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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification provision at level 3 in secondary schools

A good practice guide

July 2012



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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Contents	Page
Context	1
Purpose of this report	1
Background	1
Main findings	3
Recommendations	5
1 Students' knowledge, understanding and skills	6
2 Planning the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification	8
3 Teaching, assessment and mentoring support	9
Teaching	9
Assessment	9
Mentoring	10
4 Staff development, resources and partnership working	11
Staff development	11
Resources	11
Partnership working	12
5 Leadership and evaluation	13
Leadership	13
Evaluation	13
6 Support from awarding organisations	15
Appendix 1 – Case studies	
Appendix 2 – Evidence Base	
Glossary/references	
The remit author and survey team	

Context

Purpose of this report

- 1 This report has been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2011-2012. The report evaluates the quality of Welsh BaccaLaureate provision at level 3 in secondary schools, identifies case studies of good practice and provides recommendations for improvement.
- 2 The report is intended for the Welsh Government, senior leaders and staff in secondary schools, local authority advisers and awarding organisations.

Background

- 3 In 2005, 31 schools offered the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification as part of a pilot project. In September 2007, the Welsh Government announced a staged roll-out of the qualification across Wales. In January 2011, the Welsh Government announced that the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification would be rolled-out to further centres, making it available to students across 240 providers, including 168 secondary schools. The table below shows that the number of students being entered for the qualification has increased substantially since 2005, with a significant increase between 2010 and 2011.

Number of candidates entered for the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification at advanced level across all post-16 providers

Year	Number of entries
2005	299
2006	637
2007	1,329
2008	1,642
2009	2,940
2010	5,407
2011	8,323

(source: WJEC)

- 4 The Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification has developed in parallel with Welsh Government policy on Learning Pathways 14-19. This policy addresses the need for a more flexible and balanced approach to the education of 14 to 19-year-olds, developing a range of relevant skills, and providing a wider range of experiences that will suit the diverse needs of young people in Wales.
- 5 The Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification sits alongside and incorporates existing qualifications. At level 3, it is designed to prepare students for higher education and employment. The level 3 qualification is also known as the advanced level qualification. It has two elements – the options and the core.

6 The options may be academic or vocational qualifications. All students must achieve a minimum number in order to complete the options requirements of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (see the table below).

7 The core comprises the following components:

- Essential Skills Wales at either level 2 or level 3;
- ‘Wales, Europe and the World’ – study of political, social, cultural and economic issues;
- an individual investigation;
- a modern foreign language module;
- personal and social education;
- a period of community participation; and
- work-related education, including a period of work experience.

8 The table below summarises the requirements.

Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma	Core Certificate at level 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Essential Skills Wales at level 3, one of which must be from communication, application of number and information and communication technology, together with the other Essential Skills Wales at level 2 or level 3 • Verification and evaluation reports for working with an employer, community participation and team enterprise activity • Individual investigation at level 3 • Specified curriculum requirements 	Approved external qualifications equivalent to two GCE grades A*-E (for example 2 A levels, or NVQ level 3 or BTEC National Certificate at Pass)
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9 The WJEC is the awarding organisation with responsibility for the accreditation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

Main findings

- 10 The Welsh BaccaLaureate offers many benefits to students. Through studying the Welsh BaccaLaureate core, the majority of students improve their essential skills and they achieve an understanding of a range of topics, including enterprise, politics and current affairs, that they would not have studied otherwise. In particular, carrying out the individual investigation helps many students to develop some of the research and analytical skills needed for higher education and employment. Students also develop their confidence and social skills by engaging in community participation and work experience.
- 11 However, the standards achieved on the Welsh BaccaLaureate vary a good deal between students and between schools. For instance, standards in individual investigations can vary from level 3 pass level to a very high level. Much of the variation in standards reflects the variation in the way in which the provision is designed and delivered in different schools. It also reflects the wide ability-range of students who take the level 3 core.
- 12 Students who attain the qualification also gain qualifications in a range of essential skills such as communication and application of number, but these are not always studied at a level that is appropriate to individual students. Of all the components in the core, the lowest standards are in the 20-hour language module, which is generally not challenging enough to engage students, especially the more able.
- 13 The wide range of standards being achieved on the level 3 Welsh BaccaLaureate core suggests that grading the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification would provide a fairer reflection of the range of student outcomes.
- 14 There is variability in the quality of provision too. In many schools, there is an imbalance between the time spent on completing the paperwork relating to essential skills qualifications and the time spent on improving students' actual skills and transferring these to support learning across the curriculum. However, the quality of teaching in the core is generally good in the majority of schools. In a minority of teaching sessions, students are not challenged enough because teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of the full ability-range of students.
- 15 The mentoring and tutorial support offered by many schools are good and this has a positive effect on students' progress and achievement not only in the Welsh BaccaLaureate core but across all subjects being studied as options. A minority of schools have a manageable system for tracking and monitoring students' experiences and progress. Nearly all schools collect information about the completion of the different components of the Welsh BaccaLaureate, although in most cases only the co-ordinator or administrator have access to this information. A few schools share this information with teachers, learning coaches, parents or students and use it to track underperformance and provide additional support when required.
- 16 Many schools plan extensively to provide a broad and interesting range of activities in the Welsh BaccaLaureate and only in a few instances do the activities not engage students. A minority of schools make good use of information and communication technology, including interactive whiteboards, to support teaching and learning.

