



Ebbw Fawr Learning Community

Cymuned Ddysgu Ebwy Fawr

Director/Cyfarwyddwr: Graeme Harkness

W: www.ebbwfawr.co.uk

Ref GH/JSM

28 January 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

National School Categorisation System

Earlier this morning the Welsh Government released this year's school categorisation outcomes.

This letter explains the categorisation for Ebbw Fawr Learning Community. Further information can be found on our website including a downloadable document from Welsh Government providing further detail.

The National School Categorisation System aims to provide a clear structure to review how well a school is performing for all its learners, taking into consideration how effectively it is led and managed, the quality of teaching and learning, and the level of support and challenge it needs to do even better.

Each primary and secondary school is placed into one of four colour-coded support categories which trigger a tailored support package.

National School Categorisation is not about labelling schools or creating league tables. It is about helping schools identify what factors contribute to their progress and achievement and what areas to focus on to achieve further development.

As one of a small number of schools in Wales deemed as a "Middle" School, in that we have primary and secondary students, the system does not ideally suit us as judgements have been made on the separate phases and then brought together to provide one judgement which in our view is not truly representative of our performance.

How does the system work?

The system is based on three steps. It is not purely driven by figures and takes into account the quality of leadership, teaching and learning in the schools as judged by the Local Authority.

Learning to Achieve Together / Yn Dysgu i Gyflawni gyda 'n gilydd

Primary Phase/Cyfnod Cynradd: Strand Annealing Lane, Ebbw Vale NP23 6AN T: 01495 357755

Secondary Phase/Cyfnod Uwchradd: Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale NP23 6GL T: 01495 354690



What is the three-step process and how does it work?

Step One

Standards group

Consortia challenge advisers use a range of information to analyse the school's performance. Schools are placed in one of four standards groups, numbered 1 to 4, which identify how well they are performing against a set of agreed measures. Standards group 1 is the group that performs most strongly against the agreed measures.

Step Two

Improvement capacity

Consortia challenge advisers evaluate the school's capacity to improve further, taking account of evidence about the standards achieved and the quality of leadership and teaching and learning. Schools will be in one of four groups, A to D. Schools where the judgement is an A show the greatest capacity to improve along with the ability to support other schools. Those where the judgement is D need the most support.

Step Three

Support category

The outcomes in step one and step two are combined to decide on the school's support category. The final categorisation is a colour code that shows the level of support a school needs – green, yellow, amber or red.

What does this mean for Ebbw Fawr Learning Community?

Our **standards group** is judged as two separate phases against all primary and secondary schools in Wales and not as one school. Our primary phase is in **group 2** and the secondary in **group 3**.

The EAS advisers have said that this is helpful to us as we will receive additional support to make changes happen more quickly. We already have additional support through the Welsh Challenge Cymru programme and welcome the support which will enable us to make quicker progress.

Our **improvement capacity** was again split primary and secondary and brought together after much discussion as a **C** grade.

Our **support category** is **Amber**, which brings us 15 days of additional support throughout the year.

Overall view

I am sure that the press will focus on the support category and not mention the other listings. Our view is that we are an effective school which is already doing well and that we know the areas we need to improve. We are 3 years in to a longer term plan to improve standards across the whole 3-16 age range; we have seen improvements in all key stages over the last three years with improved attendance and greater parental support than ever before, change takes time and requires a continuous drive to improve teaching and learning standards. We have that in abundance.

With continued support from the appropriate agencies and the determination of Governors, Staff, Parents and Students our progress will continue to improve rapidly.

Further information on the categorisation system can be found from

www.ebbwfawr.co.uk

<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/raisingstandards/schoolcategorisation/?lang=en>

Should you have any questions on the categorisation system please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Harkness', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Graeme Harkness
Director