

Vulnerable Learner Policy (Closing the FSM Gap)



King Henry VIII 3-19 School Ysgol 3-19 Brenin Harri'r VIII

We believe in the limitless capacity for everyone to achieve great things.

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Next Review Due: March 2026

Introduction

This policy sets out the support and challenge that is offered to vulnerable pupils to ensure they have the opportunity to make progress in line with their peers who may be from more stable and advantaged backgrounds.

At King Henry VIII 3-19 School, we recognise the importance of ensuring all pupils, whatever their backgrounds or circumstances, are provided with the best opportunities and education. It is our goal therefore to provide them with the knowledge and skills that they need, both within school and beyond, in order to be happy, confident and successful throughout their lives. Our school believes whole heartedly in the limitless capacity for everyone to achieve great things.

We plan for the Four Purposes to be achieved for all pupils so that they become:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work;
- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world;
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Our vision of placing vulnerable pupils at the heart of the learning process helps us to meet individual needs, removing barriers that impede learner well-being and academic progress. We therefore ensure that learning activities have a clear focus upon narrowing the achievement gap between groups and individuals, using well-planned, differentiated and appropriately challenging teaching and learning activities.

Context

King Henry VIII 3-19 School is a comprehensive school with 1288 pupils (September 2024). 277 of these pupils are eligible for Free School Meals (22%). This is 38% of pupils in the primary section and 18% of pupils in the secondary section.

We have a number of pupils at our school with ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

Detailed work is regularly undertaken with staff to raise awareness of ACEs, helping them to better understand the causes and potential consequences of poverty and adversity upon pupils in our care. All staff are engaged in ongoing ACE training and receive regular, up-to-date information upon vulnerable pupils within our community. A Senior Leader and our Pupil Referral Service staff have completed the 10-day Trauma Informed Schools diploma. The school regularly updates a record of pupils who have experienced ACEs. This all staff them a clear and thorough understanding of the challenges that many young people face and the impact that their background and experiences have upon their life chances.

We are a RADY school. We are committed to supporting our most vulnerable learners through the RADY mindset. We firmly believe in equity and that when our RADY learners leave the school gates they get less, so as they come in through the school gates we must give them more.

Rationale

As a school community we are committed to giving all of our pupils the support and care they need to make the most of their learning experiences. As our pupils come from diverse backgrounds, it is

essential that all staff are clear about the part that they can play in applying both universal and targeted approaches to learning.

Ian Gilbert in his book 'The working class' sets the moral compass of why we should be going out of our way to support young people from challenging backgrounds. He identifies common barriers and champions equality whilst highlighting commonly held beliefs:

- Not all working class children are poor
- Not all poor children are from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Not all children from disadvantaged backgrounds are in poverty
- Not all children in poverty are in absolute poverty
- Not all vulnerable children are at-risk, looked-after, free school meal children

At King Henry VIII 3-19 School we recognise that, in order to address misconceptions and to remove barriers to learning, there needs to be open debate regarding why gaps in educational attainment and experience exist, and how to close them.

Aims and objectives of this policy

Aims:

- Provide a clear rationale for supporting young people from challenging backgrounds
- Ensure no pupil is disadvantaged by poverty and/or inequality
- Ensure all pupils have an equitable experience throughout their school life

Objectives:

- Ensure additional support and intervention meets the needs of the school and its diverse population
- Eradicate the effects of inequalities so that all pupils, regardless of their background, have high aspirations and an equal chance of achieving those aspirations
- Better equip staff to understand the challenges faced by pupils from deprived and challenging backgrounds and how they can best support them
- Ensure that pupils from deprived and challenging backgrounds access the highest quality learning and teaching
- Secure the human rights of pupils in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

SECTION A: VULNERABLE LEARNERS

RADY (Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Young People) Learners

Our RADY cohort of learners is made up of:

- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- CLA learners
- Learners with a social worker

Pupils who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and children in poverty

Rewriting the future: Raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools (Welsh Government, 2014), defines the term eFSM as meaning individuals who are in poverty. The effect of poverty can be seen

before pupils even start school; in the difference in educational outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals and those who are not, through each key stage; in the proportion of learners who go onto further and higher education; and in the proportion who are not in education, training or employment. Therefore, giving these pupils the best possible opportunity for success is of the utmost importance.

In a broader context, pupils from low income and deprived families are more likely to:

- Have poorer physical health
- Experience mental or emotional health problems
- Have a low sense of well-being and life satisfaction
- Have poorer prospects in work
- Experience social deprivation
- Feel unsafe
- Experience stigma and bullying at school

A survey carried out amongst young people who were eFSM by *Children in Wales in 2017* highlighted their three top concerns:

- 'Not being able to afford to do school activities after school or at weekends'
- 'Not having the right uniform or games kit' and
- 'Not being able to go on school trips'

Research undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group clearly shows that children and young people living in poverty are acutely aware of financial constraints, such as household and food costs, taxes and childcare costs. The research also found that these young people are more likely to be subjected to bullying and social exclusion, often not participating in activities afforded by school trips, or alternative school activity days. They are also much more likely to need to frequently borrow basic school equipment from both teachers and their peers (The Price of Pupil Poverty, Children in Wales, July 2019).

In relation to poverty and deprivation impacting upon academic achievement, recent studies by Welsh Government have concluded that someone with a degree will earn on average 85 per cent more than someone with only GCSEs, while those with no qualifications will earn, on average, 20 per cent less than someone with GCSEs. Ultimately, lower educational attainment is linked with reduced life expectancy and increased likelihood of engagement in criminal activity.