- 17 The Welsh Baccalaureate is at its most successful where it is planned as a compulsory part of the curriculum for all students. Schools generally allocate enough curriculum time to delivering the core, most of which is completed by the end of Year 12 in order to give students more time to focus on their other level 3 options in Year 13.
- 18 Nearly all schools have developed effective partnerships with a range of organisations to support the Welsh Baccalaureate. The links they establish with local businesses and charities are useful to facilitate the delivery of 'enterprise' and work experience and provide opportunities for students to work with others and to gain experiences beyond the classroom.
- 19 Although many schools have well-established self-evaluation processes, the Welsh Baccalaureate often sits outside these quality assurance procedures. This means that school leaders do not know enough about the quality of teaching in the Welsh Baccalaureate programme or know how much progress students are making during lessons.
- 20 Many students are positive about their Welsh Baccalaureate experiences, particularly those linked to enterprise, but they also say that there is too much paperwork to complete and too little skills-development. Students have too little input into self-evaluation procedures. While a minority of schools listen to students' views and included them in some self-evaluation activities, in the majority of schools, students' views are not used to improve the programme.
- 21 The main source of training, advice and support for staff about the Welsh Baccalaureate is the WJEC. This training has been effective and has had a positive impact. However, the support from other awarding organisations that are responsible for essential skills qualifications has been less effective. The majority of schools have not received enough guidance about the new essential skills qualifications or examples of good practice.
- 22 Many schools have sufficient resources to support their Welsh Baccalaureate programme. The range of Welsh-medium resources has improved, but there is still a general lack of Welsh-language resources, especially for personal and social education modules. Where Welsh-language resources exist, schools do not always know how to get hold of them.
- 23 A minority of schools provide a very high-quality level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate programme. Their programme is varied and puts a strong emphasis on the individual investigation and work experience as a means for developing the skills needed for higher education and employment. In these schools, students' views are listened to and they are very positive about their experiences. These schools are in favour of grading the qualification and a few have begun to develop their provision beyond the awarding organisation's current requirements.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government should:

- R1 consider reviewing the structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, to build on its strengths and eliminate its weaknesses;
- R2 work with schools and the WJEC to plan how to introduce grading into the assessment of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification; and
- R3 review the arrangements for assessing essential skills qualifications.

Awarding organisations should:

- R4 provide further guidance and exemplar materials to support schools in the delivery and assessment of essential skills; and
- R5 develop the Welsh Baccalaureate website to include a wider range of approved resources, including Welsh-medium resources.

Secondary schools should:

- R6 monitor more closely the arrangements for delivering and assessing essential skills so that they are not overly bureaucratic;
- R7 monitor the quality of learning and teaching on the Welsh Baccalaureate as part of their normal self-evaluation procedures, with a particular focus on student progress and standards; and
- R8 gather and use students' evaluations of their experiences of the Welsh Baccalaureate to improve the provision.

1 Students' knowledge, understanding and skills

- 24 Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification pass rates have been variable, although the number of students achieving the qualification is broadly increasing.

