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Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

# Training for school governors in Wales: understanding the role of data in supporting self-evaluation and improvement in schools

Guidance for local authorities on what to include in training.

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## Overview

This document sets out the scope and content of the training to be delivered to school governors in Wales on understanding the role of data in supporting self-evaluation, improvement and accountability in schools. Governors will be expected to undertake, and local authorities will be expected to deliver, training on the areas contained in this document, which are relevant to their schools

Part 1 sets out the scope and mandatory content of the training on understanding the role of data in supporting self-evaluation and improvement in maintained schools other than special schools.

Part 2 sets out the scope and mandatory content of the training on understanding the role of data in supporting self-evaluation and improvement in special schools.

Governing bodies play a key role in the evidence-based self-evaluation of a school, subsequent improvement planning and monitoring of progress and holding the head teacher and senior leaders to account for the performance and effectiveness of the school. This training must provide governors with:

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- an essential understanding of the crucial role that data plays in this process, including recognition of the need to consider context when consulting the data and an understanding of the limits of data
- an awareness of the range of data available, when it might be available and how to access it
- an awareness of other parties that use data on the schools
- some tools to aid intelligent and appropriate use of data

in order for them to fulfil their role effectively in identifying areas for further investigation to determine specific improvement priorities, and where progress against improvement priorities is unsatisfactory.

This document only sets out the areas to be covered by local authorities when providing training to school governors in Wales on understanding the role of data. As the provider of the training, it will be the local authorities who decide on the detail of such training, taking into consideration any specific contextual factors for their authority and the sort of data relevant to the schools of the governors in attendance. Prescribing a limited set of measures and analyses as the focus of training would detract from the requirement for effective self-evaluation and improvement planning to consider the full range of local data available that better reflects the school in the round.

The training requirements in this document will not apply to any governor who, before the coming into force of the Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, completed the school performance data training as set out in the 2018 document (Guidance document number: 238/2018).

This training document positions the role of data in self-evaluation and improvement in schools in current policy. It also reflects some emerging themes from the Welsh Government's new evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements for schools in relation to the role of data. The programme of work on the implementation of curriculum reform in Wales is ongoing and future requirements for governors' training will need to be revised accordingly to align with the emerging Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework that will underpin the new curriculum arrangements. The Welsh Government will provide updated guidance on this as arrangements are finalised.

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An important principle of the new framework that the school system should now be working towards, and should feature in the training, is that evaluation and improvement work is separate to accountability. Schools' self-evaluation and improvement work should not be driven by the perceived demands of the accountability system, but by the underlying objective to deliver high standards and an excellent education for all pupils.

Governors must understand, nonetheless, that governing bodies have a role to play with regards to both improvement and accountability. As part of self-evaluation and improvement, through an understanding of data and other information about their school, they should agree aims and objectives for the school to be delivered through its school improvement plan. This plan will include the school's strengths, areas for development and improvement priorities. Separately, as the accountable body for a school, governing bodies should monitor delivery of the school improvement plan and take action where progress against improvement priorities is unsatisfactory, holding head teachers and senior leaders to account as appropriate, underpinning this process with effective use of information. All available and relevant information can be used to support accountability processes at a school level, with the focus depending on specific areas identified for development and improvement.

## **Part 1: Mandatory content for maintained schools other than special schools**

### **Curriculum reform and the new Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework**

Governors must be made aware of the programme of reform in the school system, the Welsh Government's current expectations with regards to evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements and the role of data within the system. The latest information can be found on [School evaluation and improvement arrangements](#).

Governors should understand that this action is being taken in response to the

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strong consensus that some central elements of the previous evaluation, improvement and accountability system needed to change, as it incentivised behaviours that are counterproductive to the aim of providing the best opportunities for each and every learner (e.g. excessive focus on one or two performance measures driving attention towards a minority of pupils at the cost of providing the best support for each individual learner) and, in doing so, it risked inhibiting and constraining the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales and Our National Mission.

Governors should understand the timeframe for transition to the new curriculum arrangements and how this will affect the data that is available to them, particularly with regard to any progress and attainment data on learners.

