
DRAFT COPY

Mid Wales Partnership Equity and Deprivation Strategy



Rationale

Education in Wales: Our National Mission (2017) states clearly the importance of 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being'. A key action from the document is to ensure we partner equity with excellence, identifying new and effective ways to measure and improve learner well-being. The purpose of this strategy is to promote the importance of equality and offer clear approaches for school evaluation and improvement.

'We are committed to the success and well-being of every learner, regardless of background or personal circumstance. Equity and excellence go hand in

hand, and we cannot have one at the expense of the other. Geography, deprivation or childhood experiences should not prevent learners from reaching their potential'. (Welsh Government, 2017)

School contexts vary widely, and each school will be at a different stage of their improvement journey. This strategy aims to promote positive discussion around the topic of equity, high quality teaching and learner wellbeing. Vitally, these discussions should include engagement with wider stakeholders, such as pupils, parents, and governors. The strategy challenges teachers and school leaders to consider effective and progressive ways to meet the needs of all learners.

Raising awareness of the challenges and barriers faced by disadvantaged learners allows school practitioners and the schools wider community to contribute collaboratively towards inclusivity and equality. Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion) (OECD, 2012).

If used well, schools will use information in the strategy to make informed decisions about current practice. Areas to improve will be identified and actioned purposefully via self-evaluation procedures and robust improvement planning. Effective practice will include wider discussions on areas to develop with wider stakeholders alongside evidence-based research on how to promote equity across the school.

In the same way that support for young people should be unique and carefully considered; the recommendations, considerations and ideas within this strategy are designed to be opportunities for further consideration and lead staff towards professional enquiry. They are not meant to be prescriptive and should be carefully considered, tailored, adapted or ignored to meet the developing needs and context of each educational establishment.

This strategy is to be considered alongside the following key documents:

Ceredigion	Powys
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy• Curriculum Policy• Equality Policy• Pupil Discipline Policy	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ceredigion Principles and Expectations of Maintained Schools for Pupils with Additional Learning Needs 2021/ Special Educational Needs Policy• Attendance Policy• Looked After Children Policy• Ceredigion Corporate Strategy• Ceredigion Local Wellbeing Plan	
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Pupil Voice – the challenges faced living in Ceredigion:

Where we live is really nice, but it can be hard too. Sometimes when we finish after school stuff the pupils that live in the town can walk home easily and other pupils have to wait for a bus or a lift. I think this puts some pupils off.

I think there should be more religious buildings, like mosques and synagogues, around where we live. I think it would mean more people would move to the area.

I think that we have good sports facilities, but they are always just redeveloped to bring them up to a standard that is fine. They are never made to be amazing; they are just sort of made to be acceptable.

There aren't many hospitals or health facilities where we live, I think this could be improved. We also don't really have a dentist, that could be better.

Some pupils definitely have an easier time at school than others. For example, sometimes there is only one person in a class that has come from a small school and then there are lots of others from a big primary school. I think it's harder for the smaller schools because they have less friends when they move.

There aren't many jobs around here. Not just for adults but for pupils as well. I think there should be more things like science and maths jobs in Ceredigion so that people stay more local. If we go to University, we also have to pay more to go because we would have accommodation costs because there isn't a university in this town.

Timeline for Development of Strategy



Equity

Equitable schools understand advantages and barriers exist in education, acknowledge each learner has different personal and social characteristics, and make a commitment to correct this imbalance. It is impossible to view equity, high-quality teaching, and wellbeing as separate entities. Instead, high-quality teaching, wellbeing and equity should be considered collectively. Put simply, you cannot have an excellent school without equal consideration for equity, wellbeing, and high-quality teaching.

There is no official definition of equity found in educational policy in Wales. For the purpose of this document, equity in school will be defined as:

An environment where all learners, despite personal or social circumstances, have access to excellent learning, opportunity, and support. Diversity is celebrated and the school works tirelessly to challenge bias, bullying, prejudice or stereotyping based on protected characteristics. Pupil and parent voice is promoted, and all staff recognise that disadvantaged learners require more support, more often.