The percentage of candidates achieving the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification at advanced level

Year	Percentage
2005	85.3%
2006	88.1%
2007	81.0%
2008	81.1%
2009	89.6%
2010	87.0%
2011	90.8%

(source: WJEC)

- 25 When students do not achieve the Welsh Baccalaureate, it is often because they have not gained essential skills qualifications at level 2 or level 3. This is the case particularly for students for whom English is an additional language. All students must complete communication portfolios in English or Welsh, so if their English literacy skills are below level 2, they are not able to achieve the qualification.
- 26 The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification provides valuable opportunities for students to develop sound knowledge and understanding of a range of topics including political issues, current affairs and an understanding of Wales in the world. However, these experiences vary too much from school to school and a minority of students have only a superficial understanding of these issues and make little progress.
- 27 While studying for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, most students develop confidence and improve their social skills, particularly through community participation, work experience and enterprise activities. The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification provides effective opportunities for students to develop their presentation and team working skills. The qualification also provides students who are studying a relatively narrow range of subjects, for example mathematics and science subjects, with a broader range of experiences that they would normally experience.
- 28 Many students improve their essential skills. The Welsh Baccalaureate usually provides worthwhile opportunities for students to develop communication skills at level 3 and this improves standards of reading, writing and oracy. Few students achieve application of number or information and communication technology at level 3.
- 29 In a minority of instances, skills are not developed at the most appropriate level for students' level of ability, and students are not always able to transfer skills effectively to support their learning across the curriculum. This is particularly the case when students gain essential skills qualifications during discrete lessons and not as normal part of a cross-curricular programme.

- 30 Many students are positive about their Welsh Baccalaureate experiences, particularly those linked to enterprise. However, the majority of students feel that there is too much of a focus on completing the paperwork and not enough on improving and developing their skills.
- 31 In many schools, the highest standards are in the wider essential skills. This is often because students are able to cope with the wider essential skills at level 3 even though their literacy and numeracy skills may be below this level (see table below).

Level achieved in the essential skills by Advanced level candidates in 2011

Advanced level	% of entries achieving level of skill			
	none	1	2	3
Application of number	1.9	0.2	82.5	15.4
Communication	1.8	0.1	8.3	89.8
ICT	1.7	0.4	80.6	17.3
Working with others	2.0	0.1	8.5	89.4
Improving own learning	2.6	0.1	11.6	85.7
Problem Solving	2.5	0.1	38.5	58.7

(source: WJEC)

- 32 The individual investigation provides a useful opportunity for students to develop the research and analytical skills. They see the investigation as valuable preparation for UCAS interviews and higher education courses. Many students find the individual investigation one of the most challenging aspects of the programme. Standards vary widely and some students achieve at very high levels while others are at pass level.
- 33 In the majority of schools, the lowest standards are seen in the 20-hour language module as schools do not always provide a challenging enough programme that engages students, especially the more able. In a few instances, activities linked to the language module are too superficial and, although students enjoy the activities, they do not challenge them to think and develop higher-order language skills.

2 Planning the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

- 34 Many schools plan their provision for the Welsh Baccalaureate effectively, allocating a suitable amount of curriculum time to it. In the majority of schools, the time allocated to the Welsh Baccalaureate is similar to that for an A-level subject. Most schools follow the same pattern of provision, with a combination of timetabled lessons, one-off visits, presentations from guest speakers and an extensive enrichment programme that covers many core elements of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification after the AS examinations have taken place in Year 12. In the majority of schools, much of the Welsh Baccalaureate core programme is completed by the end of Year 12 to give students more time to focus on their options in Year 13.
- 35 While many schools plan extensively to provide a broad and interesting range of activities, in a minority of instances, essential skills provision is determined by staffing considerations and is not in the best interests of students. For example, students may complete information and communication technology or application of number at level 2 rather than level 3 because the school does not have teachers with the required expertise and training to deliver the qualifications at the higher levels.
- 36 Many schools make effective use of the time after Year 12 examinations to collapse the timetable and provide a varied and intensive Welsh Baccalaureate programme. This often includes a focus on the individual investigation, work-focused experience and preparation for higher education or employment. In a few schools, students visit higher education institutions to participate in a tailored programme on developing study skills. Where this happens, students are very positive about their experiences.
- 37 Many schools organise an appropriate range of activities. However, in a few instances, these do not always effectively engage or interest students and teaching styles and tasks do not appeal to the students. Many Welsh Baccalaureate classes have students from a wide ability-range. In a minority of schools, students following level 2 and level 3 options are grouped together, which means that there is an even broader ability-range compared with most other courses. Where teachers do not match activities well enough to support or challenge students, students do not make enough progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 38 The wider essential skills are often provided during thematic weeks or as part of a longer programme of activities linked to other aspects of the Welsh Baccalaureate. In most schools, essential skills, particularly information and communication technology and application of number, are developed in discrete lessons. Students' communication portfolios are often drawn from work across their option subjects or from Welsh Baccalaureate activities in Wales, Europe and the World.
- 39 In a minority of schools, activities do not always challenge students to think and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding enough. In these instances, activities are targeted towards middle-ability students and do not meet the needs of students from the full range of abilities.
- 40 The Welsh Baccalaureate is at its most successful in schools where it is a compulsory element of the curriculum. This is because these schools ensure that all

