



Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Statutory INSET in schools

June 2013



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Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2012-2013. The report examines the use of the five statutory days allocated for in-service training (INSET – an acronym for IN-Service Training) in primary, secondary and special schools. The report includes case studies of best practice.

The report is based on evidence from visits to 15 schools, and scrutiny of data and inspection outcomes. Seventy-six schools and nine local authorities returned a questionnaire to Estyn. See Appendix 1 for details.

In schools, the professional development of staff includes a wide range of training. This report focuses on the use of the statutory INSET days. It does not examine other aspects of continuous professional development (CPD) that occur in schools. Previous Estyn reports have focused on many of these aspects of CPD. Appendix 2 includes references to these reports.

The report is intended for the Welsh Government, headteachers and staff in schools and local authorities. It may also be of interest to teacher trainers and to church diocesan education authorities.

Background

An INSET day is one of a series of five days during which staff are trained and pupils do not attend school. Maintained schools must be open to teach pupils for up to 190 days each academic year. Teachers are required to be available to work for 195 days per academic year, which includes the five statutory INSET days.

Research and inspection have identified that the professional development and training of staff are of great importance in the life of schools. Effective professional development and training contribute to the professional and personal development of staff and to improvements in teaching and learning.

The Welsh Government expects schools to use at least one INSET day in 2012-2013 to focus on literacy and numeracy. Schools should also give attention to literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of training and to reducing the impact of poverty on attainment. This focus is intended to help drive school improvement and support the national priorities for education in Wales.

Main findings

- 1 In the most effective schools, the five statutory INSET days are an integral part of a larger strategy for staff development, which involves other strands such as focused task groups, professional learning communities and the production of guidance for wider dissemination among teachers and cluster schools.
- 2 The five statutory INSET days are themselves a valuable period of time that schools dedicate to the professional development of staff. Schools use statutory INSET days to offer training which mostly contributes to school improvement but managers do not monitor systemically its impact on teaching and learning.
- 3 In many of the schools scrutinised in the survey, we found strong links between the focus of the INSET activities and the priorities identified in school self-evaluation reports, improvement plans, and from performance management arrangements.
- 4 INSET programmes cover a wide range of topics, such as assessment and moderation, curriculum development and safeguarding. Over the past five years, literacy has received the most attention during INSET and many schools have focused on improving the teaching and learning of reading and writing.
- 5 In 2012-2013, the Welsh Government expects schools to focus on literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on attainment during their INSET days. Almost all schools intend to use at least one INSET day to focus on literacy. A majority of schools have identified numeracy in their INSET plans. Only a minority of schools have plans to focus on reducing the impact of poverty on attainment in 2012-2013.
- 6 A small minority of schools do not use INSET effectively enough or gain the maximum benefit from the training. In these schools, INSET does not contribute fully to school improvement because it is not linked clearly enough to staff, school or national priorities. Often, there is not enough dissemination of successful INSET practice within and beyond the school. In a very few schools, INSET time is not spent on training, but on inappropriate activities, such as organising classrooms and displays. In the schools where this is the case, INSET days contribute little to the professional development of staff or to school improvement.
- 7 Generally, schools consider carefully which days they choose for INSET, so that they provide suitable opportunities for staff training while also minimising disruption to pupils' learning. Most schools hold an INSET day at the beginning of the school year. It is increasingly common for schools to plan a series of after-school or 'twilight' sessions for staff in lieu of one or two INSET days. These days are then identified as closure days for staff and pupils, often at the end of the summer term.
- 8 In many schools, effective organisation and delivery of INSET contribute well to the professional development of staff. Fewer schools are using external training providers or educational experts to provide INSET than previously. More and more schools make use of in-house provision. This approach makes good use of the expertise of the teaching and support staff and helps to sustain and build capacity for improvement. Many schools also collaborate with other schools to share good practice and the costs of training.

- 9 The leadership and management of INSET itself are good in many schools. In these schools, leaders ensure a coherent approach by linking the INSET to priorities from performance management, self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. As a result, the training makes an effective contribution to the professional development of staff and to school improvement.
- 10 The conditions of pay and service of learning support staff often vary between schools. As a result, not all of these staff attend INSET sessions with teachers. Only in a minority of schools are learning support staff included. In a few schools, support staff are involved in planning and leading INSET, which further develops and makes good use of their professional skills.
- 11 In many schools, there is too little evaluation of the impact of INSET. Often, while some evaluation occurs at the end of the training day, there is no further monitoring of its impact on teaching and learning over time. Few evaluations analyse the impact of the training on pupils' progress and achievement.
- 12 Many local authorities make a good contribution to schools' INSET. They generally provide training of good quality and help schools to network and collaborate with others. Along with schools, a majority of local authorities do not know enough about the impact of INSET. They do not collate enough information about whether INSET leads to improvements in staff knowledge and skills, pupil outcomes, organisational changes or provides value for money.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 focus more on national priorities in INSET activities, such as tackling the impact of poverty on achievement;
- R2 make sure that INSET is linked closely to the priorities identified for school improvement;
- R3 seek ways of involving learning support staff in INSET so that they can contribute fully to school improvement; and
- R4 improve the evaluation of INSET by monitoring its impact on staff performance and pupil outcomes.