As schools work towards creating an equitable environment, it is important to remember that creating an equitable school doesn't lead to equal outcomes. The role of the schools is to ensure each learner has fair opportunity to succeed and effective planning and school improvement strategies are established to support this. Moreover, equity for all means learners should all be treated differently to support their specific, ever-changing needs. Each learner is entitled to a bespoke, person-centred education to meet their specific needs. At times, the school will be required to provide well-planned, additional support for disadvantaged learners.

Deprivation in education can manifest itself in many ways. Schools and school staff must be practiced at recognising vulnerabilities and have strong strategies in place to offer young people. It is a common misconception that deprivation is exclusively associated with poverty. It is true, of course, that disadvantaged learners can live in poverty; however, true disadvantage spans far wider. In Mid Wales, for example, all learners must overcome rural poverty due to poor access to services and opportunities when compared to other learners across urban parts of Wales. An equitable education provision recognises disadvantage and works tirelessly to ensure barriers to success are limited, or overcome, in all aspects of school life.

Well-being

Well-being encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of an individual. Positive well-being is portrayed in an ambitious and enterprising individual who is confident and capable to contribute creatively to their own and others' lives, making informed, ethical decisions based on their skills, knowledge, and experiences to overcome difficulties and solve problems, resulting in them leading a happy and healthy life supporting those around them.

There are numerous studies that show good learner wellbeing is a key contributor to learner attainment. The framework guidance on embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and emotional well-being (2021) references a document that states:

“The health and wellbeing of children and young people contributes to their ability to benefit from good quality teaching and to achieve their full academic potential.”

It continues to say:

“Academic success has a strong positive impact on children’s subjective sense of how good they feel their lives are (life satisfaction) and is linked to higher levels of wellbeing in adulthood. In turn children’s overall level of wellbeing impacts on their behaviour and engagement in school and their ability to acquire academic competence in the first place.”

Schools often recognise that disadvantaged learners are more likely to suffer from poor mental health. In a study by the Department for Education, The Impact of Pupils Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes (2012) found that young people with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school. Moreover, it continues to explain that as children move through the school system, emotional and behavioural wellbeing become more important in explaining school engagement, while demographic and other characteristics become less important. Thus, for schools to reduce any attainment gap and truly support disadvantage learners, an ethos where wellbeing is prioritised must be universally accepted to ensure improvements in attendance and successful engagement with the curriculum.

High Quality Teaching

It is widely accepted that high-quality teaching is the most important factor in improving learner attainment. This is especially true for our disadvantaged learners and reinforces the need for excellent classroom teachers to provide truly equitable education. Teachers must be equipped to

provide high-quality teaching through a variety of creative and engaging strategies that meet the needs of all learners. A high focus on teacher quality is crucial given the evidence on the importance of teacher quality and lower levels of teacher quality in more deprived areas (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2006). Retention and recruitment of high-quality staff is essential when supporting the most disadvantaged.

All professionals working with young people need sound understanding of truly impactful strategies that support all learners, but especially our most disadvantaged, to access education fully. Senior leaders have a duty to ensure teachers are suitably supported to access training material and should be considerate of the needs of the most disadvantaged when deciding on CPD opportunities.

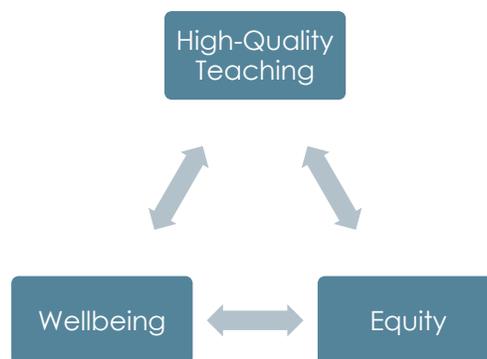
The gap in performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged learners in Wales is clear. In a recent study by the Education Policy Institute (2022), it was found that the disadvantage gap at GCSE is about 22-23 months of educational progress and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to reach the top quintile of GCSE scores. A key finding from the study states:

“A high focus on teacher quality is crucial. This may include policies designed to improve recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in more deprived areas, such as salary supplements, and access to high-quality professional development.”