students complete the qualification and do not allow students to opt out, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In addition, there is often a broader range of activities in these schools. In schools where the qualification is an option, completion rates are lower as a minority of pupils drop out. This is either because they leave before the end of the course or because they want to focus on their option subjects.

- 41 An increasing minority of schools have adjusted the way they provide the Welsh Baccalaureate as grant funding has reduced. A reduction in grant funding and the introduction of 'rarely cover'¹ arrangements has meant that a minority of schools do not offer the same breadth of activities as they did when they first started the Welsh Baccalaureate. These schools have reduced the number of residential and day visits and instead invite guest speakers to the school to reduce costs.
- 42 Over time, most schools have made minor changes to how they provide for the Welsh Baccalaureate, such as developing new partnerships and changing resources. This often follows feedback from awarding organisations and Welsh Baccalaureate moderators. The greatest changes have been seen in the way in which schools approach the individual investigation, with an increasing focus on study skills and on using the individual investigation as preparation for higher education.

3 Teaching, assessment and mentoring support

Teaching

- 43 Overall, the quality of teaching of the Welsh Baccalaureate is good. However, in a minority of instances, teachers do not challenge students enough or plan effectively to meet the needs of students from a wide ability range that study the Welsh Baccalaureate at level 3. Often in Welsh Baccalaureate classes, there are students who are following level 2 and level 3 qualifications and consequently there is a wider ability range than there is normally in a single AS level, A level or BTEC level 2 or level 3 class.
- 44 A few aspects of the programme, in particular essential skills, are not always taught well and do not stimulate and motivate a minority of students. The weakest teaching is in lessons where essential skills are provided discretely. In these lessons, students spend long periods of time completing the paperwork linked to the qualifications. This is too time-consuming and repetitive and does not help students improve their skills.
- 45 Requirements for level 3 communication in particular also mean that some teachers spend considerable time marking students' work, so that students can make sure that it meets requirements.

Assessment

- 46 A minority of schools have efficient and manageable systems for tracking and monitoring students' experiences and progress. Nearly all schools collect information

¹ See glossary

about the different components, although in the majority of schools only the co-ordinator or administrative assistant has access to this information. Only a few schools share this information regularly with teachers, learning coaches, parents and students. These schools use the information to track underperformance and intervene with additional support or challenge when required.

- 47 A majority of schools send a report on the Welsh Baccalaureate to parents at key points during the academic year. This report summarises the nature of the Welsh Baccalaureate activities offered in the school, and provides a brief overview of whether the student is on-track to achieve the qualification, highlighting any areas of underperformance. Completion rates are higher in schools that have regular mechanisms for feeding back to parents about the Welsh Baccalaureate and their child's progress.

Mentoring

- 48 Care, support and guidance are strengths of secondary schools in Wales and were good or better in nearly all of the secondary schools inspected in 2010-2011.
- 49 In many schools, mentoring and tutorial support is good and this impacts positively on students' progress and achievement, not only in the Welsh Baccalaureate but across the curriculum as a whole. Many students benefit from targeted one-to-one or group support that provides them with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Where it is most successful, senior leaders are involved in the support programme and this gives a high status to the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

4 Staff development, resources and partnership working

Staff development

- 50 Effective staff development and training are crucial to the success of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Most schools have a large team of teachers with expertise in different fields, such as mathematics, information and communication technology and personal and social education, who teach the different aspects of the programme. Often sixth form tutors also play a pivotal role in providing aspects of the programme. As a large proportion of a school's staff are involved in the delivery, good quality training and support help to provide consistency of approach.
- 51 The main source of training, advice and support is through the WJEC's Welsh Baccalaureate team. The WJEC provides an appropriate annual training programme. This programme has been strengthened recently with the appointment of four regional support officers in addition to the two subject officers already in post. Much of the focus of the training is on the organisation and implementation of the individual investigation as well as gathering information for the centre profile. The majority of schools have already made effective use of the expertise of the regional support officers and have already invited them to train and support staff in their schools. Many schools have also visited other schools to observe and share good practice as well as share resources. New centres have benefitted from the expertise and support from more experienced centres. Most schools are very positive about the support that they receive from WJEC officers.
- 52 Awarding organisations other than the WJEC also offer support on the provision and accreditation of essential skills. This support is valued by schools, although they would like to see more exemplar materials being shared and discussed during training. At present, not enough exemplar material is available to schools.

