

wjec
cbac

Annual Review

2025/26

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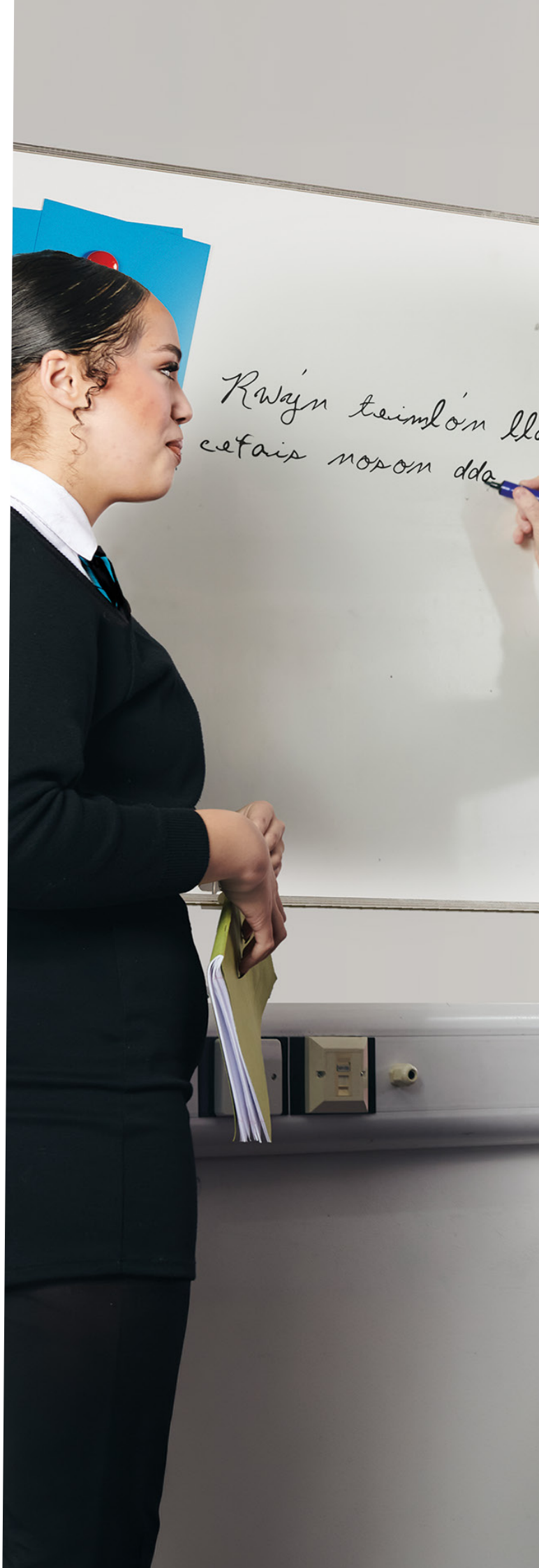
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Our Annual Review reflects what we believe about qualifications; they should take learners where they want to go

Every story in this review is shaped by our commitment to designing and delivering trusted, bilingual qualifications that support learners to progress, whether that's into further study, training, or the world of work. Great qualifications don't come from working in isolation. They come from listening. That's why, alongside showcasing our work, this review reflects the voices of the education community. From learners, teachers and lecturers to regional consortia and advisory groups; their insight and collaboration help shape qualifications that truly serve Welsh learners.

As a registered charity, we continually reinvest in enhancing our teaching resources, expanding our qualification range, and providing personalised support to meet the evolving needs of Welsh education.

Find out more about our charity work:

www.wjec.co.uk/Charity





Ian Morgan
Chief Executive

Welcome to our Annual Review 2025-26

As we reflect on the past twelve months, it is clear that this has been a year defined by collaboration and engagement with the education community across Wales. The strong partnerships we have built with schools, colleges and key education organisations have been fundamental to our work, shaping the development of qualifications that meet the needs and expectations of today's classrooms.

These partnerships extend beyond qualification development. They also inform the support we provide to educators, from free digital resources and guidance to wider teaching and learning materials, ensuring they are relevant, practical and accessible. The relationships we have established, and continue to strengthen, remain central to our success and our shared ambition of delivering quality qualifications and support to schools and colleges across Wales.

This commitment has been reflected in both the development and delivery of our Made-for-Wales qualifications, ensuring that our educators are confident in both the preparation and delivery of their chosen subject.