Local authorities should:

- R5 support schools in monitoring and evaluating the impact of INSET; and
- R6 collate information about effective INSET and disseminate to all schools.

The Welsh Government should:

- R7 provide guidance to help schools monitor and evaluate the impact of INSET on pupils' performance.

1. The timing of INSET days during the school year

- 13 Generally, school staff give careful consideration to the timing of the five INSET days in order to provide suitable opportunities for staff training and minimise the disruption to pupils' learning. Many schools determine the dates of INSET themselves. In other schools, INSET days are planned in conjunction with the local authority. Schools value the flexibility of being able to determine dates for whole-school training. This flexibility is helpful because it enables schools to choose times that best suit their needs.
- 14 INSET days usually occur in each of the three terms of the school year and commonly around the start of terms. For example, in 2012, a majority of schools held at least one INSET day before pupils returned to school in September. A majority of schools often hold two consecutive INSET days to cover a longer programme of training for staff. A few schools hold INSET days at the end of terms or the school year. INSET days at the end of the school year may be less successful because staff are not able to put the training into immediate effect. In a small minority of schools, INSET days occur during term time, although most schools try to avoid this. Generally, when this happens, it is to accommodate the availability of an external training provider or to share training days with other schools.
- 15 It is increasingly common for a majority of schools to designate after-school or 'twilight' sessions in lieu of one or two of the five INSET days. In practice, this means that schools identify a day when the school will be closed for staff and pupils, usually in the summer. The staff training that would have occurred on this day is held after school over six or seven weeks, often during the autumn and spring terms. After-school sessions commonly last around 60 to 90 minutes. An important consideration for twilight sessions is that there is enough time to cover the training programme. Also, the programme of the training sessions should not place undue burdens on staff after a busy teaching day. Where twilight sessions were held in the schools visited, staff reported that they liked the timing of this training. As it was ongoing throughout the term, they found it particularly helpful when implementing and evaluating new approaches and strategies.
- 16 Many schools usually plan the five INSET days in advance and publish this information at the start of the school year. Around one in seven schools identify several, but not all, INSET days in advance. In a majority of these schools, there are appropriate reasons why advance dates have not been determined, such as waiting for an external training provider to agree a date for training. In a few schools, the lack of advance planning for INSET has led to insufficient preparation for the training, short notice of school closure dates for governors, parents and pupils, and, on rare occasions, lack of take-up of the statutory entitlement to training.
- 17 Increasingly, schools, with the support of local authorities, plan joint closure days so that they can collaborate with others and share the costs of training. This approach provides opportunities to share good practice. Joint closure days are also often helpful to parents with children in both primary and secondary schools. A few local authorities determine school INSET days as part of their arrangements for school improvement. For example, all schools in the Isle of Anglesey County Council and Ceredigion County Council were closed for INSET on the same day in the autumn term in 2012. Staff attended training provided by each authority.

- 18 Many schools and local authorities:
- take good account of the needs of staff and pupils in planning the timing of the training;
 - use the five INSET days to support staff and school improvement;
 - ensure that when twilight sessions are held they provide suitable occasions for supporting professional development; and
 - inform staff, governors, parents and pupils of closure days in a timely manner.

2. The organisation and delivery of INSET

- 19 In many schools, effective organisation and delivery of INSET contribute to the professional development of staff and school improvement. Increasingly, schools use their own staff to lead the training that occurs during INSET days.
- 20 In effective schools, leaders are aware that the most powerful force for change is often their own staff. This is because these staff have an in-depth understanding of the needs of the school, are often recognised as ‘experts’ within and beyond the school and can, therefore, be authoritative and convincing for others. Using in-house provision for training can also help schools to build and sustain their capacity for improvement. However, this approach is not possible in all cases, such as schools in need of special measures or significant improvement, because staff may not have the expertise to provide in-house training for others. These schools often need to draw on external providers for INSET.
- 21 Fewer schools than previously draw regularly on the services of external educational experts or training organisations to provide INSET for their staff. Schools do still use external trainers, such as when staff have purchased new resources from an organisation, including ICT equipment or reading and writing schemes. This change is partly due to the increasing and significant costs of external training providers but also because schools want the training to be very focused on their particular needs. Research and inspection evidence shows that ‘one-off’ training sessions are not always successful enough in changing and improving practice.
- 22 Nevertheless, there are occasions when schools need the contribution of others to act as a catalyst for change or to provide some very specialist training. For example, a school may use a local authority adviser to explain aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum or use an expert to train staff in a special school on specific health and safety matters.
- 23 Local authorities and schools agree that the delivery of INSET is most successful when approaches such as seminars, workshops and demonstration lessons are used to engage staff actively. This view concurs with inspection and research evidence. In many schools approaches to INSET have moved away from lengthy whole-school presentations to shorter sessions covering a range of topics that involve staff actively. Active learning approaches bring benefits for staff in the same way that they do for pupils. Case study 1 below shows how a secondary school uses seminars to provide a dynamic INSET programme for staff.