Governors should understand that:

- the intelligent use of data is an integral part of self-evaluation, and in all schools this should extend further than learner or school performance data alone to include the full range of both qualitative and quantitative data available. The broadest range of data must be considered in order to inform and support a school's ongoing improvement journey in all aspects of a school's operation
- the school system in Wales is data rich, extending at a local level far beyond any nationally consistent data provided by the Welsh Government to all schools. Once appropriately analysed, this provides information that should be used effectively to inform their improvement journeys.

## Why do we need data?

Governors should understand that data:

- is another word for facts that must be appropriately organised, considered, analysed or processed in order for it to be used as information that supports self-evaluation
- can be quantitative and qualitative
- can be captured in many ways
- can come from many sources

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- can be combined in many ways
- can be scrutinised in many different ways.

Governors should be made aware of the wide range of data available on different aspects of a school and its operation. This includes that which may be collated locally, as well as any nationally consistent data made available by the Welsh Government or other agencies.

By the end of the training governors should understand that:

- data and information are central to effective self-evaluation
- reliable and appropriate data feeds into a suite of evidence to be used by school leaders and governors for an informed self-evaluation and identification of areas where improvements need to be made
- but that is a starting point for further investigation and discussion, to consider the possible specific underlying issues which may need to be addressed
- and should be used together with information gathered from wider areas to corroborate or contradict apparent trends. This may be alternative sources of evidence relating to the same aspect being examined, or across different aspects of the school, depending on the point being considered.

Governors must understand that they need to use data to assist them in carrying out their roles effectively, acting as a critical friend and identifying those areas requiring further investigation and, in combination with other information gathered from wider areas, defining precise priorities for improvement and monitoring progress.

Governors must understand where there are statutory duties placed on them that require the use of data for self-evaluation, improvement planning or reporting purposes.

## Who else uses schools' data?

Governors should be made aware of other parties and stakeholders that may use school level data (e.g. Estyn, the local authority, and the regional consortium) or school data as part of an aggregated or anonymised set (e.g. the

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Welsh Government, for publication of official statistics, funding distribution and policy formation, and researchers).

## What sort of data is available and how do we access it?

Governors must be made aware of the various different types of data that should be consulted when self-evaluating and considering a school's performance. This covers a vast span of different aspects of a school's operation and provision and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Attainment data from within-school assessments
- Attainment data from standardised assessments and externally assessed examinations
- PISA scores
- Learner progress data
- Attendance data
- External judgements (e.g. from the regional consortium or Estyn)
- Contextual and pupil characteristics data
- Comparative data (e.g. within-school data from different classes, subjects or groups of learners, as well as from other schools facing similar challenges, local authority data or regional data, to help interpret the data in its context as part of the self-evaluation)
- Value-Added data
- Data on any enabling areas (e.g. well-being, curriculum provision, staffing matters)
- Progress against specific targets or improvement priorities
- Data on wider aspects of school operation (e.g. finance, staff training and development, communications)

With regards to the use of comparative data, where available, governors should understand that this is likely to be useful to help place the school, and its wider data, in context, in order to support improvement planning and sharing of good practice within and between schools, rather than for accountability purposes or with a view to ranking schools. Comparative data is not limited in scope to any provided by Welsh Government. It would include any produced more locally (e.g. by the school, local authority or regional consortium) and/or shared between

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schools (e.g. from the same school family).

Governors must understand that, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), individual learner or staff data is not shared with governors, but senior staff can identify patterns where targets and improvements are achieved and where there are variations.

Governors should be made aware of the processes by which data is collated and recorded and the protection applied to individuals' data and their privacy.

Governors must be able to appreciate the different ways that data can be presented, e.g.:

- trends over time or single point in time
- rolling 3 year averages
- bar, line, pie chart or tabular analyses
- comparative data points for other cohorts (LA, national, or similar schools)
- regression analyses
- qualitative data, written and verbal.

Governors must understand the different sources of data (e.g. school internal data, LA produced data, Welsh Government data sets) and its validity and reliability.