The imperative is clearly there to continually develop pedagogy and the nature of support offered to help RADY pupils so that the best possible outcomes can be achieved. As a school we work closely with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to develop regional projects, taking full advantage of key research and identified best practice. The aspiration is to ensure that all pupils make progress in line with expectations.

At KS5, pupils who meet four criteria, including a specified household income or less, are able to claim for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This is a weekly allowance to help 16-18-year-olds with the costs of further education

The school is working closely with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to raise awareness across the staff body and school community of the impact of poverty on educational success. The CPAG has developed a team of Youth Voice Champions amongst the pupil body across the through-school to promote this agenda.

Care Experienced children

We have used the umbrella term of Care Experienced Children as this encompasses “Looked after Children” (CLA) and children who may have returned home or who have been adopted having previously been looked after.

Care Experienced Children remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society and comprise a small, but hugely significant proportion of the school population. Compared with their peers, looked after children generally have poorer outcomes in relation to their education and mental health, with many experiencing isolation and continued vulnerability whilst in care. Many of these young people go on to have poor experience when leaving care, including problems in relation to poverty, housing and employment (Children in Wales, 2020).

Care Experienced Children will have often suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. The gaps in their learning – and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences – are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. In an effort to target resources to help overcome these barriers each child who is looked after has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This forms part of the child’s overall Care and Support Plan. PEPs were introduced to overcome the difficulties in the provision and monitoring of the education of looked after children, caused largely by the frequent changing of schools and the need for a high level of joint working between the social services and education sectors. PEPs:

- ensure access to services and support
- contribute to stability
- minimise disruption and broken schooling
- signal particular educational needs and special educational needs
- establish clear goals and act as a record of progress and achievement

(Ref. Inclusion and Pupil Support, Welsh Government, 2015).

It is important to remember that looked after pupils have high ambitions and aspirations, and we fail them by expecting them to achieve anything less than this. Welsh Government guidance issued in 2017, *Making a Difference*, makes clear that the aspirations and ambitions of significant adults in the lives of children who are looked after should at least mirror those of the child. This is why staff at King Henry VIII 3-19 School provide strong and appropriate support to all looked after pupils, including through targeted intervention programmes where necessary. This ensures that they have every opportunity to make progress in line with both their ambitions and ability.

The progress, attendance and support in place for all Care Experienced Children is tracked on a half-termly basis by the Assistant Headteacher: Vulnerable Pupils (Equity Champion). This enables the school to ensure intervention and support is put in place as and when necessary. All Care Experienced Learners have access to CLA mentoring on a regular basis; the frequency depending on the level of need. The school has a separate CEC policy which outlines this support in further detail.

ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that affect children while growing up, such as suffering child maltreatment or living in a household affected by domestic violence, substance misuse or mental illness. In 2016, Public Health Wales published the first Welsh adverse childhood experiences study which revealed that 47% of adults in Wales suffered at least one adverse childhood experience in their childhood, and 14% suffered four or more (Appendix B).

Public Health Wales and Welsh Government studies (such as *A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care*, Welsh Government, 2018) show that children who experience stressful and poor-quality childhoods are more likely to experience poor mental health due to poor self-image and self-worth. They maintain that ACEs are not just a concern for health; experiencing them can mean individuals are more likely to perform poorly in school and more likely to be involved in crime, both as victims and perpetrators. There is often a cycle of childhood adversity that can lock generations of families into poor health and anti-social behaviour. It is important to recognise that adverse childhood experiences aren't just about children, they affect people of all ages and backgrounds, although research shows that those living in areas of deprivation are at greater risk. On average, children from low income households score 4 to 7 standardised points lower on standardised tests on entry into formal schooling. By the time they finish Year 6 these children, along with others experiencing adversity, are likely to be at least a year behind their peers academically (*Adverse childhood experiences and the implications for schools*, Lynn Miles, Teesside University, 2019).

Action to prevent and mitigate the consequences of ACEs is essential to improving young people's health, with support for those experiencing this level of adversity coming from across sectors including health, social care, policing, education and the community. School staff themselves, however, have a significant role to play on a day-to-day basis. Studies show that pupils with an ACE feel safest in a calm environment that prioritises relationships and consistency and where they are supported and connected. It is appreciated that this can be difficult to achieve all of the time, especially when challenging behaviours are displayed. However, it should be remembered that the negative behaviour of some ACE pupils is often a symptom of the adversity they are facing, and not the problem in itself. Lynn Miles, lecturer in education at Teesside University, highlights a range of strategies that can be used to attempt to re-connect with pupils and to re-engage them with their learning. She suggests being curious about behaviour, "what happened to you?", rather than directly challenging it, "what is wrong with you?" She also believes that taking a direct interest in a pupil, together with the elimination of stress triggers, such as loud voices, sudden change and abrupt sounds, can help create an environment that better allows for self-regulation and the calming of the stress response system. The key to helping children experiencing adversity, she maintains, is for adults to listen more and talk less when interacting with young people, focusing on the positives, the achievements and successes, rather than what has been missed, neglected and left unfinished.

Young Carers

The school works closely with the Local Authority Young Carers team and the Care Collective Wales, to ensure staff are up-to-date with training on best practice to support young carers and that young carers are identified and supported in our school. The school has a separate Young Carers Policy which outlines this support in more detail.

Other Vulnerable Groups

The school works closely with the Local Authority and third sector agencies to identify and support other vulnerable groups of learners, such as those from whole English is an Additional Language

(EAL), asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the children of service personnel, for example. The school has a bespoke, multi-agency approach to supporting those pupils who may be at risk of permanent exclusion

SECTION B: STRATEGIES

Improving outcomes for RADY learners and other vulnerable pupils

King Henry VIII 3-19 School has high expectations of its pupils, regardless of their background or circumstances, and provides common opportunities for all. The school employs a range of highly effective approaches to teaching and learning that raise outcomes in performance between pupils who are identified as being disadvantaged, and those who are not.