It is essential, therefore, that disadvantaged young people have the best teachers. To achieve this, there must be a commitment from schools to offer excellent professional development opportunities and work hard to retain the best staff.

Why is equity, well-being and high-quality teaching key to success?

Wellbeing, equity, and high-quality teaching are intrinsically linked, and it would be misleading to enquire about one without a consideration for the other. Research confirms this statement and excellent practice occurs when schools support young people in an environment where all elements have equal weighing. When learners feel valued and respected within an environment and feel a sense of belonging and connected to the school community, they are more likely to make academic, social, and emotional progress. Schools have a duty to set high standards in each of these areas. This is reinforced within the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (2018) that states the Act will play a crucial role in enabling the curriculum to deliver strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity, and well-being.



Equity, Well-being and High-Quality Teaching				
	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	Equity, Wellbeing and Teaching are discussed separately by different staff across the school. There is poor opportunity for sharing of practice. The readiness and opportunity for young people to engage with learning is considered separately to pedagogy. Additionality of support is rarely considered.		Staff understand that equity, wellbeing and teaching should be considered together. There is regular opportunity for lead practitioners to work collaboratively and share understanding of good practice. There is a shared understanding that 'readiness to learn' is as important as the learning itself. Providing additional support for disadvantaged learners is regularly considered and actioned.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is learner wellbeing, high quality teaching and equity given priority in your use of grant spending? • How well does the school curriculum support and consider learner wellbeing and equity? • How well does the school and the curriculum develop healthy attitudes and behaviours? • How well does the schools approach ensure equity for <u>all</u> learners in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to learning experience and resource? ○ Celebrating diversity and learners with protected characteristics? ○ Learners living in poverty? ○ Learners being able to influence what they learn? ○ Transition activities and progression to post-16? ○ Working with parents and other partners? 			

Strategies to Support Equity in Education

Leadership

Effective leadership allows teachers and students to develop alongside each other. Leaders should strive to develop a culture of research, collaboration and innovation that results in professional improvements that make a difference in the classroom. When done well, this is underpinned by effective systems, policies and procedures that are equitable and inclusive. A strong school vision should lead to high-quality teaching that is influenced by research driven pedagogical principles in effectively resourced and engaging learning environments. Senior leaders in more successful schools ensure that staff are willing to do whatever it takes to help each pupil to succeed. They hold every staff member accountable for pupils' progress (Department for Education, 2015).

Equity, as mentioned previously, is only possible alongside careful consideration for learner wellbeing and high-quality teaching and learning. Leaders must use evidence and expertise to create an environment where all learners can reach potential. Effective practice sees schools work co-constructively with other settings and stakeholders whilst involving young people in decision making processes. Senior leaders in more successful schools tend to share their thinking and work collaboratively with staff, pupils, parents, families and the local community. Leaders must ensure their schools are linked into a number of networks such as local school clusters, teaching school networks, online forums and national education events and also work to seek out new ideas and put systems in place for staff to share best practice (Department for Education, 2015). The most disadvantaged learners are disproportionately affected by poor schooling, and it is the role of leaders to develop an environment that allows fair and equitable opportunities for all.

The Education Policy Institute (2022) states that targeted extra funding at more deprived schools has been shown to be effective at narrowing the disadvantage gap. More funding should be specifically targeted at pupils experiencing disadvantage. However, the effective use of funds to target disadvantaged students and students with additional learning needs requires the right skills, guidance and strategic planning. Estyn's evaluations of better-achieving local authorities found that high-quality leadership at the local and school level when planning for spending can make a difference in student outcomes (Estyn, 2010).