Case Study 1

Context

Y Pant Comprehensive School, Pontyclun, is an English medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school, maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. There are around 1,250 pupils on roll. Twelve per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 17% for secondary schools.

Strategy

Senior managers place a very strong emphasis on the professional development of all staff. They ensure that staff have access to a wide range of training opportunities, including INSET, external courses, peer observation and departmental review. As a result, there are very good opportunities for staff to develop their professional skills, including preparing for and developing their leadership and management roles. This strategy ensures staff contribute effectively to school improvements.

Action

Each year, senior managers consider the school priorities, individual training needs and suggestions from staff, to plan a wide range of CPD seminars for INSET. Through this process, they provide a programme of twenty CPD seminars. The programme is dynamic, highly professional and recognised as valuable to the school. Staff choose ten seminars from the seminar programme to attend over the academic year in twilight sessions, which are held in lieu of INSET days.

Topics in the INSET programme are wide ranging and have included raising the achievement of boys, the development of leadership and management roles, dyslexia friendly learning, philosophy for children and the effective use of learning support assistants. The approach taken by the school helps to provide a training model that meets the professional needs of staff at different stages of their career. Generally, staff from within the school, including learning support assistants, lead the training sessions. After the training, staff complete an evaluation form, which helps leaders and managers ensure that the programme is relevant and appropriate to school priorities as well as the training needs of staff.

Outcomes

The INSET seminar programme is strongly linked to the school's priorities for improvement. The programme is also clearly linked to the professional needs of staff and provides them with a degree of professional autonomy over aspects of their training. The good opportunities for staff to plan and lead CPD sessions support the development of aspiring leaders. The recent inspection found that there was a very strong culture as a learning community in the school. Inspectors considered that staff were involved in an exceptional range of professional development activities. This work has been influential on the school's performance. In the inspection report on the school, standards and teaching were judged to be excellent.

- 24 Over recent years, an increasing number of schools have worked together on joint INSET days, often leading to the development of professional learning communities. Where schools collaborate with others for INSET, staff benefit from sharing information and good practice. Collaboration between schools can provide substantial benefits for staff and pupils. The following case study shows how a family of schools, comprising a secondary school and its ten partner primary schools, shared INSET to bring about improvements for all.

Case Study 2

Context

Bryngwyn Secondary School is an 11-16, mixed, community school, maintained by Carmarthenshire local authority. It is situated in Dafen, on the north-eastern side of Llanelli, and draws its pupils from parts of the town centre and outlying villages. There are 891 pupils on roll. Nineteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is slightly higher than the national average of 17% for secondary schools.

Strategy

The school values and works closely with its ten partner primary schools. All schools in the Bryngwyn family plan together to decide how to spend the School Effectiveness Grant. One of Bryngwyn School's four directors of learning has a lead role within the family for co-ordinating the spending of the School Effectiveness Grant. A family development plan is produced by the steering committee. The committee includes a representative from each of the partner primary schools. In order to access the funding, the schools work on one or more of the family priority areas agreed in the plan. There is joint INSET, providing opportunities for the schools to work together towards shared aims. The individual improvement plans of schools within the family feed into the overall family plan. Funding is held centrally and administered by the secondary school bursar. All spending applications are agreed by the steering committee where a comprehensive account of spending is maintained.

Action

The family of schools works together to adopt the same literacy programme across all schools. Some of the focus areas for training involve setting up professional learning communities whilst others are activities undertaken by individual schools. In April 2012, the family of schools held a joint INSET day, when staff focused on cross-phase moderation of work and their first learning fair. Stalls were set up in Bryngwyn School hall so that each school could demonstrate how they had worked on the shared aims of the family and the impact they had achieved on their pupils' learning. The work of the professional learning communities established between the schools was also shared at the fair. Local authority representatives, school governors and education publishers and suppliers attended the fair along with staff from all the schools.