Staff have excellent knowledge of the RADY and vulnerable pupils that they teach, including their background, interests, strengths and individual needs. This is achieved through the building of constructive relationships based upon high levels of respect and mutual trust. A weekly pupil update document outlining wellbeing, attendance and behaviour concerns also helps to inform staff of individuals' circumstances and this is supplemented by additional pastoral information issued by the Wellbeing Team. RADY learners are easily identified on ClassCharts and in tracking documentation.

Staff recognise that poverty and background should not be used as an excuse for low achievement and that empathy and not sympathy is more effective in eliciting the best outcomes. Moreover, it is acknowledged that regular praise and encouragement that is focused around achievement, attitude and effort is highly effective in motivating vulnerable students and creating a positive learning experience.

All RADY pupils have a mentoring session each half-term. This enables the school to deal with practical problems such as access to uniform and equipment, IT devices and safe places to complete Home Learning, as well as ensuring that these pupils can access appropriate pastoral support as needed.

Equity

The RADY mindset is based in all staff understanding the concept of equity. Staff have annual training updates in this area. In order to secure the rights of everyone to fully belong to the school community, the school appoints an Assistant Headteacher: Vulnerable Pupils (RADY and Equity Champion) to represent the interests of all pupils, regardless of their background or circumstances. We recognise the importance of this role in helping to build the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to secure the right support for individuals at the right moment, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical ability, family background, or income. Aligned with this, the school community works closely with a wide range of outside agencies who provide additional, tailored educational experiences for our most disadvantaged pupils. This collaborative approach to learning is a key feature of our commitment to securing the best outcomes for individuals and of improving their life chances.

The school has a variety of interventions to support our pupils, dependant on their range of need. This support is tiered to ensure that the pupils have the correct level of support. This is referenced in Appendix D.

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY, and vulnerable pupils through the Growth Mindset

Overview

Our school is built with the growth mindset at its heart and our belief in the limitless capacity for everyone to achieve great things underpins all our decision making. To achieve this, we have a shared school and staff mindset where we believe and know that anyone can learn anything. This includes RADY and vulnerable pupils. Our staff understand that your starting points are irrelevant to what you can learn, they are just starting points. Our school recognises that the most important thing we can do is to support pupils who are historically low attainers to reach a level where they can progress to the next stage of their education, career and life, to ensure they have a rich, rewarding, and fulfilling life. This includes RADY and vulnerable pupils for whom there often exist lower starting points, which are a result of background, and not lower intelligence. We have an ethos of high expectation for all and a shared belief in the potential of every pupil to achieve great outcomes.

Growth Mindset strategies

To achieve in accordance with this mindset, King Henry VIII 3-19 School:

- Utilises the 'next step' and 'deliberate practice' approaches as part of our school's pedagogy. This ensures that pupils are focussing on their precise next steps. It ensures they are not disadvantaged by trying to learn something they can never fully understand, because they have not had the opportunity to grasp prior underpinning concepts. It also means they are practicing their precise next step without repeating what has already been consolidated.
- Ensures that new learning is fully and explicitly linked to prior learning. This recognises that pupils learn new ideas by reference to what they already know and that they learn differently not because of how 'intelligent' they are but because of their differing amounts of background knowledge and how this new knowledge fits in with what they already know. The explicit linking of learning helps ensure that all RADY and vulnerable pupils can learn the new content and further develop their skills.
- Provides role models and real-life examples of people that have achieved because of their belief in the growth mindset. This includes people from all fields of life, to reflect the diversity of the school community. Role models are discussed in assemblies, form time sessions, by class teachers, and as part of the curriculum. Often these role models include people who have had to overcome a problem before achieving their goals, for example Paralympians.
- Is language conscious. School staff recognise that all our words, actions, and labels send a message and tell pupils what adults think of them and how they should think of themselves. This means that we use a growth mindset language all the time and all staff challenge any slip from other staff, without blame, relentlessly. For example, we refer to 'current attainment' and not 'current ability'. Current attainment does not limit what you can do, it just determines what you can do next. Staff always consider 'How can I teach this to the pupil?' and never 'Can I teach this to the pupil?'
- Teaches pupils and helps pupils act in accordance with the growth mindset. This includes training pupils to add the word 'yet' when they say or believe they can't do something. It's not that 'I can't do it', it's that 'I can't do it yet'.

- Praises effort and not achievement. The school recognises that if you praise achievement, then pupils are likely to think that 'intelligence' explains their successes but also their failures. This creates the problem that pupils are then likely to choose tasks that lead to easy success without tough challenges. In contrast praising effort raises the expectation bar and motivates pupils to strive for greater challenge.

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils through pedagogy

Overview

"Learners from deprived backgrounds need to benefit from the highest, quality learning and teaching." (Rewriting the future: Raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools, 2013)

High quality teaching and learning is the most important strategy for raising the achievement for RADY and vulnerable pupils. It ensures that attainment gaps are avoided, identified, and closed. The pedagogical approach at King Henry VIII 3-19 School has been designed with vulnerable pupils at its heart to ensure that all make excellent progress and achieve highly.

