# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **School Enrichment Trials**  |
| **DATE**  | **26 May 2022** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language** |

We are committed to exploring reform of the school day and school year so that we support learner and staff wellbeing, tackle educational inequalities and bring them more in line with modern patterns of family life and employment. This work is being carried out in collaboration with the Plaid Cymru Senedd Group, as part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

As part of this commitment, trials of additional enrichment sessions have been running across 13 schools and one college, with more than 1,800 learners benefitting from five extra hours a week of bespoke enrichment activities, over a ten-week period.

Schools participating in the trials have been supported and funded to incorporate additional enrichment activities and experiences around the school day to support learning, wider skills development, relationship building and wellbeing. This approach draws on international models and work by the Education Policy Institute and Education Endowment Foundation.

Each school involved has designed their own programme of enrichment activities, based on their local needs and circumstances, with broad flexibility around the range of sessions offered, external partner involvement and whether additional hours were provided before or after core school hours.

Extensive and stimulating opportunities have been offered to learners through these trials. These range from cookery to coding, multi-sports to musical theatre, as well as a mix of social activities and academic programmes such as creative writing and expressive arts. Schools have also had the opportunity to develop or strengthen links with a wide range of third-party providers. These include professional sporting organisations, the Urdd, Forest Schools and the RSPB, among others, ensuring enriching and stimulating additional sessions to support learners re-engage with learning.

These trials have now come to an end, and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all our delivery partners, including third party providers and the WLGA. In particular, a huge thanks to all of the participating schools and their workforce, who volunteered during extremely challenging times, developing and delivering such rich and varied programmes.

Initial feedback from schools, learners and families has been extremely positive. A full and independent evaluation of the trials is now underway and will report in the autumn.

Through this evaluation I want to understand the range of activities and opportunities offered. How learners were engaged and supported through the trials in terms of their development, emotional and physical wellbeing and how they engage with education. We will also consider the impact on the school workforce and family perceptions of the experience. Similarly, the evaluation will look at the role, impact and opportunities of external third party providers.

Whilst I await the results of this evaluation which will further support our emerging evidence base, I will continue to explore options around the school day including how enrichment activity can be further supported.