Outcomes

The fair provided staff with opportunities to see at first-hand what other schools had been working on and to engage in professional dialogue across different phases.

They were able to share good practice and learn from the experiences of other schools. The information gained from the event is helping these schools to plan the next steps of their joint work on school improvement. In the recent inspection of Bryngwyn Comprehensive School, pupils were judged to make outstanding progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4.

- 25 The conditions of pay and service for learning support staff in schools vary across Wales. Not all of these staff are required or paid to attend INSET sessions in the same way as teachers. In a minority of schools, learning support staff always attend all INSET sessions. In a few of these schools, they provide or contribute to INSET, using and enhancing their professional skills very well. In other schools, leaders and managers determine if learning support staff should attend particular training sessions and pay them accordingly. In a few schools, learning support staff attend INSET voluntarily because they value the training. While learning support staff may benefit from other CPD activities, their lack of involvement in whole-school INSET is likely to inhibit and limit their contribution to school improvement. Case studies 1 and 6 include examples of how these schools involve learning support staff in INSET training.
- 26 In most schools, leaders make governors aware of INSET activities. While many schools often invite governors to attend INSET, governors usually attend one or more INSET activities in only about a quarter of schools. Governors who attend INSET value the insight this provides into aspects of the school's work and the greater knowledge they gain about the school.
- 27 The characteristics of effective organisation and delivery of INSET days, include:
- using the expertise of staff to provide in-house training, which helps to build and sustain capacity for improvement;
 - ensuring that training provided by external organisations and experts is carefully tailored to the specific needs of the school;
 - using approaches for training sessions that involve staff actively, such as seminars, workshops and demonstration lessons;
 - collaborating with other schools so that staff have opportunities to benefit from sharing experiences, expertise and good practice; and
 - seeking ways to involve learning support staff in INSET training.

3. The range of INSET topics and the emphasis on literacy and numeracy

- 28 INSET activities cover a wide range of topics. In many schools, INSET activities are usually linked well to school and national priorities. Generally, these schools use INSET effectively to promote school improvement.
- 29 Over the past five years, literacy has received the most attention during INSET, with many schools focusing on improving the teaching and learning of reading and writing. In 2012-2013, almost all schools intend to focus on literacy for at least one INSET day in line with the Welsh Government's expectations. Often, schools have identified the need to examine the new National Literacy Framework as the focus for their training. Numeracy has not had such a high priority as literacy. However, a majority of schools who responded to the questionnaire identified that numeracy is an area for INSET this year. Of the schools that have identified numeracy as an area for training in 2012-2013, many also have intentions to examine the new National Numeracy Framework.
- 30 The range of school INSET topics beyond literacy and numeracy is varied and extensive. Some INSET topics are specific to the phase of the school, such as outdoor learning in primary schools or INSET on WJEC feedback in secondary schools. However, there are also similar topics covered in all types of schools, including this year:
- safeguarding;
 - bilingualism;
 - developing thinking and questioning skills across the curriculum;
 - behaviour management; and
 - assessment and moderation.
- 31 When schools focus INSET on subjects and areas of learning beyond English, Welsh and mathematics, there is often not enough consideration of how these other areas could promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. By themselves, the subjects of English, Welsh and mathematics cannot do enough to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. INSET provides opportunities for staff to become more aware of the need to utilise all contexts for learning to raise standards of literacy and numeracy.
- 32 In special schools, INSET training also often focuses on important health and safety matters, such as how to lift and restrain pupils safely. Some of these health and safety areas must be repeated each year in order to remain current. The reduction in the number of INSET days, from seven to five this year, has put a strain on the capacity of special schools to provide important health and safety training for all staff as well as training related to other educational improvements.
- 33 For several years, the Annual Reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training have highlighted how excellent schools achieve a very high level of consistency in teaching and learning across their organisations. In high-performing schools, INSET often plays an important role in helping to achieve this consistency.

For example, schools may use INSET to develop a common format for lesson plans and agree whole-school approaches to maximise opportunities to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. Case studies 3 and 4 below show how two schools have used INSET to help them to improve the consistency of teaching and learning in order to raise standards.

Case Study 3

Context

Llangynidr Community Primary School, west of Crickhowell, serves the local community and surrounding villages. There are 112 pupils on roll, including eight full-time nursery children. No pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Strategy

Staff carried out a rigorous analysis of English as a part of self-evaluation. A comparison of family data, showed leaders and managers that while pupils read fluently, higher-order reading skills and reading comprehension needed further development, particularly for more able pupils. Recognising that performance was significantly below the family mean and Powys and Wales' averages, literacy became the school's highest priority for improvement in 2011.