Pedagogical principles

King Henry VIII 3-19 School has designed a pedagogical approach to ensure that all RADY and vulnerable pupils make excellent progress. This includes:

- Review questioning. These consolidate previous learning and activate the prior learning that new learning is built upon. It allows teachers to determine any learning gaps to be addressed in the lesson and to rectify these so that new learning can be understood by all.
- Small step teaching. Explanations and the learning of content and skills is broken down into small steps. This ensures that all pupils can master new content and skills before moving on.
- Explanations linked to prior learning. Teachers link new learning to what pupils already understand. This ensures that a lack of background knowledge does not affect the understanding of new learning.
- Lots of questions which includes all pupils. Teachers use a range of techniques to ensure that all pupils are included in questioning to ensure that the teacher can assess and accurately respond to the level of understanding of all.
- No 'guess what's in my head' questions. Questioning relates to what has been taught and does not rely on knowledge that comes from elsewhere. This ensures that disadvantage does not affect learning and ensures that questioning does not just benefit the more advantaged pupils.
- Teachers identify pupils that need further support and guiding and provide this in lessons whilst the rest of pupils are independently practicing. This helps ensure that pupils do not fall behind and receive the extra help they need.

Our school staff co-constructed our key parameters for supporting RADY learners in the classroom. They are:

1. Build solid relationships through positive conversations, for example around what RADY learners have achieved in lessons or outside of school
2. Use positive language at all times (and when behaviour is an issue, be firm on the behaviour but gentle on the child)
3. Celebrate success through targeted affirmations, where possible, in every lesson
4. Ensure RADY learners are easily accessible on seating plans for check understanding and give targeted support
5. Give verbal feedback to RADY learners every lesson

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY, and vulnerable pupils through the development of literacy

Overview

Literacy is the key to successful communication and is at the heart of teaching and learning. The ability to communicate successfully is a cornerstone of the Curriculum for Wales, ensuring effective, ongoing learning and ultimately helping individuals to play a full and active part within the work place. The effect of poverty and social deprivation can however be a barrier to developing good literacy skills.

As literacy is fundamental for success in school and later life, pupils who cannot read, write and communicate effectively are highly unlikely to access the challenging academic curriculum within a school or further educational setting. They are, in short, more likely to have poor educational outcomes across the curriculum. The academic challenges faced by pupils moving from a primary to secondary setting presents a particular challenge, especially for those individuals who are identified as being disadvantaged. For example, pupils in Year 7 must adjust to being taught by a range of teachers, being confronted with a range of texts which are often detailed and may contain more technical vocabulary than anything they will have encountered when in primary school. Such challenges can create a 'literacy gap', meaning that many pupils making the transition from primary struggle to access the secondary school curriculum.

Voice 21

Taking a wide range of research into literacy development into account, King Henry VIII 3-19 School, in collaboration with the cluster primary schools, is implementing the Voice 21 Oracy Improvement Programme. Researchers at Voice 21 firmly believe that oracy – with its focus on talking and listening - develops pupils' confidence, articulacy and capacity to learn. The programme is therefore based upon the provision of high quality oracy education which empowers pupils, regardless of their background, to find their voice for success in school and in life.

Voice 21 places a particular emphasis upon the development of high-level language skills, with the long term aim of improving summative outcomes and ultimately students' life chances.

Through high quality oracy education, pupils learn through talk and to talk. This is when they develop and deepen their subject knowledge and understanding by conversing regularly within the classroom. Talk is planned, designed, modelled, scaffolded and structured to enable them to learn the skills needed to communicate effectively. The deliberate, explicit and systematic teaching of oracy across phases and throughout the curriculum will support children and young people to make progress in the four strands of oracy outlined in the Oracy Framework. This approach is an integral part of the King Henry VIII 3-19 School strategy for improving literacy, especially amongst our more vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. This sits alongside the Accelerated Reader program and implementation of Speed Readers.

Etymology and Morphology

King Henry VIII 3-19 School has a consistent and well-planned approach to the teaching of new vocabulary to ensure that it is understood by all pupils. This includes:

- Teaching the story of the word
- Teaching the origin of the word (etymology)
- Breaking words down into their various parts (morphology)
- Preselection of key terms that lessons will focus upon
- Use of tier 2 and tier 3 words in Questions for Learning

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils using highly effective tracking and monitoring

Overview

In order to meet the needs of all pupils in our care, we utilise a wide range of data in order to track their progress of individuals and groups of pupils, challenging and encouraging them to become increasingly self-reflective, independent and resilient. Progress towards meeting targets is monitored closely by gathering information at calendared data collection points. The school tracks and monitors the intervention and support of all vulnerable learners across the school collaborative document. RADY pupil progress is at the heart of all tracking and monitoring activities.

Performance Data

King Henry VIII 3-19 School makes extensive use of all available information and data relating to pupils, e.g. teacher assessment and fine grade analysis, Fisher Family Trust (FFT) estimates, National Numeracy and Reading Tests (NNRT) Scores and Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS) targets. Close tracking and monitoring of pupil level data is carried out to:

- Ensure that each individual who attends King Henry VIII 3-19 School and is at risk of not achieving end of key stage targets, receives timely and appropriate support and intervention
- Create personalised targets for all pupils that are challenging and aspirational
- Monitor the progress of pupils' targets half-termly using all available evidence
- Engage pupils in the process of fine grading, using Personal Development Sessions (PDS) to involve them directly in reviewing and setting their own targets for improvement

- Inform dialogue between pupils and Wellbeing Leaders (WBLs) that are solution-focused, helping RADY and vulnerable pupils to consider rates of progress and identify areas for further development
- Target personalised support, particularly for RADY and vulnerable pupils
- Shape the Wellbeing Learning Support Officer (WBLSO) Mentor Programme for RADY and vulnerable pupils, identifying and helping pupils to address barriers to learning, with a particular focus upon the development of literacy and metacognition
- Inform staff professional learning, including that which is aimed at developing high quality support for those pupils who are vulnerable and hard to reach

To support this, we use the RADY uplift strategy, to raise aspirations of RADY learners. This is where we calculate the mean difference between RADY and non-RADY learners' prior attainment, and raise RADY learners' attainment by this mean average, uplifting their attainment, targets and therefore their aspirations.

