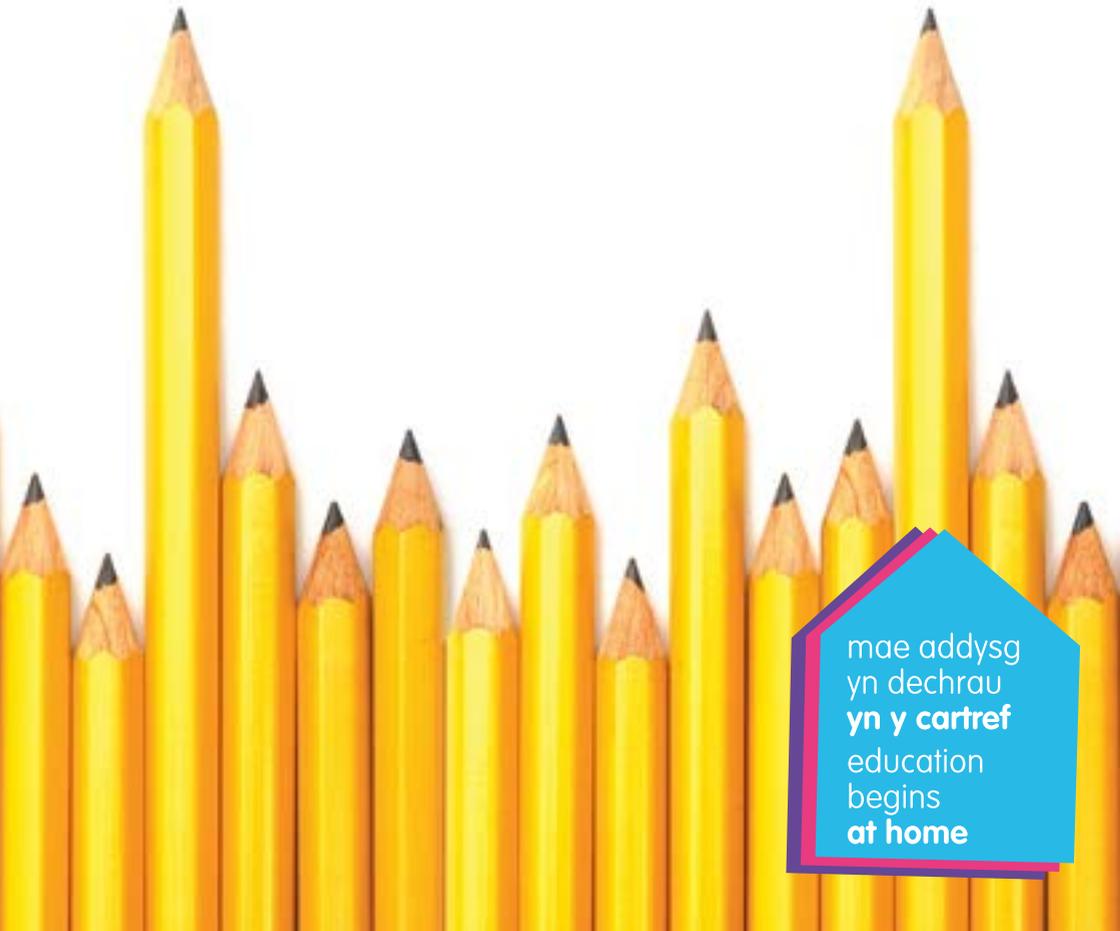
Understanding how your child's school is performing

A guide to the national school
categorisation system



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk



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What is this new system and why has it been introduced?

If we are going to raise the standard of education in Wales and help all our schools improve, we need a really clear picture of how well they are doing now and their capacity to improve further. Since the introduction of banding, which was our way of identifying secondary schools most in need of support based on their performance, we have seen many schools make great progress. However, I want to see many more schools improve, whether they are primary or secondary schools.

That is why I have introduced a new national school categorisation system for both primary and secondary schools. It will be a clear and simple way to judge how well a school is performing for all its pupils, how effectively it is led and managed, the quality of teaching and learning and the level of support and challenge it needs to do even better. My priorities of strengthening literacy and numeracy, as well as breaking the link between disadvantage and educational achievement are at the heart of the system.

Each primary and secondary school will be placed into one of four colour-coded support categories. This will show, at a glance, the schools that need the most help and guidance to improve, those that are doing well but could be doing even better and those that are already highly effective and can help others to do better.

I encourage all parents and carers to take an active interest in the performance and progress of the schools their children go to and to support the school on its journey in improving. Whatever category your child's school is placed in, this system will help to make sure that the school will receive the help and support it needs to secure the very best outcomes for every one of its pupils.



Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills



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Your questions answered

Why do we need a new categorisation system?

This new categorisation system will give us a clear and fair picture of a school's progress and provide you with information on how well your child's school is performing compared with other schools across Wales.



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

STEP ONE

STANDARDS GROUP

We will use a range of information to make a judgement about the school's standards. Schools will be in one of four standards groups (1 to 4), with schools in standards group 1 demonstrating very good overall performance and those in standards group 4 demonstrating the greatest need for improved performance.

STEP TWO

IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY

We will evaluate the school's capacity to improve further, taking account of evidence about the standards and the quality of leadership, teaching and learning. Schools will be in one of four groups (improvement capacity A to D), with schools in improvement capacity A showing the most capacity to improve themselves and those in improvement capacity D showing the least capacity.

STEP THREE

SUPPORT CATEGORY

The judgements in step one and step two will come together to decide on the school's support category, colour coded either green, yellow, amber or red. *See overleaf.*



What does each support category mean?