The Mid-Wales Partnership will:

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- Identify examples of good practice of leadership at senior and middle management
 - Establish leadership Networks to share effective practice, share ideas and build outward facing schools
 - Provide school leaders with effective leadership training and professional development opportunities

What schools should do:

- Ensure that deprivation and supporting disadvantaged learners is considered across all aspects of school life and connections are made between supporting more vulnerable learners and other pupils at the school
- Facilitate opportunities for staff to attend training and read guidance / research on supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable learners

Evaluation of current practice:

Leadership				
	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	The needs of the schools disadvantaged learners are considered by few. All aspects of school life (curriculum, teaching and learning, supporting mental health and wellbeing etc) are considered discretely and there is little opportunity for wider discussion.		All of senior and middle management consider the needs of disadvantaged learners. Senior leaders make strategic decisions that promote holistic support from every member of staff in the school. CPD opportunities are effective and meet then needs of the school and wider community.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does leadership establish equitable systems, policies and procedures to ensure excellent teaching of disadvantaged learners? • How well does leadership establish equitable systems, policies and procedures to prioritise learner wellbeing? • How well does leadership include stakeholders in equitable decision-making processes? • How effective is leadership in engaging stakeholders with the development of community schools? • How well does leadership influence and improve teaching and learning? • How well does leadership provide professional learning opportunities in relation to equitable practice and supporting disadvantaged learners? 			

Curriculum for Wales

The Curriculum for Wales sits alongside a broad series of wider reforms across the Welsh Education System. A well planned and equitable curriculum for all is central to all learners engaging with learning and reaching potential. It is important to recognise that a broad and balanced curriculum encompasses all aspects of life within a school community, and a truly broad and balanced curriculum will consider the wider picture - effective break times, morning clubs, extra-curricular activities and more. A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it (Welsh Government, 2020).

Successful curriculum design will also work to narrow the attainment gap. Curriculum development should be at the heart of practitioner, school and national efforts which seek to raise standards for all, tackle the attainment gap, and ensure an education system that is a source of national pride and enjoys public confidence (Welsh Government, 2020). Use of resources to make reasonable adjustments and targeted interventions will support disadvantaged learners to access schools in an equitable manner. For example, the focus on pupil voice and enhanced learner experience in the new curriculum will provide more opportunities for disadvantaged learners to have their voice heard and make links between classroom learner and real-life experiences. For this to be effective, curriculum design must be considered with the poorest learner in mind and engagement with opportunity should not be limited by socio-economic status.

The importance of equity when designing curriculum is important at a strategic level but should also be taught to young people in line with new curriculum expectations. For example, it is statutory for schools to teach Relationships and Sexuality (RSE), where guidance emphasizes the importance of being educated around equity and children's-rights. Learners should develop an understanding of how rights are related to all aspects of RSE and contribute to the freedom, dignity, well-being, and safety of all people. This helps learners to understand the importance of equity, recognising the importance of rights in ensuring fair treatment for all (Welsh Government, 2020). At its best, the teaching seen at a classroom level should reflected the equitable ethos of the school.

The Mid-Wales Partnership will:

- Seek effective practice from local, regional and national schools and education providers

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- Consider supporting the needs of disadvantaged learners before sharing resources, planning training and engaging with schools

What schools should do:

- Consider the needs of disadvantaged learners when planning for effective curriculum delivery
- Make strategic decisions on curriculum development based on evidenced good-practice and ensure the most disadvantaged learners have appropriate support to achieve alongside their more privileged peers
- Provide an environment that celebrates a variety of qualifications and achievements, sets high standards and inspires all learners to succeed

Evaluation of current practice:

Curriculum for Wales				
	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	Curriculum development is not supported by evidenced based practice or effective quality assurance activities. The wishes of the learners are not considered and there is little evidence of bespoke, person-centred practice that leads to impactful progress. Engagement with the local community and wider stakeholders is minimal.		The curriculum is designed to supports all learners to achieve and disadvantaged learners are given extra support to facilitate this. The curriculum is engaging and there is strong learner voice. There are strong community links and teachers and senior leaders support engagement with effective learner 'experiences'. Wider stakeholders are invited into the school regularly and engage with relevant and appropriate activities.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the curriculum's design and delivery meet the needs of all learners? • Do all learners have fair and equitable access to a broad and balanced curriculum? • How well does the curriculum enable progression for all learners along the continuum of learning? • How well does the curriculum incorporate opportunity for equitable assessment opportunities? • How well does the school consider a vision for its spending on resource to establish an equitable curriculum? • How well does the school draw on contributions from the community and other partners to develop an equitable curriculum? 			