Attendance

Poor attendance is routinely challenged and excellent punctuality and attendance is encouraged by Class Teachers, Form Tutors, Wellbeing Leaders and WBLSOs through assemblies. It is recognised that good attendance provides all pupils with the best chance of success through continuous engagement with the learning process. To encourage good attendance and ensure RADY and vulnerable pupils are not disadvantaged by non-attendance at school:

- The school's Attendance Strategy outlines our staged response to attendance intervention
- A Wellbeing Mentoring programme, with a focus on vulnerable learners, is undertaken by Form Tutors during assembly time
- Attendance is tracked, monitored and analysed on a weekly basis. Attendance Summit Meetings, between key pastoral staff, occur on a weekly basis. Vulnerable pupils are clearly identified as part of this work
- Attendance patterns are evaluated in monthly attendance reports
- Personal Attendance Plans are created where necessary. These are closely monitored and updated by WBLs
- A variety of interventions, based on pupil and family need, are put in place to support improved attendance. A focus is always on removing barriers
- Assistant Headteacher meetings with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) take place on a weekly basis, targeting persistent absentees, analysing, and where necessary challenging, the causes of poor attendance
- The school liaises with the Local Authority to take give further support and take further action where needed, for long-term authorised absence and persistent unauthorised absence respectively

RADY mentors focus on ensuring RADY learners' attendance is closely monitored and addressed when necessary.

Wellbeing

Personal factors, such as lifestyle, self-esteem or childhood experiences can often have a dramatic impact upon young people's belief in their own abilities, their confidence to cope with the stresses of life and their studies and to socially engage. Monitoring pupil wellbeing is therefore essential in helping pupils to build resilience so that they are better able to deal with adverse events and circumstances and to better cope with and enjoy the learning process. Greater optimism also contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere and helps to create a whole school ethos built around enjoyment, challenge and success.

We aim to ensure all RADY learners are engaged in an enrichment activity, and are supported to do so by their RADY mentor.

In order to help pupils to improve and maintain mental wellbeing

- Merits are awarded regularly to RADY and vulnerable pupils
- Postcards recognising the achievements and positive engagement of RADY and vulnerable pupils are sent home by subjects, WBLs and members of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Regular Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings are held to share information, review and develop strategies for helping the most vulnerable pupils
- The school leads the Abergavenny Cluster multi-agency monthly meeting and staff attend and inclusion panel meetings to secure the most appropriate and effective support and intervention for vulnerable pupils
- RADY pupils are provided with personalised half-termly reviews conducted by a member of the Wellbeing Team

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils using highly effective review and feedback

Feedback

For individual pupils, good quality feedback is integral to the learning process and must be carefully structured so as to have the greatest impact upon progress. Staff have developed a consistent approach to feedback that prioritises RADY and vulnerable pupils and incorporates effective dialogue that helps to guide and support the learning process. The impact of understanding of how to improve, and of the strategies used, is regularly reviewed at both department and whole school level.

Whole School Review Strategies

Estyn maintain that, as a reflective professional process, review and self-evaluation enables schools to get to know themselves better, identify their agenda for improvement and promote innovation and sector-leading practice. Where self-evaluation process focuses upon impact, it leads to improvements in educational experiences and outcomes for pupils (Ref. Estyn, A self-evaluation manual for secondary schools, 2014).

Ongoing review of strategies employed to support RADY and vulnerable pupils include:

- Regular analysis of the percentage of merits and behaviour points awarded to RADY and vulnerable pupils, identifying where further encouragement and intervention is required and those individuals who engage positively with the learning process
- Lesson observation, learner product analysis, listening to learner exercises and scrutiny of Subject Schemes of Learning (SsoL) to evaluate the impact of provision on RADY and vulnerable learners.
- A fully representative School Council that actively reviews provision and outcomes alongside teaching staff and members of the Leadership Team
- The CPAG Action Group which encompasses pupil Youth Voice Champions
- Pupil subject and pastoral consultation groups who are fully involved in strategic planning and review
- Annual curriculum surveys that are completed by pupil representatives, including those who are RADY and/or identified as vulnerable, to inform provision
- Opportunities for parents/carers to feedback observations and to ask questions through half-termly Headteacher Open Door sessions to inform current practice and future planning.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Pupils Deprivation Grant (PDG) spend that has been used to support RADY and vulnerable pupils in order to assess impact and help shape future policy
- RADY and vulnerable pupil progress meetings undertaken by WBLs, using a range of information, including teacher comments and pupil data. At KS4 this will include the production of Personalised Intervention Plans
- Parent-teacher consultation events where parents/carers of RADY or vulnerable pupils are personally contacted and invited to attend
- Work Experience programmes for disadvantaged or low attending learners

Additional learning opportunities informed by review and feedback

Ongoing pupil engagement and review of pupil performance provides evidence-informed insight in relation to opportunities that pupils at King Henry VIII 3-19 School would like to have in order to enhance the learning experience and to help them make good academic progress. Support arrangements and extra-curricular opportunities are continually reviewed in order to meet pupil preferences and needs. Pupil informed support includes:

- An annual KS4 revision/study skills programme that is published each year. All RADY and vulnerable pupils are encouraged to engage fully with this, including through direct contact with parents/carers.
- Calendared curriculum enrichment activities funded through faculty and departmental bids
- An extensive extra-curricular programme that provides a range of experiences, e.g. sport teams, revision classes, chess, music and film club to name but a few.