Action

Staff believed that there were differences in the ways that they taught 'guided reading'¹ and wanted to develop a consistent approach throughout the school. An external training organisation was invited to provide training on guided reading during a closure day. The equivalent of two further INSET days were identified as twilight sessions throughout the school year. The school used this time to reinforce the strategy continuously, consider difficulties, and solve issues. Staff videoed their guided reading sessions with pupils and used this evidence to help them to identify strengths and areas for development, as well as to share good practice. The school also agreed that one of the performance management targets for staff would be focused on using guided reading to raise standards.

Outcomes

All staff have developed their teaching skills as a result of the staff INSET on reading. The training was well matched the needs of staff who have used the skills they gained to good effect to raise the standards of pupils' outcomes. In 2012, pupils' performance improved. Ninety-four per cent of children in the Foundation Phase attained the expected outcome (Outcome 5), with 41% attaining Outcome 6, higher than the family average of 32%. In key stage 2, 100% of Year 6 pupils achieved level 4 or better. Sixty-two per cent of pupils achieved level 5+ compared with a family average of 40%. The recent inspection of the school, found a highly effective professional learning community, which focuses appropriately on identified priorities for improving pupil outcomes in reading and writing.

¹ In guided reading, small groups of pupils of similar ability are guided through the text by the teacher. The focus is on developing and practising strategies to cope with unfamiliar text.

Case Study 4

Context

Cynffig Comprehensive School is a co-educational 11-18 community school in Bridgend local authority with approximately 700 pupils on roll. Thirty-one per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is well above the national average of 17% for secondary schools.

Strategy

A key priority of the school is to embed the development of pupils' skills into the school's curriculum framework. Recognising that literacy is central to the success of every pupil, the school's strategy is to provide a rich variety of literacy experiences across all subjects, so that pupils can learn, practice and improve their literacy skills in a wide range of areas.

Action

Senior managers established a literacy focus group who were tasked with producing a literacy toolkit to support staff. The focus group included colleagues from five different subject departments as well as a member of the administrative staff who is a governor of the school.

In devising the toolkit, the focus group drew on Estyn's publications on literacy, particularly the good practice documents on reading and writing. Using these and a range of other materials, the group produced a toolkit that explains how to teach literacy skills across all subject areas. The comprehensive toolkit provides all teachers with information and guidance on how to promote pupils' literacy skills effectively. The toolkit includes:

- the uses and benefits of pre-reading activities in different subject areas;
- how to teach grammar, punctuation and spelling;
- a marking code to ensure consistency across all subject areas;
- information about the six non-fiction text types, identifying language features and success criteria; and
- strategies for staff to use to support weak writers.

The literacy focus group used one of the school's INSET days in January 2012, to introduce the toolkit to all staff. During the day, there were practical workshops that enabled staff to discuss the toolkit and gain skills in teaching literacy.

To make certain that the literacy toolkit becomes a part of everyday teaching and learning, all staff have a generic performance management objective that relates to the use of the toolkit. The Practice Review and Development Records, maintained by individual staff, provide an exemplification of this objective so that staff are clear about how they should promote literacy and use the toolkit in their subject areas.

Outcomes

The school already performs very well in relation to family, local and national averages. In the recent inspection, inspectors judged that pupils' performance was outstanding in key stage 4. The school's literacy toolkit is being used to help maintain these high standards as well as improve the good standards in key stage 3 to the same high level.

- 34 Many schools focus on evaluating pupils' performance during INSET days. For example, they may use an INSET day in September to review the previous year's outcomes as well as to consider how to improve aspects of their work. Leaders and managers may also use INSET time as an opportunity to revisit the school's vision, values and aims, particularly when there are a significant number of new staff or a new leader in the school.
- 35 In general, pupils eligible for free school meals perform significantly less well than those not eligible for free school meals against key performance indicators². However, responses to the questionnaire from schools and local authorities indicate that only a minority of schools commonly use INSET to help them focus on reducing the impact of poverty on attainment. Schools have a key role to play in helping pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve more. Around a third of schools that responded to the questionnaire indicated that they only sometimes or rarely used INSET for these purposes. INSET provides opportunities for schools to develop and improve the skills of staff to better understand and meet pupils' needs and raise standards. For example, one secondary school used an INSET day to analyse a wide range of performance data, identify the barriers to learning for pupils and agree strategies for more effective teaching and learning.
- 36 The following case study shows how INSET helped an infant school to narrow the gap in pupils' performance.

Case Study 5

Context

Ysgol Abercaseg is a Welsh-medium infants' school situated in the village of Bethesda. Pupils come from the village and surrounding area. There are 98 full-time pupils and 23 nursery children who attend on a part-time basis. Almost 70% of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language. Nineteen per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is a little higher than local and national averages.