School and the Community

Engagement with the community is essential to building equity in a school. Recognising that the wider community can support all learners, especially those experiencing deprivation, can help build an outward facing school culture that ensures the community and the schoolwork collaboratively to ensure all learners reach their full potential. Establishing a learning environment and a curriculum that reflects the community is a major focus of the new curriculum. The Welsh Government's Implementations and Practical Considerations Guidance (2021) for the Curriculum for Wales states that when developing a curriculum, schools should involve learners, parents, carers, partner agencies and the local community. This is an important means of ensuring the curriculum meets learners' needs and is authentic to their context within the national framework. Schools and practitioners also play a critical role in ensuring learners, parents, carers, and communities understand the vision and ethos underpinning the curriculum. It is recommended throughout the document that the school must also prepare learners to become active members of their community and have opportunities to build relationships with the schools' wider stakeholders to provide rich learning experiences.

Community Schools is an evidenced based strategy supporting the concept of effective community and school links. There are four pillars to effective support - integrated student support, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement and collaborative leadership and practice. An evidence review of practice by the Learning Policy Institute (2017) found schools with strong community links lead to improvements in school outcomes and contribute to meeting the educational needs of low-achieving learners in high-poverty schools. Moreover, the evidence shows benefit for closing attainment and opportunity gaps for students from low-income families, families from minority ethnic groups and learners with disabilities. Offering integrated support, such as effective counselling, medical support, and assistance with transport show improvements with behaviour, social functioning and academic achievement.

For young learners in rural Wales, it is challenging to connect the knowledge and skills developed in the classroom with prior experiences. At times, learners that live in rural parts of Wales, especially our most disadvantaged, lack life experiences due to the typically isolated nature of their local communities and families. This can result in a reduction in a young person's ability to fully benefit from a broad and balanced education. By living in rural communities, our disadvantaged pupils are not only affected by the current attainment gap in education but are also more likely to suffer from an 'opportunity gap' when compared to peers living in more residential

and urban parts of Wales. Schools must be aware of the benefits of engagement with the community and plan for future engagement whilst working to overcome rural deprivation.

The Mid-Wales Partnership will:

- Identify examples of good practice in the formation of community schools and ways to overcome potential barriers
- Support creative use of resource to engage with action research opportunities and work alongside schools trying to develop community schools
- Continue to modify strategies with case studies of good practice
- Work to develop action research proposals alongside headteachers and senior leadership teams (suggestions below related to community school and rurality concerns) that encourage development of community schools:

Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3
Prioritise one afternoon of the week for additional learning opportunities (for example, a Wednesday afternoon) and work with bus and taxi companies to arrange additional routes home later in the afternoon so all learners can engage fairly. Can schools offer rugby clubs, science clubs, choir practice, reading clubs etc after school on the same night and try to extend the school day for one night of the week?	Consider borrowing time from lunches during the week, and set that time aside for learners to have timetabled additional curriculum opportunities on a Friday afternoon (the last 2 lessons of the week) with a focus on learner wellbeing. Each faculty / teacher must offer a club, or a series of clubs, that young people can attend. Moreover, schools could use the community to increase the offer (golf, horse riding, surfing etc) that increases opportunity.	Secondary school staff to work closely with local primary schools and offer clubs in the community after school. Primary schools generally sit within more local communities that disadvantaged people could walk to overcoming potential transport issues. Conversely, primary school staff could support with activities in mainstream schools to support with effective transition.