There are four support categories.

GREEN SUPPORT CATEGORY

A highly effective school which is well run, has strong leadership and is clear about its priorities for improvement. These schools have a track record in raising the standards that pupils achieve and have the capacity to support other schools to do better.

YELLOW SUPPORT CATEGORY

An effective school which is already doing well and knows the areas it needs to improve. By identifying the right support and taking action, it has the potential to do even better.

AMBER SUPPORT CATEGORY

A school in need of improvement which needs help to identify the steps to improve or to make change happen more quickly. Through discussions with the regional school improvement service and local authority, the school will receive a tailored package of support.

RED SUPPORT CATEGORY

A school in need of greatest improvement and will receive immediate, intensive support. Progress will be closely monitored to make sure that the necessary improvements take place as quickly as possible.

What information will be used to categorise schools?

A wide range of information will be used. We will look at performance in English or Welsh and mathematics during the last three years, and how much overall progress the school has made. We will also look at attendance, how effectively the school is led and managed and how well it knows its strengths and areas for improvement.

Why are attendance figures important?

Improving attendance is a national priority. If children are not in school, they cannot learn and we will not be able to make sure they make the most of their time in school.

When will the support categories be published?

We will publish information about each school's support category and make it available to parents 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://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/schooldata/ims>

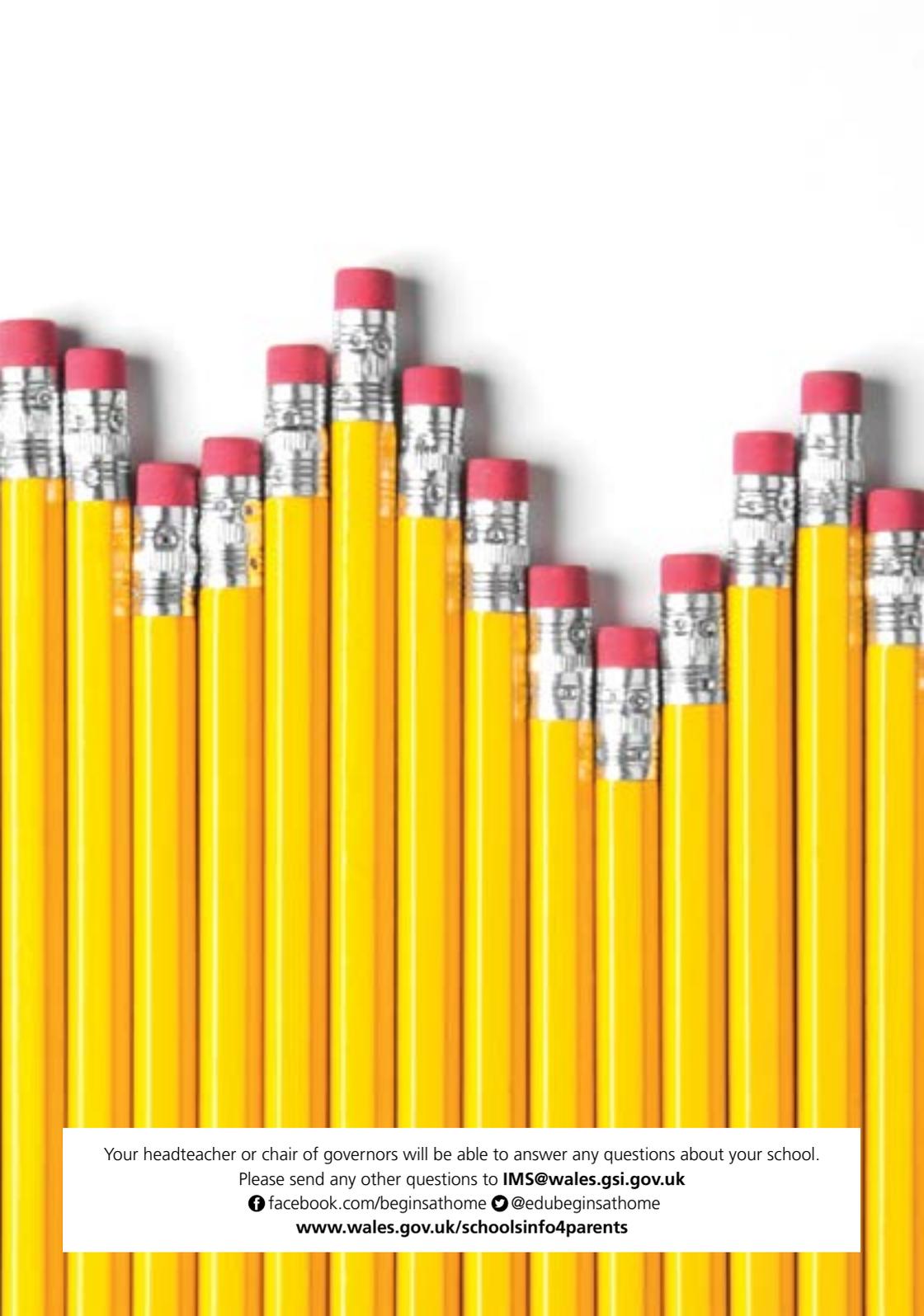
Are special schools and pupil referral units included?

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 take the place of Estyn reports?

No, Estyn will continue to inspect schools and will provide an external check on the national school categorisation system when inspecting.





Your headteacher or chair of governors will be able to answer any questions about your school.

Please send any other questions to IMS@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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