Strategy

The school has enthusiastically embraced the principles and philosophy of the Foundation Phase. Through INSET and other training activities, senior leaders supported and enhanced the skills of staff to implement the new arrangements. They also used INSET to provide opportunities for parents to attend training and be better informed about the Foundation Phase.

² Estyn, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2011-2012

Action

The school used the expertise of local authority advisers and also the skills of their own staff to provide INSET. The training was focused on the areas that the school had identified for development, including:

- improving the teaching and learning of reading skills;
- developing pupils' practical mathematical skills;
- using information and communications technology to enhance literacy and numeracy;
- developing assessment for learning strategies;
- developing the role of learning support staff; and
- supporting parents.

Outcomes

In lessons, staff make better use of open-ended questioning to extend pupils' understanding and oracy skills. The teaching of reading skills and pupils' use of correct sentence patterns have improved. Overall, more pupils now attain the higher Outcome 6 by seven years-of-age. In 2012, results placed the school in the top quartile and this performance was 30% higher than the family average. In particular, the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals has improved and the gap between their performance and that of other pupils is reducing. In the recent inspection, the school was judged to have high standards of support and training for the professional development of all staff.

- 37 A small minority of schools do not always use INSET time productively. Often, in these schools, the content of the INSET programme is not determined enough by the priorities of the school improvement plan, the individual needs of staff or national priorities. Inspection evidence suggests that in a few schools, INSET time is spent on inappropriate activities, such as organising classrooms and displays. In a very few schools, staff use INSET time at the beginning of each term for planning, which already has dedicated time set aside during the school week. Overall, in these schools, the INSET days do not contribute enough to continuous professional development or school improvement.

4. The leadership and management of INSET

- 38 Overall, INSET events are planned and managed well in many schools. In these schools, there are clear and coherent links between INSET activities and the priorities identified in school improvement plans, and through processes such as performance management and self-evaluation.
- 39 In many schools, the evaluation of INSET tends to focus too much on the quality of the experience and the intended outcomes of the training. Analyses do not focus enough on the impact of the training on pupils' progress and development.
- 40 Local authorities usually make a good contribution to schools' INSET, in particular, helping schools to network and collaborate with others. Along with schools, a majority of local authorities do not know enough about the types of INSET activities that are most successful in bringing about improvements in staff knowledge and skills, organisational changes, value for money and pupil outcomes.
- 41 In many schools, leaders ensure that there are good links and coherence between INSET activities, performance management, self-evaluation and priorities in the school improvement plan. Increasingly, in these schools, learning support staff and governors are also involved with teachers in the training. Schools that have made improvements have integrated systems so that INSET, and other forms of professional development, link naturally with performance management and self-evaluation for all staff.
- 42 The case study below shows how a headteacher in a primary school used INSET as a means of helping staff to refresh their professional confidence and enthusiasm and raise standards.

Case Study 6

Context

St. Mark's Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Church-in-Wales school, on the outskirts of Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire. Around 45% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than the national average. In 2005, just after the current headteacher had been appointed, an inspection found that pupils' standards of achievement were widely variable across the school. Pupils' attainment was often well below their capabilities and national expectations. The school had made insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

Strategy

Following the inspection, the headteacher recognised the need for staff to rediscover their professional confidence and enthusiasm and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, staff development has been given a very high priority in the school. INSET became a crucial means of providing whole-school staff development.

Action

Senior managers made certain that rigorous processes of self-evaluation were put into place, to identify accurately the school's improvement priorities and staff training needs. The school improvement plan and targets for performance management were closely aligned so that there was a co-ordinated and coherent process that would impact directly on standards and quality. Learning support assistants, as well as teaching staff, were involved in the training and took responsibility for preparing and delivering some of the school's INSET programme. This approach has helped the school to build and sustain capacity for improvement.

Outcomes

Teaching and support staff have gained a wide range of professional skills. They have a keen appreciation of how good INSET can improve the quality of their work and help pupils achieve more. The recent inspection of the school recognised that the school provides very good opportunities to develop staff expertise in areas of the curriculum, which is having a very good impact on standards in the school, for example, in literacy. Staff have been invited by the local authority to share their practice with other schools.