For our Wave 2 Made-for-Wales qualifications, this has meant ensuring teachers and lecturers had everything they needed ahead of first teaching in September 2026. A full suite of support materials, including adaptable digital resources, is now in place, and our 'Preparing to Teach' Professional Learning events gave educators across Wales the training and confidence to deliver these qualifications.

The same approach has shaped our Wave 3 qualification development. Through school and college visits, senior leader webinars, advisory groups and qualification development groups, we have worked to keep teachers and lecturers involved, informed and part of the process. All approved specifications are now available, giving educators the opportunity to plan and prepare ahead of first teaching from next year.

We also recognise the concerns raised regarding the delivery of our Wave 1 qualifications. Our teams have listened and worked closely with our schools and colleges to implement real change that will support our educators. That is what genuine partnership looks like: listening to concerns and working together to find practical solutions.

Our Annual Review captures the breadth of what has been achieved, celebrates our successes and offers updates on key developments that will support our schools and colleges. I want to thank our schools, colleges, and my colleagues for all they have contributed to the continued success of WJEC.



Our year in numbers

400+
Senior leaders from schools and colleges **attended our webinars**

34
Schools and colleges visisted in person by our Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team

90%
of schools and colleges **engaged with our Regional Support Team**

86%
of teachers and lecturers rated our Professional Learning courses **as extremely or mostly satisfactory**

1,400
hours of new learning content
across **280 new resources**

13,997
Teachers and lecturers attended
Professional Learning events across Wales

20+
Conferences attended

Through active participation in more than twenty national and international conferences, our Senior Leadership Team is shaping current and future work, while staying ahead of the latest trends

Conferences include:

AEA-Europe
International Assessment conference
The Hague - NL

BETT
Online and digital assessment
London - UK

Secondary Headteachers Conference
Cardiff & Newport
Wales - UK

Policy Forum for Wales
Sector Policy & Reform
Cardiff - UK

The Made-for-Wales Journey

Our Made-for-Wales qualifications are purpose-built to support Qualifications Wales' National 14–16 Qualifications Offer and aligned with the Curriculum for Wales and its Four Purposes. They equip learners with real-world skills through coherent, accessible content rooted in local, national, and international contexts, giving teachers and lecturers the tools to bring learning to life.



A journey in three Waves

Wave 1 First teaching: September 2025

As Wales' only awarding body delivering the new GCSEs and related qualifications, we developed fourteen new qualifications among them English Language and Literature, Mathematics, and Religious Studies.

Wave 2 First teaching: September 2026

Building on the momentum of Wave 1, a second Wave of GCSEs and related qualifications (including History, Integrated Science and The Sciences) expanded the suite.

For both Waves, we delivered a comprehensive support pack including a Pan-Wales Professional Learning programme and a new suite of free, adaptable Blended Learning Resources equipping teachers and lecturers with the tools to confidently deliver these new qualifications.

Wave 3 First teaching: September 2027

To ensure every learner has a relevant and fulfilling pathway through education, we committed to developing a third and final Wave, encompassing Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education in Wales (VCSEs), Foundation Qualifications, Work-Related Foundation Qualifications, the Personal Project, and the Skills Suite. Qualifications designed to offer greater choice and ensure every learner has a meaningful and relevant pathway through education.

Building an inclusive offer

The goal with our Wave 3 Made-for-Wales qualifications is to offer greater choice and provide valid pathways for every learner in Wales. Working in close partnership with industry and education specialists, these qualifications offer alternative learning routes that complement our GCSEs and open doors to a wide range of futures.

VCSEs: Providing learners with innovative pathways to explore new areas of interest, offering greater choice and encouraging consideration of a wide range of roles within their industries of interest.

Foundation Qualifications: Designed to empower every learner to succeed, build essential skills, and lay a strong foundation for future learning, life, and work.

The Personal Project: A natural replacement of the Individual Project within the existing Skills Challenge Certificate, empowering learners to undertake meaningful, self-directed study.

The Skills Suite: Spanning Entry Level to Level 2, recognising achievement at every stage through a flexible, unitised structure rooted in real-world contexts.

Why centres choose WJEC?

At the heart of the National 14-16 Offer is a commitment to ensuring every learner has a pathway that works for them. As the only awarding body delivering Made-for-Wales GCSEs, Vocational, and Skills-based qualifications, WJEC is uniquely positioned to support that ambition. Combined with over 75 years of experience developing trusted, bilingual qualifications and established relationships with schools and colleges across Wales, we are the natural partner for centres seeking a comprehensive, consistent provider.

