

# Raising School Standards



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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A guide for parents and carers

Autumn term 2011



**The national school banding system**  
Because schools are never uniform

Inside: The Minister's commitment • A teacher's vision • A parent's view • Your questions answered



## The Minister's commitment

### What is the national school banding system and what does it mean for parents/carers?

I have set out my aims for improving the performance of the education system in Wales. We are making good progress but we can, and must, do better.

I have looked at how we assess school performance. We need to focus on making improvements where they are most needed and we want that information to be made readily available to parents and carers, governors and staff in schools.

We are introducing a national banding system for secondary and primary schools in Wales to help us do this. We will publish information on secondary school banding information in December and we are currently developing a model for primary banding.

The national school banding system will group schools into bands, which will reflect their performance and progress and consider the challenges they face and their individual circumstances.

Banding is **not** about labelling, naming or shaming schools, or creating a league table. It is about putting schools into groups to identify which need our support and which we can learn from. Banding will help us make effective improvements to our education system.

Leighton Andrews AM  
Minister for Education and Skills



## A teacher's vision

**“Different schools.  
Different challenges.  
Same aspirations.”**

Banding will help make sure that the schools that need the most support will get it. It's not about which band your school is in, it's about what we do about it.

Banding is only part of the picture. It helps us think, in an open and honest way, about what our pupils have achieved, and it means we can take action to improve things.

We'd all love to be in the top band. We all need to be the best to help our pupils benefit and to improve our schools.

**Jon Williams**  
Assistant Headteacher  
Porth County Community School



## A parent's view

**“It's good to know they'll  
be targeting schools  
that need extra support.”**

It will be interesting to know how my child's school is doing compared to other schools but I'm more concerned about what happens next. People say that deprivation causes poor performance in schools but it's not always true. The banding system shows the schools that are doing a really good job in difficult circumstances, which is a real boost for those schools. And I think it's right that schools that are not doing too well should get support to improve. It's a great idea that schools in the top bands should help less successful schools.

However, what I really want is for my child's school to get the support it needs to be as good as it can be for my child and all the children in the school.

**Diana Blowfield**  
Mother



## Your questions answered

### Why introduce banding?

Banding is a way of helping us see how schools in Wales are performing. Banding will also help us provide support to those who need it.

### How does banding work?

Banding uses the performance of schools to group them into one of five bands – from Band 1, schools which are performing well, to Band 5 schools which need to improve.

### What information do you use to band schools?

We use information about how well 15-16-year-olds have performed in examinations, and information about their level of attendance. We also take account of the level of poverty of pupils in the school as this can have an impact on what the school can achieve.

### When will the banding be published?

We will publish banding information on our website at [www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents](http://www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents) during the week beginning 12 December 2011.

### Will primary schools and special schools be banded?

We are developing primary school banding. We have no plans to band special schools at this stage, and we are developing a more appropriate measure. When we have done this, we will work with special schools to agree how best to use the measure to support continuous improvement.

### What happens next?

Banding will help local authorities support their schools more effectively. Each local authority will have a different approach – there is no national rule for specific action in relation to schools in different bands. High-performing schools will be expected to share their good practice widely in order to help low-performing schools. All schools will be expected to consider the full range of information available to them, to review their performance in an honest way and to agree targets and ways to improve, based on where there is most need for improvement.

If you have any other questions, please go to the Welsh Government website at [www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents](http://www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents)  
Your headteacher or chair of governors will be able to answer any questions about your school.  
Please send any other questions to: [SSU@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:SSU@wales.gsi.gov.uk)