What schools should do:

- Consider current practice and question effective ways of extending the school day, bringing the community into the school building, and supporting with additional learning opportunities for adults.
- Speak to other organisations that could benefit from using the school building more regularly to support with reducing the attainment and opportunity gaps (Health Service, Social Care, Youth Service etc)
- Attempt to work alongside other primary schools and secondary schools within your region to try and work towards effective multi-agency support for all learners

Evaluation of current practice:

School and the Community		
	1 (Weaker) looks like	4 (Stronger) looks like

Description	The school operates without wider community engagement. There is little or no wider use of the school building to support opportunities outside of the school day. Pupil and parent voice is minimal and prescribed, leading to little meaningful change.	There is a strong link between the school and the community, and the school supports additional learning opportunities for pupils and parents and allows for integration of wider services (health, youth service, social care etc). There is a rich extension of the school day (or additional learning offer). Parent and learner voice are diagnostic and leads to purposeful change.		
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is parental voice heard and valued in your school? • Are parents engaged in their children’s learning and in the design of the curriculum? • Do you offer family learning programmes and adult learning opportunities? • Do you regularly engage with youth workers? • Is the school used by the wider community to support clubs, learning opportunities etc? • Have you considered extended and enriched school days? • Do you work the stakeholders to provide wrap around support? • Is there alignment of health and well-being, social and educational services that may be co-located? 			

Regional Inequality

There are many benefits to living rurally; however, when it comes to offering an equitable education, it can become a barrier to fair opportunity. Rural communities and coastal towns experience different types of deprivation and disadvantage when compared to more populated areas in Wales.

Rural deprivation is a barrier to all learners regardless of socio-economic status, and schools must work creatively to overcome such challenges. Rural deprivation is exacerbated for low-income families and requires a more considered, strategic, and multi-agency support to overcome. For example, transport implications for learners attending after-school activities can mean less opportunity to engage with a wider curriculum offer. Moreover, in-line with learners having planned access to better 'experience' within the new Curriculum for Wales, schools in Mid-Wales have fewer opportunities and poorer transport links to access such opportunities, such as theatres and sporting venues.

Offering opportunities digitally can improve access for some learners; however, this is also more challenging in rural Wales. Although the number of houses with the internet is relatively consistent with the rest of Wales, the speed of connectivity remains slower. This, coupled with other regional issues (such as high house prices, fewer opportunities for work and lower salaries) results in the need for schools and other agencies to make further considerations when supporting young people and their families.

What we will do:

- Support schools to develop a community schools' model specific to rural communities
- Work alongside the Welsh Government to highlight specific issues faced by rural communities

What schools should do:

- Consider the needs of the most disadvantaged learners when making decisions
- Ensure that rural deprivation isn't a barrier to learners accessing education fully
- Offer opportunities for young people (and the wider community, if possible) to use the school when working to overcome regional inequalities

Evaluation of current practice:

	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	There is little consideration for the additional challenges faced when living in rural parts of Wales.		The school considers the challenges faced by living rurally when engaging with young people, parents, carers, and the wider community.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the school consider regional deprivation when coordinating activities, including extracurricular activities? • How well does the school consider barriers to opportunity and experience due to regional deprivation? • How creatively is the school using technology to ensure fair and equitable access to experience? • Does the school consider regional deprivation when coordinating events that attempt to engage parents and stakeholders? • Are disadvantaged learners proportionately represented in extracurricular activities, trips and events that happen outside of school hours? 			

Support and Intervention

It is wrong to assume that everyone benefits from the same level of support. This is equal treatment of young people, and only works to maintain any gap in social and emotional or academic imbalance. Schools must work to ensure each young person gets specific and targeted support and intervention as required. At times, this will mean some young people will benefit from more support than others. This is an equitable school - where young people that require more support, get more support, on their journey to living a prosperous and fulfilling life.

Learners from low-income families can be disadvantaged from an early age. Studies have found that under-achievement in children in Wales receiving FSM may be a significant problem from nursery class onwards (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2013). If unsupported, this trend can continue at GCSE. A study by the National Education Union (2021) found Children accessing Free School Meals are 28% less likely to leave school with 5 A*-C GCSE grades than their wealthier peers. Schools must become practiced at identifying attainment and wellbeing gaps early and work strategically to overcome these issues. Effective tracking of attainment and wellbeing should inform impactful support and intervention.