Meeting our teaching community where they are

Showcasing the qualifications on offer and building relationships with schools and colleges has been central to our engagement work this year. **Sophie Dobbs**, **our Wave 3 Regional Representative**, has visited over 140 schools and colleges across Wales.

She has engaged with teachers and lecturers face-to-face and online to share what's on offer and answer questions.

> "We are delighted that all our Wave 3 qualifications have now been approved by Qualifications Wales. We understand that centres are keen to make the transition, and our role is to make that as straightforward as possible. The response from schools and colleges has been really encouraging, and I'm looking forward to continuing those conversations as we move towards first teaching in 2027."



Sophie Dobbs,
Regional Representative, Wave 3

Alongside this outreach, we have been building a comprehensive pack of support materials.

In March, we launched our Wave 3 Quick Guides; an accessible overview of each qualification covering purpose, structure, target learner profile and assessment approach.

In September, we published our final specifications and Sample Assessment Materials allowing teachers and lecturers to confidently prepare for first teaching September 2027.

As with previous Waves, this will be complemented by our Guidance for Teaching (January 2027), a Professional Learning programme and a suite of Blended Learning Resources, all available ahead of first teaching.

Looking ahead

The Made-for-Wales journey has always been about developing qualifications that support the ambitions of the Curriculum for Wales, serves every learner equitably, and gives Wales' educators the tools and confidence to make it work in their classrooms.

As the new suite of qualifications continues to grow, we remain committed to that vision and grateful to every learner, teacher, lecturer, school, college and education partner whose insight has helped shape these qualifications across all three Waves.

Find out more:
wjec.co.uk/Wave3



New guidance to help you deliver **with confidence**

Ask any teacher delivering our Made-for-Wales qualifications what would make the biggest difference to their day-to-day practice, and the answer is usually the same: clear, practical guidance that reflects what's happening in their classroom. Over the past year, we've published two new guidance documents that do just that, shaped directly by what teachers and lecturers across Wales have told us they need.

Supporting non-examination assessments, including the use of AI

Non-examination assessments (NEAs) give learners the chance to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding through portfolios, practical work and research-based projects.

With the growing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) raising new questions for schools and colleges, our Qualification Development team produced guidance[1] covering what learners can and cannot do at each stage of the assessment process, along with the evidence needed to demonstrate authenticity.

The guidance splits the NEA process into two phases.

1. The Research Phase: Covers the activities, sources and resources learners may use, both in the classroom and independently.

2. The NEA Phase: Covers the different levels of assessment control, expectations of learner independence and how to evidence authenticity.

It also includes practical examples of how to reference a wide range of sources, from books and journals to generative AI tools, helping learners build good academic practice and helping schools and colleges avoid potential malpractice issues.

Find out more:

wjec.co.uk/NEAGuidance

Navigating sensitive topics with confidence

Teaching often opens the door to complex and sometimes sensitive discussions, whether they sit within the specification or arise naturally in the classroom. To help teachers and lecturers navigate these moments well, we also published guidance on introducing sensitive topics to the classroom, designed to support safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments.

Unlike the NEA guidance, this resource outlines key considerations for practitioners when supporting learners to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to sensitive topics in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. Our teams also encourage teachers and lecturers to use the guidance alongside qualification-specific Guidance for Teaching, as well as relevant legislation, national guidance and school and college policies.

Find out more:

wjec.co.uk/SensitivityGuidance

These two guides are a good example of how we work hand in hand with the teaching community, taking feedback on board and turning it into resources and guidance that make a real difference. We are committed to ensuring teachers and lecturers have everything they need to deliver meaningful learning experiences with confidence.

1 The terminology used reflects our Wave 2 and Wave 3 qualifications. The same principles apply to Wave 1 too, though Wave 1 terminology has not yet aligned with this guidance. These two guides are a good example of how we work hand in hand with the teaching community, taking feedback on board and turning it into resources and guidance that make a real difference. We are committed to ensuring teachers and lecturers have everything they need to deliver meaningful learning experiences with confidence.



> Developed in response to feedback from practitioners and through collaboration with stakeholders across Wales, the new guidance provide practical and accessible support for both teachers and learners. It also supports practitioners in creating safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments.