- 43 Schools judged to be adequate or unsatisfactory in inspections usually have weaknesses in leadership, performance management, self-evaluation and training for professional development, including INSET. These schools may have no clear links between staff training and the school's priorities or performance management targets. In the worse cases, staff are left to plan INSET for themselves.
- 44 Local authorities usually make a good contribution to schools' INSET, including advising schools on the focus and range of training as well as delivering INSET training themselves. They play a particularly important role in facilitating networking and collaboration between schools.
- 45 Too few schools do enough to evaluate the impact of INSET. In particular, they do not have a clear enough focus on success criteria in terms of the gains that may be expected in pupils' performance. Evaluation of the training is often confined to the end of the training day or soon after. There is not enough monitoring of the impact of INSET over time. The evaluation of INSET by schools often focuses more on the quality of the training experience and the intended outcomes of the training, such as producing new curriculum plans. There is not enough emphasis on the impact of the training on pupils' progress and development. Other Estyn reports on staff training, referred to in Appendix 2, have identified similar weaknesses in the way that schools monitor and evaluate their professional development.
- 46 In the best practice, the intended outcomes of INSET are clear in the initial planning of training activities, and plans show how, when and by whom monitoring and evaluation will be conducted. The advantages to identifying the intended impact of INSET on teaching and learning are:
- ensuring professional development focuses on what matters;
 - staff having a clear understanding of what they are aiming to achieve; and
 - leaders being well placed to evaluate the effectiveness of the impact of INSET, as they know from the outset what outcomes are intended.

Case study 7 below shows how a primary school evaluates INSET to help leaders and managers judge the impact on teaching and learning.

Case Study 7

Context

Ynysddu Primary School is a small primary school situated south of the town of Blackwood. There are currently 94 full-time equivalent pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11. Around 35% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is well above local and national averages.

Strategy

Since the headteacher's appointment in 2009, there has been a strong focus on continuous professional development, including developing distributed leadership in the school. There are very clear and strong links between school policies, performance management, staff training, the INSET programme and the school improvement plan.

Action

All staff evaluate the training they receive. They maintain a reflective learning log, which examines the short and long-term benefits of training and its impact on their practice and pupils' achievements. For example, last year, the school held INSET sessions on the stylistic features of diary writing. At the end of the year, staff evaluated their confidence and competence in teaching this genre. Senior managers used these learning logs and other information to evaluate INSET in terms of the impact on:

- staff knowledge, skills and performance; and
- school improvement, including raising standards of literacy.

They produced a report, which synthesises their findings and identifies further INSET training for staff.

Outcomes

An analysis of samples of pupils' diary writing confirmed that pupils have improved their writing. There is also greater accuracy and consistency in teachers' assessments. The recent inspection judged that rising standards indicate that innovations introduced by leaders are having a significant impact on pupils' performance.

- 47 As for schools, a majority of local authorities do not know enough about the impact of INSET. They do not collate enough information from schools about the effects of training and they often have limited information on aspects such as value for money.

- 48 Information from INSET sessions is not disseminated fully in a majority of schools. Sharing information about what works best to improve teaching and learning, is important for school improvement. The following case study shows how a special school found an innovative way to share information across the school.

Case Study 8

Context

Ty Gwyn School is a local authority maintained special school in the Ely area of Cardiff, for children and young people aged 3 – 19 years who have profound or multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils are also on the autistic spectrum. Currently there are 120 pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of having their needs assessed. Thirty-two per cent of pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. This is lower than the national average of 43% for special schools.

Strategy

Senior managers give staff opportunities to acquire and further their specialist skills as well as reflect on and share the most effective practice. They use occasions such as INSET days to build a strong culture of professional development throughout the school. In addition, highly effective networks of professional practice within and beyond the school focus on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Action

In order to share good practice even more effectively, the headteacher has recently introduced a 'Learning and Teaching Journal' for staff. This journal is published by the school on several occasions during each half-term. The content of the journal is wide-ranging and typically includes:

- feedback from INSET, training courses and visits to other schools with an analysis of the benefits for teaching and learning;
- current research articles relevant to the education of pupils with complex learning difficulties;
- references to Welsh Government documents, such as health and safety guidelines; and
- examples of excellent practice.

Outcomes

The school's systematic and thorough approach to continuing professional development, including INSET, enables all staff to have access to well-planned opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. As a result, the school provides pupils with highly personalised and appropriate learning experiences. The recent inspection judged that nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve very good standards in relation to their abilities and personal targets.

- 49 Where there is effective leadership and management of INSET, schools have:
- clear and coherent links between INSET activities and the priorities identified in school improvement plans;
 - taken good account of national priorities so that INSET supports the drive for school improvement;
 - made good use of a wide range of evidence to identify staff development needs and effective use of INSET to support this development;
 - ensured processes such as performance management and self-evaluation link closely to INSET training;
 - made certain there is clarity about the intended outcomes of INSET so that the effects can be monitored, evaluated and disseminated widely; and
 - a keen awareness of effective INSET provision, which leads to significant changes in practice and improvements in standards, as well as those that provide good value for money.