Resources

- 53 Many schools have sufficient resources to support the Welsh Baccalaureate programme. New resources to support the teaching of Wales, Europe and the World are of a high quality and are available bilingually. In addition, nearly all schools have developed their own wide range of resources, although only a minority make good use of information and communication technology, including interactive whiteboards, to support Welsh Baccalaureate teaching. In most instances, Welsh Baccalaureate teachers have responsibility for developing resources in specific areas, for example for personal and social education or elements of the Wales, Europe and the World module.
- 54 Many schools use the internet as their primary source for gathering resources for the Welsh Baccalaureate. The recent changes to the Welsh Baccalaureate website (www.wbq.org.uk) mean that a wider range of resources are now available. Teachers make effective use of online resources produced by charities and local organisations. However, not all of these resources are available in Welsh.

- 55 The range of Welsh-medium resources continues to improve but there is still a general lack of Welsh-language resources, especially for personal and social education modules. Where Welsh-language resources exist, schools do not always know how or where to access them.
- 56 The majority of schools have developed effective links with other providers to share resources, although, in most instances they do not have procedures to quality assure, check and validate resources. Consequently, a few new centres are reluctant to use these resources as they are not sure if they meet the requirements for the Welsh Baccalaureate.
- 57 A minority of schools do not have good enough access to information and communication technology to teach the Welsh Baccalaureate programme effectively. As there is no longer a proxy² for information and communication technology essential skills qualification at level 2, many schools now timetable discrete lessons for students. In the majority of schools, this puts pressure on their information and communication technology resources, which is further exacerbated by the need for students to use computers to carry out research and word process documents when completing their individual investigation. Where schools also offer the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4 and vocational courses that require the use of computers, they do not always effectively allocate resources to provide for this aspect of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

Partnership working

- 58 Partnership working is a strong feature of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in most schools. Nearly all schools have effective partnerships with a wide range of organisations to support their programme. Most schools have productive links with local businesses to support their enterprise and work experience programmes. Local charities and national organisations also provide a valuable input. However, a few organisations are unwilling to travel to schools, particularly those in more rural areas.
- 59 Before starting the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, most schools visit more experienced centres to observe good practice and discuss ways of organising the work. These visits are highly valued by new coordinators. Many schools also meet other local schools to share resources and discuss good practice.

² See glossary

5 Leadership and evaluation

Leadership

- 60 Where Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification provision is successful, there is strong support by the headteacher and effective leadership by the Welsh BaccaLaureate co-ordinator. In most schools, co-ordinators are knowledgeable middle or senior leaders who are well organised and have established an ethos of teamwork. Most schools manage their Welsh BaccaLaureate programme well. Where a school has a large number of students taking the programme, the headteacher, senior managers and governing body are closely involved in its introduction and often in its implementation. The majority of schools have a senior member of staff responsible for co-ordinating the work of the team of teachers involved in teaching the programme. In these schools, teams meet regularly to plan and share good practice. As a result, the percentage of students who achieve the qualification is higher. Students across the year group receive a more consistent programme and are more likely to succeed.
- 61 In all schools that offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate, senior leaders support and see great value in offering the qualification. However, the extent of day-to-day support varies considerably. This support often depends on the experience of the coordinator. As co-ordinators become more experienced, the day-to-day support required from senior leaders reduces.
- 62 Where schools have high attainment rates, this is often due to the support of senior leaders who support partnerships, mentor a group of students, release staff to attend training events and market the qualification with students and parents.
- 63 Nearly all schools have a dedicated Welsh BaccaLaureate co-ordinator. In a minority of schools, this co-ordinator is a member of the senior leadership team. In a minority of larger schools, as the number of students following the Welsh BaccaLaureate has increased over time, leaders have appropriately re-allocated responsibilities between two or more people. Often there is a Welsh BaccaLaureate co-ordinator who works alongside an essential skills co-ordinator and this works well.
- 64 In many schools, there is an administrative assistant who supports the coordinator with the input and collation of data. Co-ordinators consider this support is crucial to the success of the qualification and many would not be able to undertake their role without this support.