Governors should be familiar with the cycle of availability of the data throughout the year (or less frequently where longer cycles are set for aspects of school life).

## **Using data to self-evaluate, plan improvements and monitor progress**

Fundamental features of the training should enable governors to recognise that:

- although vital, data is one important element of school self-evaluation; it can be both a starting point for identifying areas for improvement and useful to supplement other types of evaluation

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- many types of data need to be considered when assessing effectiveness and identifying improvements, including contextual data, current position with learner outcomes, progress data, trends over time, comparative data and breakdowns by learner characteristics. Individual indicators should not be considered in isolation
- the variety of contextual data available may help identify challenges facing the school
- the new evaluation and improvement arrangements emphasise the need for a wide range of data and information capturing the whole learning experience, as well as learner progress and the Welsh Government's ambitions for the new curriculum, to be used to support self-evaluation and continuous improvement, tailored to a school's local context
- it is important to understand the source of the data and the purpose for which it has been gathered and recorded, for example classroom assessment to understand individual and group progress, external examination to understand individuals' readiness for further progression
- it is important to consider the cohort/group that the data concerns and the volatility of outcome data for groups of smaller numbers
- there are differences in considering levels of change between different groups of individuals and levels of change within a single group of individuals
- it is important to ask questions/seek clarification and challenge the data to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its meaning
- it is good practice to triangulate data that suggests a pattern with other data that's available to check for further evidence to support or contradict the emerging story
- it is important to evaluate the impact of actions and strategies on outcomes to identify any cause and effect
- data has its limits and is only a part of the overall picture

Governors should be made aware of the need to use internal school data effectively as a vital aspect of investigating what is underlying higher level trends and where to make specific priorities for improvement. Examples are:

- comparing data between classes and subject departments, helping to indicate within-school variations in learner progress and where sharing of good practice is important

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- tracking progress of cohorts or other specific groups of learners
- tracking progress of learners or groups of learners who may be at risk of underachievement, e.g. those eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM), those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), those Looked After (CLA)
- tracking trends over at least three years and comparing progress priorities previously identified (across cohorts and other groups of learners).

Governors must recognise the need to understand how assessment data in all areas of learning is considered in the school to support learners' development.

Governors should be provided with examples of appropriate questions to ask about data for the purposes of self-evaluation and how this data can be used to identify areas where improvement is needed. A list of examples can be found at Annex A.

Governors should understand how the roles of governing body sub-committees and link governors fit into the self-evaluation arrangements and the identification of appropriate data to feed into the process.

## **Self-evaluation and using data in exceptional circumstances**

Governors should understand that where there have been exceptional circumstances impacting on the data, or the availability of data, the Welsh Government would expect school governors to continue to take part in effective self-evaluation and identification of improvement priorities. Whilst in some circumstances some of the data typically used may not be available to feed into this process, the Welsh Government would expect governing bodies to access and interrogate the full range of local data that is still available in order to fulfil their role. This may involve greater focus than has been previously placed on a the wider range of data available on the broader spectrum of school life, and looking at enabling factors (e.g. staff and pupil well-being) as well as what limited outcome data may be available (e.g. attainment or attendance).

Governors should recognise that, when approaching the self-evaluation process where there have been exceptional circumstances impacting on the data

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available to them, in their assessment they need to be mindful of the interruptions to the normal cycle of activities that the school has experienced and the scale of the impact on school provision.

## Part 2: Mandatory content for special schools

This section sets out the scope and content of the training on understanding school data for governors of special schools.

The contents as set out in Part 1 is also relevant to governors at special schools, although many of the types of data denoted in reference to what data is available will differ.

Special schools will record and analyse the extent to which learners achieve their individual learning goals and governors should expect the school to provide an evaluation of this. According to the more specific needs of individuals, the school will also record the degree to which learners:

- develop mature and appropriate behaviour
- learn to use and apply communication devices and systems to overcome barriers to learning
- develop important life skills
- develop independence
- develop literacy and numeracy skills
- attend school
- access more inclusive and age-appropriate settings
- achieve accredited qualifications (suitable to their needs)

The training programme for governors of special schools must cover the following areas:

- accredited qualifications where appropriate. There are a plethora of courses used across special schools in Wales. Examples include ASDAN (both primary and secondary), Edexcel (both primary and secondary), Entry Level GCSE, Level 1 City and Guilds, Level 1 B Tech.