Delyth Jones
Assistant Director,
Qualification Development





An article by
Richard Harry
Executive Director:
Qualifications and Assessment

The new qualifications giving young people their first real insight into Wales' essential sectors

Wales is building on an education system that values every learner and every pathway. Central to this is designing vocational qualifications that are rigorous, relevant, and genuinely open doors for young people.

As the only awarding body delivering Made-for-Wales GCSEs, Vocational, and Skills-based qualifications within the National 14-16 Qualification Offer, WJEC plays a unique role in turning that vision into reality. Here, Richard Harry, Executive Director: Qualifications and Assessment, reflects on what it takes to design qualifications that truly work for learners, employers, and Wales.

In recent years, the landscape of education in Wales has undergone profound transformation.

At the heart of this shift stands the emergence of a new suite of qualifications: vocational pathways carefully designed to reflect the ambitions of our national curriculum and to give young people meaningful insight into Wales' key sectors.

Our Wave 3 qualifications form part of a Qualifications Wales' reform, and are built to broaden learners' experiences, deepen their understanding of real-world contexts, and help them make informed choices about their futures in an evolving Welsh economy.

Qualifications Wales has approved a range of new Level 1/2 Vocational Certificates of Secondary Education (VCSEs) and Foundation Qualifications developed by WJEC, making it the first awarding body to secure approval under Wave 3 of the National 14-16 qualifications reform, and reinforcing its role in delivering high-quality, Made-for-Wales qualifications aligned to the Curriculum for Wales.

These qualifications will offer greater choice and a broader range of skills and vocational knowledge, complementing traditional GCSEs.

The approved offer includes Level 1 and 2 VCSEs across sectors such as the Built Environment, Creative and Media Production, Technology, Hospitality and Catering, and Travel and Tourism, alongside Entry Level and Level 1 Foundation Qualifications in areas including Cymraeg and Design and Technology. First teaching is scheduled for September 2027.

Designing robust qualifications to support learner progression

As we ready these qualifications for wider adoption, it is important to understand why they matter, and what makes them uniquely valuable, not only for today's learners, but for Wales as a whole.

These qualifications have been designed specifically for Wales, allowing them to align closely with the Curriculum for Wales and with the sectors that learners may ultimately choose to pursue.

They offer young people meaningful insight into real-world working environments, supporting a clearer understanding of how industries operate and the progression opportunities available.

As WJEC, our role is to take the ambitions of the reform programme and turn them into high-quality, practical qualifications that work for schools, colleges, and learners across Wales.

Turning policy into practice through industry partnerships

While Qualifications Wales sets the direction, we design the qualifications themselves: the content, assessment models, bilingual materials, and the support that enables effective teaching.

Our focus is not simply to promote these qualifications, but to shape it through evidence-led development, strong partnerships with industry, and our experience of what delivers real value in the classroom. They must stand confidently alongside traditional academic routes, offering coherent progression and the knowledge and experience learners need for future study and work.

Designing a qualification is not a closed-door exercise; we have engaged with employers, industry bodies and expert organisations, including the Construction Industry Training Board, hospitality partners, and public sector leaders.

In hospitality and catering, for example, learners can gain an embedded Food Safety Hygiene and Allergens Certificate endorsed by the Food Standards Agency, demonstrating that they understand and can apply recognised industry standards.

Partnerships also open doors. By working with industry partners across Wales, we help young people understand the breadth of opportunities available to them within each sector.





What these qualifications offer learners, schools, and Wales

Vocational qualifications have long suffered from outdated perceptions, often seen as second-choice routes.

These qualifications challenge this thinking by showing learners the range of roles, responsibilities, and career paths that exist, from mastering logistics in retail to community engagement in public services or applying creative and technical skills in engineering and catering.

This visibility matters; it helps young people see themselves in these industries and recognise the wider purpose behind their studies. Fundamentally, these qualifications have been designed as part of a coherent educational ecosystem. They do not sit apart from GCSEs, they complement and enrich them.

By offering bilingual delivery across Welsh and English, they support our national commitment to linguistic inclusivity. And, crucially, they have been mapped directly to the Four Purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, ensuring that each learner is equipped not just with technical skill, but with the mindset and capabilities needed for modern life.

Ambition, creativity, ethical citizenship, and personal confidence are woven into the design of every qualification, preparing learners to flourish long after they leave compulsory education. And the benefits extend beyond the classroom. For learners, these qualifications provide confidence, practical abilities, and a sense of direction. For parents and teachers, they offer reassurance that the vocational route is rigorous, credible, and respected. For employers, they represent a pipeline of young people who are workplace-ready, grounded in real experience, and aligned with industry needs.