Evaluation

- 65 Over the past ten years, the quality of self-evaluation has improved greatly in secondary schools in Wales. Improving quality was good or better in many of the secondary schools we inspected in 2010-2011. Many schools have well-established processes for self-evaluation that draw on a wide range of suitable evidence. However, in many schools, the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification sits outside the normal self-evaluation procedures. Very few schools systematically

monitor Welsh Baccalaureate lessons in order to assess students' progress and skills development. In many schools, the evaluation of the Welsh Baccalaureate is not robust enough and often relies on anecdotal evidence. Some students say that too much of the work is at too low a level and that the course is too time consuming and distracts from the time that they spend on their AS and A level studies.

- 66 In a minority of schools, teachers regularly and systematically seek the views of students to develop Welsh Baccalaureate provision. However, in the majority of schools, although coordinators involve students in some self-evaluation activities, outcomes from these reviews are not used well or regularly enough to improve provision and teaching in particular.
- 67 While all schools moderate individual investigations and student diaries as part of WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate requirements, there is very little scrutiny of work completed as part of the Wales, Europe and the World and language modules.
- 68 Most schools use their results to measure the success of their provision for the Welsh Baccalaureate. Only a very few schools:
- analyse available data, including information at key points throughout the course on student performance, including that on essential skills;
 - assess progress against quantifiable and challenging outcomes;
 - evaluate their curriculum provision to be make sure that the Welsh Baccalaureate programme meets the needs of all students;
 - collect first-hand evidence about the quality of learning and teaching;
 - undertake lesson observations;
 - scrutinise the quality of written work; and
 - take account of the views of parents and students.

6 Support from awarding organisations

- 69 Awarding organisations hold general training events annually as well as specific training for new centres. The annual Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification training programme offered by the WJEC provides good opportunities for schools to work with each other and share effective practice.
- 70 Most schools are positive about the support they receive from the WJEC as the Welsh Baccalaureate awarding organisation. They believe that communication between the WJEC and schools is generally very good and that WJEC staff respond quickly and efficiently to any queries.
- 71 The support from the awarding organisations responsible for the essential skills qualifications is variable. The majority of schools have not received sufficient guidance about the qualifications and many have found it difficult to find examples of good practice.
- 72 The main shortcomings in the training for many schools has been not enough focus on the requirements of essential skills qualifications and a lack of detailed feedback about the grade boundaries of the individual investigation.
- 73 There are strong arguments for grading the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. Grading would reflect the full range of levels of student attainment more fairly. The majority of schools are in favour of grading the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, particularly those who provide the best provision. They feel that grading should be based on the quality of the individual investigation. A move to grading the qualification would recognise the high-quality of work produced by a minority of students as well as motivating other students who complete the minimum amount to pass the qualification. At a time when many secondary schools offer the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at advanced level, grading the qualification would strengthen its position in the curriculum and with higher education gatekeepers.

Appendix 1 – Case studies

Case study 1

Ysgol Y Preseli – Students' knowledge, understanding and skills

Context

Ysgol Y Preseli is an 11-18 mixed, designated Welsh-medium school in Crymych, Pembrokeshire. There are currently 967 pupils on roll. In 2011, 6.1% of statutory aged pupils received free school meals, compared to the national average of 17.7%. The school was part of the Bacallaureate pilot scheme and has offered the qualification since 2004.

Strategy

The school aims to provide a high-quality Welsh Bacallaureate programme that meets the needs of their students and helps them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. The Welsh Bacallaureate is an integral part of the post-16 curriculum and activities are planned effectively to develop students' skills to support them across the curriculum.

Action

Over the last six years, the school has refined its Welsh Bacallaureate programme. In 2009, they introduced the Welsh Bacallaureate qualification at key stage 4 and this meant that further work was needed to make sure that sixth-form pupils were developing their knowledge, understanding and skills and building effectively on what they had learnt in Year 10 and Year 11. The school offers a wide range of activities; this includes visits to local and national events, presentations from guest speakers and well-established links with a local higher education institution. All staff are involved in some aspect of Welsh Bacallaureate delivery and receive regular high-quality training.

