

[Leadership in education](#)

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16/05/17

This afternoon (16 May 2017), the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams will make a statement in the Senedd about leadership in education.

Successive Estyn reports have highlighted the importance of strong and effective leadership to improving educational standards. In his most recent [annual report \(2015/2016\)](#), HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales said that leadership is the ‘**most significant factor**’ in school improvement. Estyn has also reported previously:

Where a school requires special measures or is in need of significant improvement, weak leadership is nearly always a cause for concern.
[\(2013/14 annual report\)](#)

One of the three key questions used by Estyn in its [Common Inspection Framework](#) is ‘How good are leadership and management?’. [Estyn’s online data tool](#) shows the proportions of schools inspected between September 2010 and August 2016 that were judged as having the following standards of leadership and management:

- Primary schools: 6% Excellent; 68% Good; 22% Adequate; 4% Unsatisfactory
- Secondary schools: 14% Excellent; 45% Good; 33% Adequate; 8% Unsatisfactory

The OECD recommended in its [2014 review](#) (PDF 3.57MB) that the Welsh Government should ‘**treat developing system leadership as a prime driver of education reform**’. High performing education systems in other countries, including those that generally do well



in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), are characterised as ‘self-improving’ systems and this is the model the Welsh Government seeks to achieve in the long term. However, it retains accountability tools such as performance measures based on GCSE results and [national school categorisation](#), the latter of which also has the stated purpose of identifying and directing the levels of support and intervention needed by schools.

One of the four strategic objectives of the Welsh Government’s education improvement plan, [Qualified for Life \(2014–2020\)](#), is for

Leaders of education at every level working together in a self-improving system, providing mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools.

Qualified for Life, published in October 2014, provided a summary of what the Welsh Government had done regarding improving leadership up to that point and what it planned to do over the following few years (see pages 21–24). More recently, this has evolved to include the development of a **National Academy of Educational Leadership**, under the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams. In a [statement on 17 Nov 2016](#), she said the new body would ‘help move forward our reform agenda and provide current and future leaders with the learning opportunities they need to ensure a thriving community of leaders in education’. Former Estyn Chief Inspector, Ann Keane, was appointed as the chair of a shadow board tasked with scoping the remit, organisational structure, governance arrangements, and vision for the proposed Academy.

It was clear from Kirsty Williams’ [statement, Self-improving education system](#) (12 July 2016), in the first couple of months after her appointment that leadership in education would continue to be a priority for this Welsh Government. The Cabinet Secretary said:

I intend to develop a workforce and leadership strategy to set out explicitly a clear and coherent picture of the way forward for the workforce and how that will be developed and supported through the process of change. This strategy will build upon the existing plans developed as part of the new deal for the education workforce, such as the deployment of pioneer schools to support peer-to-peer professional learning, the introduction of an enhanced



professional learning passport and strengthened school development plans to support more effective planning and choice of professional learning.

The [OECD's Rapid Policy Assessment](#) (PDF 2.91 MB) – commissioned in Autumn 2016 and reported in February 2017 – reiterated that leadership is crucial to education improvement and called for further policy attention as follows:

Making leadership development a prime driver of the Welsh education strategy. Move forward with the establishment of the National Academy of Educational Leadership. Speed up development of leadership standards and the professional learning offer for (aspiring) leaders. Ensure that these policies are aligned with the new teaching standards and the Welsh school as a learning organisation model under development. Promote the use of highly skilled business managers for schools, or group of schools, to reduce the administrative burden on school leaders so they can focus on educational leadership and developing their schools into learning organisations and through this ensure the “readiness” of staff to absorb the new curriculum.

Responding to the OECD's Rapid Review in Plenary on [28 February 2017](#), the Cabinet Secretary said:

Historically, we have not placed enough value on this crucial aspect of raising standards in our schools. Since taking office, it has been clear to me that **leadership is an area that demands significant and urgent development.** Since the OECD visited in November, work is gathering pace on leadership with the establishment of the national academy of educational leadership and I can assure this Chamber, the profession and parents, that leadership development will be a prime driver of our education strategy. Now, more than ever, Wales needs strong leaders that are up for the challenge.

Last week, Kirsty Williams also told a discussion forum on [The national mission of education reform – everybody's business](#), hosted by Positif, that whatever the problem or issue being discussed in education, **‘the solution is almost always the quality of teaching and the quality of leadership’**. Leadership will undoubtedly feature prominently in the updated edition of the *Qualified for Life* plan, which the Welsh Government is expected to publish soon.



The Cabinet Secretary's statement will provide the opportunity for Assembly Members and stakeholders to hear more about, and scrutinise, the Welsh Government's approach to improving leadership in education.

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