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils using the through-school approach and through the curriculum

Overview

King Henry VIII 3-19 School is a through-school. This creates many benefits for pupils, especially vulnerable pupils. It allows these pupils to seamlessly progress through their schooling without a primary/secondary divide. It means that all the support and provision provided for these pupils, together with the systems used, can continue throughout their whole school experience without changes and with consistent staff. The consistency of inclusion practices and wellbeing practices are fully embraced by the school.

Curriculum

In particular, a through-school allows for 3-19 school curriculum with the seamless and systematic development of content and skills from age 3 to age 19 without the requirement of transition to a curriculum at a different school. This provides huge benefits to vulnerable pupils. It means that pupils experience a well-planned curriculum throughout their education with staff who always know their current attainment and next steps.

Our school curriculum:

- Systematically and sequentially develops skills from Nursery to Year 13
- Systematically and seamlessly develops content from Nursery to Year 13 where the order of knowledge and concepts is strategically planned
- Focusses on powerful knowledge. This includes ensuring that RADY and vulnerable pupils gain the background knowledge that others may have.

Universal Provision: Supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils at Transition

Overview

All RADY learners on entry to primary and secondary phases are assigned a RADY mentor, who will visit the home and build a relationship with the family. This builds the essential relationship with school staff and supports RADY parents/cares engage in school events such as Parents' Evenings and reports. It also gives RADY families a 'VIP service' in their first year at school with us.

Transition procedures provide continuity and progression in pupils' education and are therefore a crucial factor in securing school improvement. In order for pupils to secure a successful transition to the secondary section, King Henry VIII 3-19 School recognises that there needs to be a degree of social adjustment, together with ongoing curriculum interest that is secured through good quality subject content and the careful planning of the development of skills.

It is recognised that anxieties during Transition are very often magnified for vulnerable pupils who are already dealing with adverse circumstances that are beyond their control. We therefore ensure that we gather as much detailed knowledge as possible about individuals and their circumstances through the careful management of transfer records and data. King Henry VIII 3-19 School has a

robust system for gathering pupil information, including face-to-face meetings with Year 6 teachers, ALNCOs, LA Officers, and where necessary, outside agencies. The forging of close links with vulnerable Year 6 pupils and their parents/carers prior to transfer is an essential element in securing the appropriate support upon Transition to meet student needs. Our Cross-Phase HTLA allows for relationships to be built between the school and families and to encourage and endorse effective communication around the needs of pupils. All pupils attend induction days, with many accessing an Extended Transition Programme throughout the latter part of the summer term. Parent/Carer interaction with the school is encouraged through attendance at open events and pre-arranged meetings with the Wellbeing Team.

Transition

As part of extensive Cluster Transition arrangements, King Henry VIII 3-19 School:

- Provides an Extended Transition Programme to meet the needs of all RADY and vulnerable pupils, helping them to make new friends, familiarise themselves with both teaching and non-teaching staff and gain more confidence in and around the school building
- Makes effective use of Transition Projects to help embed key literacy skills, including approaches promoted through Voice 21 cluster working
- Provides continuity of Maths teaching through the Year 5-6 Maths Project. This familiarises pupils with staff and school approaches used to secure core numeracy skills before entry into Year 7
- Provides an additional Transition experiences for those pupils who have an additional learning need, or who are identified as needing further support within a Primary School setting
- Provides online Transition resources for pupils who are unable to attend Transition activities within the school setting, or simply wish to add to their Transition experience. Resources include bespoke activities for those pupils who have additional learning needs, or who are identified as needing additional support.
- Arranges meetings with the parents/carers of identified vulnerable pupils (and other professionals where necessary) in order to prepare a pastoral support programme that can be activated upon entry into Year 7.

Universal Provision: Challenging and supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils through relationships

Overview

Vulnerable pupils need to feel a sense of belonging to their school. They need high quality relationships with the staff that teach them and care for them. The school's Relationships and Behaviour Policy is rooted in the formation, development, and maintaining of these relationships.

Vulnerable pupils also need to feel secure in the school's approach to responding to unacceptable behaviour. They need the school to be clear about its approach to managing behaviour, they need this approach to be consistent, and they need to feel they can rely on the school to resolve issues.

Pupils need the security of knowing where the expectation line is and what will happen if this is not reached. The school's Relationships and Behaviour Policy provides this security.

Relationships and Behaviour Policy

To maintain and develop high-quality relationships, our Relationships and Behaviour Policy includes:

- Teachers greet every pupil as they arrive to every lesson
- Staff persistently catch pupils doing the right thing (active noticing)
- Staff take a daily and continued interest in the lives of pupils
- There is a school-wide commitment to getting to know the pupils on an individual basis
- Staff are kind and caring at all times
- Staff do everything they can to ensure that pupils feel valued and important
- Staff actively look for opportunities to engage with pupils around the school
- Staff are positive and assertive when dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Staff do not shout and are mindful of displaying good manners at all times
- Staff are calm and respectful and avoid an emotional-led response
- Staff ensure that their responses are socially engaging and not socially defensive.
- Staff follow a range of consistent positive and preventative strategies to prevent a continuation of unacceptable behaviour
- Staff use restorative discussions to resolve conflict

Targeted Provision: Supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils through the provision of in-house targeted support

Overview

As a school we are committed to doing everything that we can to improve outcomes for RADY and vulnerable pupils, recognising that some individuals require support beyond that which can be provided by teaching staff alone, or solely within a classroom setting. The intervention and support that is offered ranges from skills development to the creation of bespoke learning pathways, to educational experiences that promote teambuilding and positive mental health.