Outcomes

Nearly all students who are registered at the start of Year 12 achieve the Welsh Bacallaureate Qualification at advanced level. These figures are significantly higher than the average for schools across Wales. Most students have a very good understanding of current affairs, political issues and a wide range of other topics included in the Welsh Bacallaureate programme of study. Most students are very positive about their Welsh Bacallaureate experiences and the positive impact the programme has had on their preparation for higher education, further education or employment.

Case study 2

Ysgol Morgan Llwyd – Curriculum planning and delivery (The language module)

Context

Ysgol Morgan Llwyd is a Welsh-medium secondary school with 800 pupils between 11 and 18 years of age. The school is located in the town of Wrexham, three miles from the English border. Approximately 13.8% of the statutory aged pupils received free school meals in 2011, compared to the national average of 17.7%. The Welsh Baccalaureate is compulsory for every sixth form student. The school was part of the Baccalaureate pilot scheme and has offered the qualification since 2004.

Strategy

The aim of the language module (Irish) is to allow students to experience another minority language. The activities are designed to stimulate and motivate them to continue to be passionate about the Welsh language, not only while attending school but also as adults. Teaching another Celtic language and its historical background provides additional opportunities to promote ancient Welsh history and its heritage. This work allows the students to develop an understanding of their Welsh citizenship, as well as international citizenship.

Action

Four days are allocated to teach the Irish language. The first day is concerned with presenting the history of the Republic of Ireland together with the results of the last two censuses with reference to the Irish language. This is followed by two days of learning the language. A vocabulary booklet has been prepared for this purpose. The language is then put to use. The students visit the Rathcairn region for a day. The students are involved in Irish language and dancing lessons and visit the Rathcairn Library, where there is a variety of Irish books for them to read. They are also taught about the area's history and its establishment as a gaeltacht (region) by people who migrated there from Connemara. At the end of their presentation, the students make a speech in Irish with a Welsh translation to a panel of sixth form tutors.

Outcomes

Teaching the Irish language has had a significant impact students enjoyment of Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and their contribution to the language module. Every student, without exception, understands the importance of the language. The residents of Rathcairn have welcomed this aspect of the partnership and both schools visit Rathcairn Primary School, which has 250 pupils. Many of the sixth form students that visited Rathcairn last year have continued to develop the relationships that they established with the young people of the region during the visit. They communicate regularly via social media. This is an unexpected development that the school fully welcomes, as it has helped to promote good citizenship.

Case study 3

Whitchurch High School – Staff development and training

Context

Whitchurch High School is an 11-18 mixed, split-site community school. There are currently 2269 pupils on roll with 465 students in the sixth form. The school is situated in Whitchurch, a northern suburban area of the city of Cardiff. In 2011, 13.3% of statutory aged pupils were entitled to free school meals. This figure is below the national average of 17.7%.

Strategy

To ensure that the Welsh Baccalaureate is successfully integrated into current structures at key stage 4 and post 16, as well as further enhancing the quality of the learning core. Each department and every member of teaching and support staff is involved in the delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate in some way and receive training relating to their area of responsibility. This training is on-going with necessary updates being filtered through to new members of staff.

Action

The school has introduced a comprehensive training package to support their Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

The training covers the following aspects:

- Welsh Baccalaureate co-ordinator and senior leaders attend the WJEC training conference each year and one representative also attends wider essential skills INSET. Relevant information and useful documents are disseminated amongst key members of staff and then filtered further through to departments;
- all staff receive annual training focusing on aspects of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme and departmental representatives attend Welsh Baccalaureate committee meetings. These are held once every half term. Representatives pass on advice and train their own departments taking into account specific departmental based issues and actions;
- Welsh Baccalaureate mentors also received additional training to support them in their role; and
- non-teaching staff are trained and new members of staff are introduced to the qualification as part of their induction process.

Outcomes

The school believes that the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification facilitates pupil progress at a pivotal time in their education. The structure for delivery of the qualification integrates well with the courses that pupils have opted to follow and provides greater opportunities for group and individual support. The strategy ensures that all members of staff fully understand the qualification and individual roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. This has led to a higher percentage of pupils achieving the level 3 threshold year-on-year and an average wider points score significantly higher than the Welsh average.

Case study 4

Hawarden High School – Mentoring programme

Context

Hawarden High School is an English-medium 11-18 comprehensive school of 1,160 pupils, including just over 200 in the sixth form. About 7.3% of statutory aged pupils were eligible for free school meals in 2011, which is well below the Welsh average of 17.7% for secondary schools.