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# Annex A

## Types of questions governors should ask about school data for the purposes of self-evaluation and identifying areas of improvement in a school's performance.

1. Where are learners doing well?
2. Where do learner outcomes need to improve?
3. What must be done to improve?
4. How learner numbers are reflected as percentages – what is the actual number of learners being considered, does this affect the results (e.g. is it a particularly small cohort, are there a large proportion of boys or girls etc. Which could distort results)?
5. Are results better/worse than expected?
6. Are these results an improvement on previous years? What could be the reason for this?
7. Is there a trend appearing for certain subjects, if so, what strategies can we put in place to improve results in that area?
8. Are there trends over time in the distribution of outcomes achieved at all attainment levels in each subject? What could be the reason for these?
9. How is the school supporting the most able learners and those most in need of support?
10. What does learner progress look like? Is there a trend?
11. What are the overall absence levels for the school?
12. What are we doing to support and encourage improvement?
13. What is the trend in attendance figures over at least the last three years?
14. Have we improved, stayed the same or worsened? And why?
15. Is there a pattern/trend to the figures?
16. How different were the school's actual outcomes from any expected or predicted outcomes? Is there is a notable difference and what might have caused this?
17. Are we sharing good practice between subjects and across the school?
18. Are we identifying and sharing good practice with other schools, particularly those within the same statistical family?
19. Has anything happened during the term to affect the attendance figures, e.g.

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bad weather conditions, high incidence of illnesses?

20. Are absence levels attributed to specific learners in the school?
21. What strategies have been employed to address absenteeism for specific learners?
22. Has the school's population of learners eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) changed over time
23. How has the level of eFSM learners impacted on outcomes?
24. Are there trends in the attainment outcomes of eFSM and non-eFSM learners?
25. How do the attainment outcomes of eFSM and non-eFSM learners compare with those of schools within the same statistical family, the Local Authority and Wales?
26. Is there a difference in the results between boys and girls?
27. How have the outcomes for boys or girls changed over time? Is the direction of change the same for boys and girls or different?
28. In which subject(s) have boys' or girls' outcomes got better or worse? Is there any pattern in the comparisons?
29. Is there anything we should know about the cohort of learners, which could affect the results?
30. What precise improvement priorities can we identify to improve learner outcomes overall?
31. Have the priorities already identified made an improvement?
32. How does the attainment of specific groups of learners e.g. looked after children, children in need, different ethnic backgrounds, learners with English as an additional language, learners subject to special education needs provision, compare with other learners in the school? How does this link with levels of eFSM.
33. How does the educational attainment of these learners compare with overall learners in Wales?
34. What support and interventions are in place to help improve the educational attainment of specific groups of learners?
35. Has this affected teaching and learning in the school? Has this affected overall learner outcomes?
36. What percentage of learners have different ethnic backgrounds?
37. How does the educational attainment of ethnic minority groups compare with other learners in the school?

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38. Do particular learners or groups of learners have special educational needs?
39. Have additional support and resources been provided for these learners?  
Has this affected teaching and learning in the school? Has this affected overall learner outcomes?
40. What does the current rate of educational attainment by acquisition of English or Welsh as an additional language look like?
41. What support is in place to help these learners with English or Welsh as an additional language?
42. How does academic achievement compare by Special Education Needs?
43. What are the current attendance rates for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners?
44. How are you engaging with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families to improve attendance and drive up educational attainment?
45. What level and type of support are we receiving from our challenge advisor?
46. What interventions and strategies have been implemented elsewhere in the school (e.g. staff well-being or community engagement) and how have these affected learner outcomes?
47. How does evidence from the classroom compare with attainment outcome?

## About this document

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