



## Maintained special schools

Special schools have generally worked effectively to ensure good levels of **care, support and guidance** to address any issues with pupils' **well-being** that have arisen from the pandemic.

### What's going well

- Pupil well-being continues to be at the heart of schools' work.
- Schools have sensitively re-introduced routines, structures and relationships that impact positively on pupils' well-being.
- Staff in special schools generally have a very secure understanding of the needs of pupils and their families.
- Families value the support schools give them.

### What needs to improve

- Rates of attendance of some learners are a concern, particularly those pupils whose attendance levels have continued to deteriorate since the pandemic.
- Although the quality of support from external agencies is improving, the effectiveness of this support has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.



Schools are working to re-establish effective **teaching** to support pupils' **learning** and address any gaps arising from their experiences of the pandemic.

### What's going well

- Schools have rightly recognised the need for a flexible curriculum that recognises the experiences of pupils over the past couple of years.
- Schools provide appropriate support for pupils, including increasing work in small groups and one-to-one teaching.
- Schools ensure that the skills of staff are generally very well matched to the needs of pupils.
- Many pupils are happy to be in school, have positive attitudes to learning, have re-engaged well with their classmates and show great resilience.
- Special schools are generally very well placed in implementing both ALN and the Curriculum for Wales.
- Schools are sensitively re-assessing and meeting the needs of pupils, particularly where their communication and independence skills were negatively affected by the pandemic.

### What needs to improve

- On occasions, staff absence and a lack of suitably experienced replacement staff limit the pupils' progress and impact on their well-being.
- The proportion of young people with a disability, including those from special schools, that are not in education, training or employment has worsened over the past three years and there are no formal arrangements to track their outcomes or destinations over time.
- [In a very few schools, curriculum provision is neither broad nor balanced and does not prepare pupils well enough for the next stage of learning.](#)



**Leaders** have shown continued resilience and creativity as they adapt provision to respond to the pandemic and prepare for curriculum reform.

### What's going well

- Leaders in special schools continue to show great resilience and are adaptable in the face of ongoing daily challenges.
- Leaders remain optimistic and resolute in securing provision that meets the well-being and learning needs of their pupils.
- As a result of their shared experiences over the past two years, leaders and their staff have further cemented strong team working.
- Quality assurance arrangements are being reintroduced.

### What needs to improve

- Leaders continue to find it challenging to arrange suitably qualified staff to cover short and long-term absences.
- In a very few cases, wholesale and significant changes to leadership have had a very marked negative impact on learning experiences, well-being and outcomes, particularly for older pupils.