As Wales continues to reshape its economic priorities, including hospitality, tourism, the foundational economy, digital innovation, and green growth, our qualifications will play an essential role in preparing the workforce of the future.

Responsive, relevant and ambitious qualifications

We also recognise that reform is not a one-off event. Continuous improvement is embedded into the design and implementation of these qualifications. As they roll out, we will draw on feedback, evaluation, and ongoing engagement with sectors and practitioners to ensure these qualifications remain responsive, relevant, and ambitious.

Looking ahead, we want learners to feel empowered by choice, supported by opportunity, and confident that their qualification opens real doors.

And we want Wales to lead, not follow, in designing education that reflects the realities of modern life and the evolving demands of the workplace. We want employers across Wales to recognise and value learners for their resilience, creativity, and readiness to contribute.

These qualifications will help shape a generation ready to thrive in Wales and beyond, equipped with the skills, confidence, and insight to succeed on their own terms.

To learn more about our Wave 3 qualifications, visit

wjec.co.uk/Wave3

Celebrating young Welsh mathematicians:

2025 Bursary recipients

Now in its fourth year, the Gareth Pierce Bursary was established in 2022 in memory of our late Chief Executive, Gareth Pierce.

Each year, the scheme supports undergraduate students studying Mathematics through the medium of Welsh, providing each recipient with a £3,000 bursary. This initiative honours Gareth's passion for mathematics and statistics, as well as his dedicated advocacy for Welsh-medium education.

The Gareth Pierce Bursary continues to grow in popularity, and we are proud to announce our three newest recipients: Tarian Jones and Gruffudd Howell, both studying at Cardiff University and Bailey Powell-McCloy, an undergraduate student at Aberystwyth University.

We hope this bursary will further aid the recipients learning journey and we look forward to witnessing where this will take them.

> "Mum doesn't speak Welsh, but she wanted me and my brother to go to a Welsh-medium school to get new opportunities.
>
> I'm glad that I've been able to continue to use my Welsh at university through my studies, and socially too. Welsh and Maths open so many doors, and the language will certainly be an advantage when I'm applying for jobs in the future."



Bailey Powell-McCloy
from Blaenavon, Torfaen



Find out more at:
wjec.co.uk/GarethPierceBursary

25 years igniting young Welsh talent at **the Innovation Awards**

For 25 years, the Innovation Awards have celebrated Wales' brightest young inventors. This landmark event continues our longstanding partnership with the Welsh Government to discover, showcase and nurture Wales' next generation of innovative thinkers, while honouring the rich legacy of Welsh inventors.

The 25th annual ceremony, held on 18 December 2025 at the iconic Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay, welcomed talented young inventors from across the country to showcase their groundbreaking designs.

A milestone to celebrate

The Innovation Awards are one of the most significant events in our calendar, and it is a real privilege to showcase the remarkable talent emerging from schools across Wales.

The standard of creativity, problem-solving and technical skill on display this year has been exceptional.

As Wales looks to strengthen its position in an increasingly competitive world, the role of design and technology will only grow in importance.

The ideas we have seen in these awards show just how bright the future is.



Ian Morgan
Chief Executive

2025 Award Winners

A Level

1st: Huw Davies,
Ysgol Uwchradd Aberteifi
2nd: Dylan Draper,
St John Baptist Church, Wales High School
3rd: Madison Burgess,
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern

AS Level

1st: Lewis Barnes,
Brynteg Comprehensive School
2nd: Gruffudd Thomas,
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern
3rd: Lucy Moyes,
Ysgol Bro Pedr

GCSE

1st: Henry Farr,
Welshpool High School
2nd: Glesni Rees,
Ysgol Bro Pedr
3rd: Matthew Evans,
Ysgol Bro Preseli