Pupils are closely involved in the design of intervention and support programmes as this enables provision to be effectively shaped so that it meets individual needs and secures the best educational experiences and outcomes.

Targeted In-House Support

Additional pastoral and educational support that is tailored to meet the needs of RADY and vulnerable pupils includes:

- Pastoral Support Plans to ensure wellbeing support for vulnerable learners is well-communicated, congruent and regularly evaluated
- Small group intervention and personalised support for the development of communication skills and promotion of positive mental health

- Mentoring and intervention support run by our team of WBLSOs
- Weekly Young Carers session led by the Young Carers team from the LA
- Individualised programmes of support for pupils to develop their emotional literacy
- Targeted nurture provision in accordance with the six principles of nurture
- Small group and 1:1 literacy intervention
- Small group literacy intervention using Leonix SOUND Training at KS4
- Small group intervention and personalised support for the development of numeracy
- Early entry to GCSE and vocational qualifications from Year 10 and some one-year GCSE programmes at KS4 for identified students
- Use of the PRS and in-house support programmes to support bespoke learning plans for individuals at KS3 and learning pathways for pupils at KS4
- Provision of additional adult supervision and specialist support through Home-learning and Study Clubs
- Provision of a Breakfast Club for RADY and vulnerable pupils
- Access to opportunities that broaden the educational experience and promote teambuilding and friendship, e.g. The Phoenix Project, theatre trips, inclusion on interview panels and participation with The Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Arranged visits to colleges and universities, including through the Seren Programme, raising aspirations and motivating students to achieve good, or better outcomes
- Use of the Foundation Governors Fund to provides music tuition for identified pupils
- Partial or fully funded trips and residential visits for identified students e.g. Glanllyn, Llangorse Multi-Activity Centre and the theatre
- The forging of links with community groups, including those that involve parents/carers of RADY and vulnerable pupils, increasing opportunities for identified pupils to engage in activities that promote active citizenship

Specialist Provision: Supporting RADY and vulnerable pupils using outside agency support

Overview

There are a wide range of circumstances in which vulnerable pupils may require specialist support, either in the short, or long-term. Evidence shows that certain factors which exist in pupils' lives can place them at a greater risk of disengagement from school and in turn also increase their risk of social exclusion. These pupils can often be absent from school and exhibit poor behaviour and in such cases a diverse range of support mechanisms need to be provided, within a whole-school approach (Ref. Inclusion and Pupil Support, Welsh Government, 2015).

Where pupils are particularly hard to reach there is sometimes a need for services to share knowledge, skills and experience so that highly bespoke and wrap around support can be offered. By taking this approach many pupils are helped to make the right life choices and to engage more positively when in school and the local community.

Specialist Support

In order to secure the best possible provision for RADY and vulnerable pupils with very specific identified needs, King Henry VIII 3-19 School:

- Collaborates with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) to improve pupil outcomes using restorative approaches, preventing and diverting children from anti-social and offending behaviour through effective support for both them and their families
- Supports the School-Based Counselling self-referral process that allows individual pupils to address personal concerns through highly personalised therapeutic work
- Provides therapeutic support across both school phases from the Baxter Project
- Identifies pupils who may benefit from engagement with Ngage, young person's drug and alcohol services and Platform mental health services, having experienced trauma or other adverse experiences
- Provides educational psychologist support through the Monmouthshire Educational Psychologist Service. Support includes consultations with school staff, parents or carers and other professionals to explore how a young person's difficulties are affecting their learning and how best to support them
- Liaises with clinical psychologists, including those within the Building Attachments, Security and Emotional Wellbeing Team (BASE) in order to support students who have suffered trauma due to abuse or neglect
- Plans on-site activities with Monmouthshire Young Carers Service aimed at enriching the curriculum and supporting student wellbeing. This service also offers off-site opportunities to participate in activities which these young people may otherwise miss out on
- Offers young people the opportunity to achieve highly and make excellent progress through a range of educational and enterprise initiatives through the Monmouthshire Youth Enterprise mentoring programme
- Works with Llamau to provide high quality support for those young people who are facing homelessness
- Networks with Family Mediation and Bereavement Services so that pupils are offered specialist support when families are faced with a death, divorce or separation
- Engages with Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS) to ensure pupils whose first language is not English or Welsh are fully supported, improving their English language skills and provide full access to the curriculum

Appendix A

Levels of child poverty in Wales

Levels of child poverty in parts of Wales are some of the highest in the UK and its impact on children and young people's educational attainment is well documented. Research conducted by Welsh Government in 2018 found that KS3 pupils who were eligible for free school meals were between two and a half and four times less likely to achieve an age-standardised score above 115 in each of the national tests (NNRT). The attainment gap widens considerably more when pupils reach Key Stage 4. In 2016 the gap stood at 32% at Level 2, a figure which has remained relatively unchanged.

The Four Binds of Poverty

Many studies have explored the causes of low achievement and concluded that low aspiration is one of the primary factors. However, research by Dr Ceri Brown (Educational Binds of Poverty: The lives of school children, 2014) has highlighted that even when parents/carers who are in poverty have clear and high aspirations for their children, it is the poverty that children and young people encounter that impacts so significantly upon their educational progress and life chances. Through the theoretical concept of a set of 'binds' against educational success, Dr Brown explores four key areas that children in poverty have to navigate if they are to be successful in school. These are:

1. Material deprivation
2. The cultural contexts of school, home and the community
3. Friendship and social capital
4. The effects of student mobility through atypical school changes

The Four Binds of Poverty explained...

