# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Raising standards of literacy and numeracy** |
| **DATE** | **29 November 2023** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language** |

I am proud of how, despite the challenges we have faced as a nation in recent years, our teaching profession has worked tirelessly to ensure the roll out of the Curriculum for Wales has been a success.

It is imperative, as we strive towards high standards and aspirations for all our learners, that we retain our focus on improving literacy and numeracy. Pre-pandemic, thanks to the hard work of our teaching workforce, Wales had made progress in raising standards of literacy and numeracy. However, Estyn has raised significant concerns about the impact of the pandemic on school standards. This impact was reflected in the [report on national-level patterns in attainment in reading and numeracy](https://www.gov.wales/patterns-reading-and-numeracy-attainment-2018-19-2022-23) we published last week, based on personalised assessments taken by all learners in Year 2 to Year 9.

We therefore need a sustained and joined up national focus on these foundational skills to enable our children and young people to access the breadth and balance of the curriculum, and move confidently towards their long-term employment, education, or training prospects.

If all learners, whatever their background, are to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and experiences to reach their potential, literacy and numeracy must remain a national priority.

I am pleased the additional £5 million already invested in high quality books and reading programmes, gifting books to all learners and schools, has had a positive impact on reading enjoyment across Wales. I am also funding a pilot project for a reading mentoring programme where mentors are working with targeted groups of learners to improve enjoyment and the motivation to read.

In March this year, I published our oracy and reading toolkit, co-developed with practitioners, providing a package of support to schools to develop and embed their own whole school approach to achieving high standards of oracy and reading. Today I have published an [update to that toolkit](https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/389c306a-0be4-4d39-9a54-7703c04035b1/en/overview), reinforcing my commitment to the systematic and consistent teaching of phonics as set out in our *High Standards and Aspirations for All* Action Plan. We will continue to work with partners to inform how we can further support the teaching of literacy skills within the Curriculum for Wales and increase the package of support to help schools and settings achieve high standards.

Our report on national-level patterns based on personalised assessments also showed that a similar focus on numeracy and mathematics is needed, alongside the oracy and reading toolkit I am publishing a [Mathematics and numeracy plan](https://www.gov.wales/mathematics-and-numeracy-plan-2023). This lays out the actions the Welsh Government will take to support the sector to secure meaningful improvement in mathematics and numeracy learning. We will engage with the profession to understand sector requirements and will work with school improvement partners and mathematics and numeracy specialists to develop a professional learning offer for practitioners which builds confidence, raises awareness of strategies to tackle mathematics anxiety and which is impactful for learners in Wales.

It is important that we look to improve learners and practitioners’ experiences of mathematics and numeracy, as well as their knowledge and skills. We will support practitioners to develop their confidence in this area, enabling them to plan for effective and engaging approaches to mathematics and numeracy learning.

The Curriculum for Wales guidance, which includes the updated Literacy and Numeracy Framework, is a clear statement of what is important in delivering a broad and balanced education. Clear support for our young people in both literacy and numeracy is necessary given the ongoing impact of the pandemic, to enable them to gain the full benefits of the curriculum.