Best practice will see schools not only offer support and intervention for learners but consider the impact and effectiveness of support over time. Where possible, schools establish a baseline from which progress can be measured and report regularly on any progress made. Staff leading on support and intervention should use educational research to inform planning and improve learner outcomes.

The Mid-Wales Partnership will:

- Ensure the Additional Learning Needs team supports schools to provide effective and impactful early intervention
- Work alongside schools to upskill staff in delivery of impactful intervention
- Support, track and monitor effective spending of grant funding to facilitate purposeful support and intervention

What schools should do:

- Track and monitor the effectiveness of support and intervention

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- Ensure staff delivering support and intervention have engaged with appropriate training, keep accurate records of impact and have adequate time to prepare effective interventions
 - Raise awareness of effective classroom practices that result in equitable learning opportunities (for example: learned helplessness, effective use of teaching assistants etc)

Evaluation of current practice:

Support and Intervention				
	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	Staff are poorly supported when delivering support and intervention. Learners progress is not tracked effectively and there is little evidence of impact. Learners are considered for additional support at random and the opinion of the young person and their parents / guardians is not considered. Classroom practice does not support the most disadvantaged learners effectively.		There is clear evidence of impactful support and intervention with learners making excellent progress. The young person, parents / guardians and the school work collectively towards improvements. At a classroom level, teachers can support disadvantaged learners effectively and are aware they are often best placed to provide subject-specific support alongside teaching assistants. Good practice is shared across the school.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are interventions monitored for effectiveness? • Is the school facilitating the most impactful interventions for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners? • Are teachers / school staff aware of the interventions offered by the school? • Is the school working with teachers and teaching assistants collectively to ensure effective classroom-based support and intervention? • Does the school priorities support and intervention appropriately (adequate space for sessions, staff training, reasonable use of grants and budgets etc.)? 			

High Aspirations

It is generally accepted that learners who experience deprivation have lower aspirations when compared to their peers. However, this is unproven. In fact, disadvantaged learners have equally high aspirations as non-disadvantaged learners but are more likely to have a negative educational experience and lack the support required to reach their goals. This is more apparent when learners are older and have a better understanding of the disadvantages they are working to overcome (for example, their socio-economic status). Primary school learners are less influenced by this and tend to maintain their higher aspirations than their older peers. Working towards an equitable education means ensuring all learners, especially secondary school learners, are valued, listened to, and driven towards achieving their aspirations throughout education. This is especially true for learners experiencing disadvantage, who will require more focused support and intervention to maintain the aspirations they once held earlier in their journey through education.

Learned helplessness is especially common in disadvantaged learners. The avoidance of challenge, collapse in problem-solving and having a negative outlook on life is synonymous with the lives of disadvantaged youngsters. Uncontrollability is linked with negative emotions and will transfer between situations (home and school) and will be displayed in the classroom. Schools must work to overcome this by offering motivational, cognitive and emotional support that works to overcome such issues. A truly equitable school will provide targeted support that helps disadvantaged learners grow in confidence, realise their potential, and maintain similar aspirations to their more advantaged peers.

What we will do:

- Work alongside schools to support maintaining learners' aspirations
- Ensure disadvantaged learners have fair and equal access to third party support, such as Careers Wales, to maintain high aspirations and plan for the future

What schools should do:

- Raise awareness of Learned Helplessness and support staff to be better practiced at engaging disadvantaged learners in their education
- Prioritise building effective relationships with disadvantaged learners to improve confidence, offer advice and maintain high aspirations

Evaluation of current practice:

	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	Pupil voice is poor, and learners lack confidence to discuss their thoughts and opinions openly with staff. Disadvantaged learners generally have a negative outlook on their life and have little opportunity to discuss this with staff and other professionals.		Learners have strong pupil-voice built on excellent relationships and opportunity. High aspirations are encouraged, maintained, and discussed regularly with teachers and outside agencies (where possible). Many disadvantaged learners discuss their futures positively and with confidence.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do our staff promote good relationships with and between learners through their own actions? • How well do learners develop positive relationships with peers and adults? • How well does teaching prepare learners for transition to the next phase of their education/career? • How well does the school collaborate with external agencies to meet the needs of learners, including those with ALN? • How well does the school meet the needs of learners who are disadvantaged by poverty? 			

