Secondary schools

Schools have prioritised the **care, support and guidance** they offer to address any issues with pupils' **well-being** that have arisen from lockdowns.

What's going well

- Most schools offer strong support for pupils with specific emotional, health and social needs and make good use of external agencies.
- Many pupils are developing well as ethical, caring citizens who respect difference and diversity (Click here to see resources that School Councils and pupil groups can use to consider if they learn enough about Welsh history, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history, identity and culture).
- Many schools have an effective behaviour policy and well-considered procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying and harassment.
- Many schools are developing their provision for preventing and tackling incidents of sexual harassment.
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength in a majority of schools.

What needs to improve

- In a few cases, schools don't have sufficiently robust and secure systems for recording safeguarding concerns, including around bullying and harassment.
- Despite the best efforts of many staff, there are instances of pupils experiencing bullying or harassment as a result of their sexuality, racial characteristics or gender in all schools.
- A degree of sexual harassment is experienced by some pupils in all schools.
- Unverified data suggests that attendance is far below where it was before the pandemic, especially that of pupils who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- A few pupils have struggled to readjust to life following the pandemic and have been unable to manage their behaviour well enough.

Schools are working to re-establish effective **teaching** to support pupils' **learning** and address any gaps that occurred due to pandemic experiences.

What's going well

- In most schools, teachers foster positive working relationships with pupils and manage their classrooms effectively.
- In the best examples, teachers know their pupils well and plan carefully to meet their needs. Teachers model approaches successfully and use information from assessment skilfully to adapt their teaching.
- In a few schools, curriculum design is research-based, relevant to the context of the school and linked to the development of teaching. Areas of learning are creating a curriculum to ensure progression from the primary to the secondary phase.

What needs to improve

- In general, pupils' oracy, writing and numeracy skills have regressed during periods of lockdown.
- During the lockdown periods, pupils did not have enough opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. This has had a significant impact on pupils' fluency and inclination to speak Welsh in all types of schools.
- Overall, schools' new approaches to their curriculum have not placed enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching or on ensuring progression from the primary phase.

Leaders have reacted with fortitude and resilience to keep their school communities safe and mitigate the impact of measures to control the spread of COVID-19.

What's going well

- Since returning to more usual school life and processes, senior leaders are carefully considering the balance between holding staff to account and protecting their well-being.
- In many cases, senior leaders are responding well to national and local priorities such as the additional learning needs reforms and the development of their curriculum.
- In many schools, professional learning is well planned and has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

What needs to improve

- As a result of a suspension in schools' normal self-evaluation processes, leaders do not always have a comprehensive understanding of their school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- A common shortcoming among leaders at all levels is their lack of understanding of how to evaluate teaching in light of its impact on learning.
- Leaders do not always prioritise the need to ensure pupils' progress in Welsh and ICT.
- In a few cases, professional learning does not focus strongly enough on improving teaching.