Special Awards

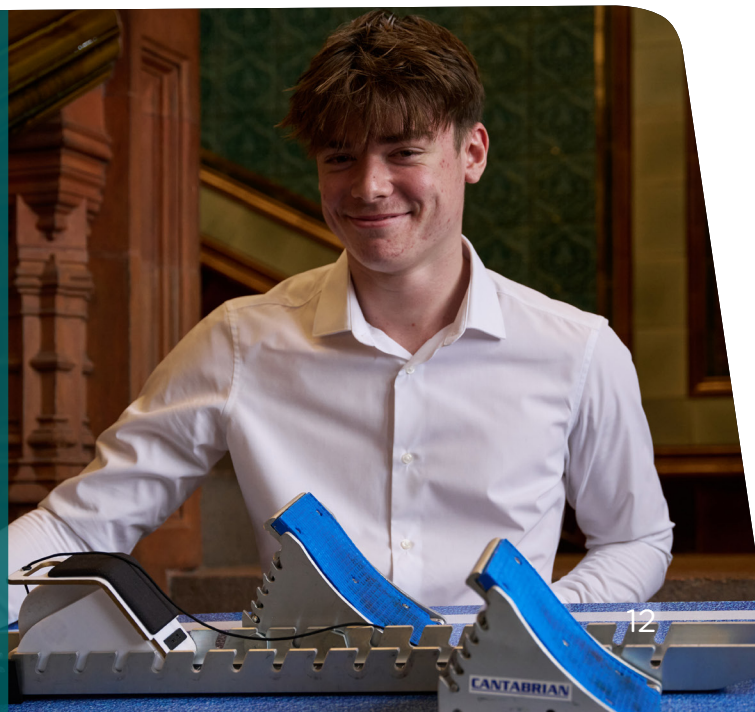
Creativity Prize: Mari Lois Williams,
Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, Pwllheli
Intellectual Property Prize: Tegid Harper,
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg, Bro Edern
Science Prize: Alfie Smith,
Bishop of Llandaff Church Wales High School

"I've made an acceleration tracker for sprinters. It uses a reel from the back of the starting blocks and a speaker to start the athletes off, then tracks their acceleration on an app I designed for the coach's phone. I'm a sprinter myself, so I was inspired by problems I come across in daily training. Winning this award is a real boost — it's going to help with university applications and motivates me with my A-level projects.

I'd like to thank my D&T teacher, Mr Harper, and my parents. That's where the ideas and all the help come from.

Lewis Barnes
Overall Winner, Brynteg Comprehensive School

[Pictured right]



Investing in our people and leaders

At WJEC, we believe that the quality of our qualifications starts with the quality of our people. That belief has shaped our approach to people development over years, and the results speak for themselves.

Investors in People

In 2021, we achieved our Investors in People standard accreditation, a milestone that gave us a strong foundation and a clear framework for growth. By 2024, we progressed to Silver status, placing WJEC among just 22% of organisations worldwide to have reached that standard.

The Investors in People framework is rigorous and wide-ranging. It looks at how well an organisation supports its people to grow, whether individuals feel genuinely valued, and how effectively leadership creates the conditions for everyone to do their best work.

Achieving Silver status means demonstrating consistent, embedded practice across all of those areas, not just in pockets of good intent, but as a reflection of how the organisation actually operates day to day.

In November 2025, we were proud to be named UK Employer of the Year: Silver at the Investors in People Awards. This national recognition now in its 12th year, celebrates organisations that are redefining what it means to be a truly great employer.



Building an inclusive culture

Alongside our Investors in People journey, we have been building something equally important: a culture where fairness and inclusion are embedded in how we work, not simply values we talk about.

This year, that commitment was recognised externally when WJEC was named a finalist in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion category at the HR in Wales Awards. The recognition reflects our work to make recruitment fairer, reduce unconscious bias and attract a wider range of talent.

Since September, we have also been part of an external diversity forum, providing an ongoing opportunity to share ideas, learn from others and bring fresh thinking back into our own approach. We have also established a new Employee Resource Group (ERG), giving colleagues a dedicated space to connect, share experiences and help shape our approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

For anyone considering a future at WJEC, this means joining an organisation where belonging is something we actively build and champion. Dignity and respect are non-negotiable. Bullying, harassment and discrimination have no place here, while accessibility is considered as part of how we work, rather than added as an afterthought.

And this commitment to our people is closely connected to the work we do for learners, schools and colleges. When our people feel supported, valued and able to be themselves, that culture extends into everything we do, from the care that goes into qualification design, to the responsiveness of our support teams and the relationships we build with the education community.

Find out more about us
wjec.co.uk/AboutUs



> It’s fantastic to be externally recognised and to be part of an organisation that truly wants to make positive change.



Elizabeth East
Senior HR Business Partner

Leaders of Trusted Qualifications
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