Evaluation and Improvement

Self-evaluation and improvement processes are fundamental to school effectiveness (Welsh Government, 2021) and this process is fundamental to supporting disadvantaged learners and their families. Identification of areas of strength and areas of improvement to drive positive change can help create a school culture where all learners flourish. Effective school improvement processes will ensure equity across all aspects of school life through critically analysis of additionality of support. That is, are disadvantaged learners having the opportunity to access more support, more often, so they have fair opportunity to succeed in line with their more privileged peers?

At its best, schools will not only consider the amount of support, but will monitor its effectiveness and have a clear understanding of desired outcomes. Senior leaders should plan to support disadvantaged learners with high-impact academic and social intervention delivered by the best staff. Improvement planning should also carefully consider equity of opportunity, with schools proactively working to reduce any additional barriers to engaging fully with school life.

Teachers and support staff should also be consistently evaluating their engagement with young people. For example, are lessons planned with the poorest learner in mind (equipment needs, homework expectations etc) and do all pupils have fair access to opportunity in every faculty (opportunities to join school choirs, sports teams, science clubs etc)? Staff should also be considerate of their pedagogy in relation to supporting disadvantaged learners. The pace of the lesson, targeting of learners for questioning, learner feedback, and use of support staff are critical when maintaining aspirations and engaging learners.

What we will do:

- Support school to identify areas of strength and areas to improve
- Provide each school with a School Support Advisor to support with identification and future planning
- Offer opportunity for schools to engage with specialist staff

What schools should do:

- Ensuring disadvantaged learners are considered through all school-improvement processes

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- Be proactive and identify areas to improve the life of disadvantaged pupils at school
 - Carefully consider the impact of interventions, evaluate outcomes, and use grant funding to make ongoing improvements depending on the needs of the school
 - Ensure all staff and wider stakeholders are aware of strategies to support disadvantaged learners and their families (teachers, support staff, governors etc) and this knowledge is challenged during opportunities for scrutiny and reflection

Evaluation of current practice:

	1 (Weaker) looks like		4 (Stronger) looks like	
Description	Disadvantaged learners are considered as a separate component to school improvement processes. The impact of support is rarely considered.		Disadvantaged learners are always considered as part of school improvement processes. There is a culture of impactful improvement that allows all pupils, regardless of background, to succeed.	
Evaluation	1	2	3	4
Any comments:				
Questions to consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does leadership use its vision to underpin a shared sense of purpose, high expectations and positive cultures in all aspects of its work? • How well does leadership establish a clear vision for learning, teaching and the curriculum that secures the best possible progress and wellbeing for all learners? • How well does leadership establish and maintain a positive and inclusive learning and teaching environment? • How well does leadership use professional learning to improve learning, wellbeing, teaching and the curriculum? • How well does leadership establish a culture of collaborative learning and mutual respect within and beyond the school? • How well does leadership establish and apply systems, policies and procedures to achieve its vision for learning, wellbeing, teaching and the curriculum? 			

Conclusion

The Equity and Deprivation Strategy is a research informed document, constructed by a range of local authority staff and schools. It recognises that to enable an equitable education, schools are required to carefully consider all aspects of school life. Equity should sit at the heart of decision-making for senior leaders, teachers, governors, and wider stakeholders.

A key focus for schools should not only focus on improving the progress made by disadvantaged learners, but also work tirelessly to narrow any opportunity gap that may arise in education. Throughout this process it should be widely recognised that some learners, at times, will require more help, more support, and more time than others to reach their potential.

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