Strategy

To provide guidance and support to students as they progress from key stage 4 to post 16 and to develop students' skills as independent students in preparation for post 18 choices. Prospective students receive an interview during the spring term of Year 11 with a member of the leadership group. They also have an interview with the link Careers Wales adviser and participate in a carefully co-ordinated programme of activities. As students continue into the sixth form the school has extended its level of guidance and support. They have built upon the required access to one to one tutorials by re-designing the sixth-form timetable to provide two hours of additional guidance each week.

Action

As part of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme, students have a timetabled 10 minute one-to-one session with their learning coach every three weeks. These sessions encourage a dialogue to review performance and establish targets. Agreed targets and actions are recorded and logged electronically. These are then reviewed at the following tutorial session and are communicated on a weekly basis to tutors through the Welsh Baccalaureate learning coach meeting. An overview of this information is maintained by the administrator who ensures that the information is accessible to pastoral and senior staff, for use in the informal mentoring discussions. All students participate in a mock interview day during Year 12. This programme is resourced by a number of local employers and enables all students to participate in a one to one interview, followed by appropriate feedback.

Outcomes

Students make more informed and realistic choices about their future aspirations. Surveys indicate that many students are confident in applying strategic thinking to their studies, thus achieving improved outcomes. In 2010 and 2011, 99% of the students achieved the level 3 threshold. The average wider points score was 966, an improvement of 190 points on the school's rolling average for the previous three years (2008-2010). The progression rate for students from Years 12 to 13 continues to improve with most Year 12 students progressing from AS level to A level courses.

Appendix 2 – Evidence base

This report draws on:

- visits by Estyn to a representative sample of twenty-two secondary schools in autumn 2011. Inspectors interviewed senior leaders and the Welsh Baccalaureate co-ordinator, scrutinised documentation, including curriculum plans and schemes of work, and interviewed a group of students;
- questionnaires completed by 167 students;
- questionnaires completed by nine secondary schools in addition to those visited; and
- a review of relevant literature.

The schools visited as part of this remit were:

- Alun School, Flintshire;
- Caereinion High School, Powys;
- Cowbridge Comprehensive School, Vale of Glamorgan;
- Crickhowell High School, Powys;
- Hawarden High School, Flintshire;
- Porth County Community School, Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Queen Elizabeth High School, Carmarthenshire;
- Sir Thomas Picton School, Pembrokeshire;
- St Cyres Comprehensive School, Vale of Glamorgan;
- The Maelor School, Wrexham;
- Whitchurch High School, Cardiff;
- Ysgol Bryn Elan, Conwy;
- Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Gwynedd;
- Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, Torfaen;
- Ysgol Maes Yr Yrfa, Carmarthenshire;
- Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, Wrexham;
- Ysgol Penglais School, Ceredigion;
- Ysgol Preseli, Pembrokeshire;
- Ysgol Tryfan, Gwynedd;
- Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern, Anglesey;
- Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd, Denbighshire;

The schools who completed the questionnaire were:

- Afon Taf High School, Merthyr;
- Builth Wells High School, Powys;
- Connah's Quay High School, Flintshire
- Pontypridd High School, Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- John Beddoes School, Powys;
- Stanwell Comprehensive School, Vale of Glamorgan;
- St Cenydd Community School, Caerphilly;
- Tasker-Milward V.C. School, Pembrokeshire;
- Ysgol John Bright, Conwy; and
- Ysgol Rhiwabon, Wrexham.

Glossary/references

WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee
Essential skills Wales qualifications	These qualifications comprise Application of Number, Communication and ICT. Each skill is assessed at levels 1-4 via an internally assessed and externally moderated portfolio.
Wider key skills qualifications	These qualifications comprise Working with Others, Problem Solving and Improving own Learning and Performance. Each skill is assessed at levels 1-4 via an internally assessed and externally moderated portfolio.
Proxy for information and communication technology	Where students have achieved a C grade at GCSE. They can apply for a proxy for level 2 information and communication technology.
Rarely cover	Since 1 September 2009, all schools in Wales have been required to have in place policies and procedures to ensure that teachers and senior leaders cover only rarely in unforeseeable circumstances.

The remit author and survey team

Catherine Evans HMI	Author
Iolo Dafydd HMI	Survey team member
Ray Owen HMI	Survey team member