1. **Material deprivation (and its role in exclusion).** This relates to the material impact on learning, both in terms of direct and indirect effects, through social exclusion. Housing, mental health issues, poor diet, lack of space and privacy to do homework, financial difficulties/stress, student's lack the material resources of their peers – all can lead to a feeling of not belonging, including within the classroom.
2. **The cultural contexts of school, home and the community (The alienating culture of school).** The disjuncture between home and school life culture includes routines, language used and expectations of children and adults. This can lead to a feeling of being out of place, which in turn can have a direct impact upon levels of confidence and the ability to engage and participate effectively within lessons.
3. **Friendship and social capital (and their impact on learning).** The importance of friendships makes school life meaningful for children. The exclusionary impact of bind 1 and bind 2 means that for children and young people in poverty their friendship groups become a major resource to call upon for support. Due to bind 2, children and young people in poverty are more likely to form friendships based upon anti-schooling identities. In these instances, they are often only too aware that they are caught in a bind, whereby they feel compelled to reject learning in order to maintain their position within the social group.

4. **The effects of student mobility through atypical school changes.** The impact of turbulence (irregular school moves) causes disruption and can have a negative impact upon the learning continuum and a young person's sense of belonging in a school setting.






Triple Jeopardy

A number of high-profile studies have, not surprisingly, indicated that targeted literacy intervention can help close the poverty gap in relation to attainment.

Triple Jeopardy is a concept developed by Dr Brian Male and is based upon theories relating to how children and young people learn. According to Dr Male, children from lower socio-economic groups tend to have a narrower range of early learning experiences. This means that they need to change their understanding to fit new information less frequently. As language develops in line with experiences, the narrower the range of experiences, the narrower the range of language. This belief is at the heart of the triple jeopardy theory relating to deprived and vulnerable students who:

- Have less extensive sets of understanding into which fit new learning
- Are not used to changing those sets of understanding to accommodate new learning
- Haven't developed the language that would allow these accommodations to be made.

Child maltreatment

ACE					
	Verbal abuse	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional neglect	Physical neglect
% in Wales	20%	16%	7%	7%	4%

Childhood household included

ACE						
	Parental separation	Mental illness	Domestic violence	Alcohol abuse	Drug abuse	Incarceration
% in Wales	25%	18%	17%	13%	6%	4%

Increased risk of associated harms for those individuals with 4+ ACEs compared to those with no ACEs

-  3 times more likely to develop heart or respiratory disease or to have attended (or stayed overnight) in a hospital
-  4 times more likely to be a high-risk drinker
-  6 times more likely to have ever received treatment for mental illness
-  6 times more likely to be a smoker
-  6 times more likely to have had or caused an unplanned teenage pregnancy
-  15 times more likely to have perpetrated violence in the last year
-  16 times more likely to have used substances (i.e. heroin or crack)
-  20 times more likely to have been incarcerated

Sources: Ashton et al., 2016; Bellis et al., 2015a; Hughes et al., 2018.

Appendix C

The importance of supporting RADY, EMA and vulnerable students using highly effective communication

King Henry VIII 3-19 School recognises the importance of clear and effective communication that is open and accessible as outlined within the school's Communication Policy. It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers, and communication between home and school is key. This underpins positive student wellbeing and outcomes. We firmly believe that by working together we can help students to achieve their aspirations and fulfil their potential.

To ensure that excellent communication takes place:

- Centrally held parent/carer information is checked regularly so that contact names, telephone numbers and email address are accurate and up-to-date
- Weekly Teaching and Learning and Wellbeing briefings inform staff of individual pupil circumstances and needs
- Teaching staff and members of the Wellbeing Team regularly share key information with parents/carers of RADY, and vulnerable pupils. This is achieved through SIMS Parent App and In-Touch messaging, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings that include progress events and parents' evenings
- All parents of RADY and vulnerable pupils are contacted prior to parents' evening, progress events, or other information sharing sessions to encourage attendance
- Parents/Carers of RADY or vulnerable pupils who do not attend Parents' Evening receive a phone call following the event to inform them of the pupil's progress and areas for development
- Regular information sharing meetings take place with cluster primary schools that focus upon the analysis of key data (including attendance), the sharing of pedagogy, support and intervention strategies
- Opportunities for parents/carers to feedback observations and to ask questions through half-termly Headteacher Open Door sessions
- Multi-agency meetings are held as necessary to ensure knowledge of individual student and family needs are shared and that the most effective support and intervention is put in place

Abbreviation table

Abbreviation	Explanation
ACE	Adverse childhood experience
ALNCO	Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator
AoLE	Area of Learning Experience
EAS	Education Achievement Service
eFSM	Eligible for free school meals
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance for 6 th Form students
I2A	Inspire to Achieve programme, run by Monmouthshire Youth Service
KHS	King Henry VIII School
LORIC	Skills of Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communication
nFSM	Not eligible for free school meals
PAP	Personal Attendance Plan
PEC	Peer Enquiry Cycle
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PiXL	Partners in Excellence – An organisation working to support schools, providing resources and ideas for young people
PRS	Pupil Referral Service
RADY	Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters project
SsoL	Schemes of Learning
TAC	Team around the child
VESPA	Model of study skills including Vision, Effort, Systems, Practice and Attitude
WBL	Wellbeing Leader
WBLSO	Wellbeing and Learning Support Officer