5. The impact of INSET on school improvement and standards

- 50 Causal links between INSET and improvements in pupils' standards are often difficult to establish, but evidence that high-quality INSET contributes to a more skilled and effective workforce is easier to ascertain. As the quality of teaching is one of the greatest influences on pupils' standards, INSET can be significant in helping schools to bring about improvements. By supporting the development of the professional skills of staff, INSET plays a key role in ensuring that they operate effectively in school settings.
- 51 The most effective schools ensure that INSET is integrated with the wider CPD programme that occurs for staff. This maximises the way that the training can contribute fully to school improvement and improvements in standards.
- 52 The following case study, illustrates how a secondary school used INSET to bring about improvements in teaching that have widened pupils' access to the curriculum.

Case Study 9

Context

Flint High School serves the town of Flint and the surrounding area. Around 17% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is the same as the average for Wales. There are around 660 pupils on roll. In 2010, reading tests showed that around 55% of pupils entering the school had reading ages that were below their chronological age. While the school already had good provision for pupils with additional learning needs, senior managers recognised that a broad group of pupils were in urgent need of literacy support.

Strategy

In 2010-2011, senior managers chose to use an INSET day to launch the school's literacy intervention strategy and inform and enthuse all staff about the need to teach reading. Presentations on the outcomes of the reading test data for Year 7 pupils provided staff with information about:

- pupils with a reading age below the level of functional literacy (9.5 years);
- pupils with a reading age more than six months below their chronological age;
- pupils with a reading age within six months of their chronological age; and
- pupils with a reading age above their chronological age.

This information enabled staff to better understand why some pupils could not access subject materials. During the day, staff were also shown an example of a successful shared reading programme from the science department, which together with the reading test data, provided powerful evidence that convinced staff that everyone could and should support pupils' reading improvement.

Action

After staff had been shown **why** they needed to support the development of pupils' reading skills, subsequent INSET days were used to show them **how** to teach reading skills. The training covered strategies such as skimming and scanning, breaking down words to decode complex subject vocabulary and using the context, tables, pictures and other cues to help comprehension.

The findings from the reading test data also led to significant curriculum and timetable changes in the school. A dedicated literacy time was introduced for around half of Year 7 pupils. Previously in three classes, these pupils were organised into five smaller teaching groups staffed by learning support assistants and teachers.

Outcomes

Whole-school INSET sessions helped to inform and inspire staff and make the school's literacy strategy successful. The training during INSET days gave staff the skills needed to drive change and bring about improvement in pupils' reading skills. When pupils were tested at the end of the year, there was demonstrable improvement in their test scores. While one group of pupils continues to need additional literacy support, the other four groups have gained sufficient skills to access the curriculum competently.

53 INSET impacts on school improvement and pupils' standards, most effectively when:

- the dedicated training time for staff is used fully and is focused clearly on school and national priorities;
- it forms an integral part of the wider CPD programme for staff;
- it is incorporated with school improvement planning;
- the training is used to bring about significant changes in practice;
- staff update their professional knowledge and skills;

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- staff broaden and enrich their teaching and leadership skills;
- there is support for and challenge to the way staff work;
- the dissemination of good practice is shared within and between schools;
- there are opportunities for schools to collaborate as professional learning communities and network with others; and
- staff gain greater job satisfaction as a result of the training.

Appendix 1

Evidence base

This report is based on evidence from visits to a sample of schools, scrutiny of data and inspection outcomes of schools from 2010-2012. Seventy-six schools and nine local authorities returned a questionnaire to Estyn. An analysis was also made of recent and relevant research and Estyn publications.

The sample of 15 schools visited included English and Welsh-medium schools in rural and urban areas. Visits also took place to two local authorities. The schools and local authorities visited were:

- Brynwyn Secondary School, Carmarthen;
- Carmarthenshire County Council;
- Comins Coch Primary School, Ceredigion
- Cynffig Comprehensive School, Bridgend
- Flint High School, Flintshire;
- Gowerton Primary School, Swansea
- Greenfield Special School, Merthyr Tydfil;
- Llangynidr Primary School, Powys;
- Milton Junior School, Newport;
- St Mark's VA Primary School, Pembrokeshire;
- Ty Gwyn Special School, Cardiff;
- Wrexham County Council;
- Y Pant Comprehensive School, Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Ysgol Abercaseg, Gwynedd;
- YGG Cwm Garw, Bridgend;
- Ysgol Gymraeg Gyfun Gwyr, Swansea; and
- Ysgol Tan-yr-Eos, Cardiff.

The schools and local authorities that responded to the questionnaire were:

- Abertysswg Primary School
- Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School
- Barker's Lane Community Primary School
- Bishopston Comprehensive School
- Bryngwyn Primary School
- Brynllwarch Hall School
- Capcoch Primary School
- Cardiff County Council
- Castell Alun High School
- Cefn Mawr Primary School
- Ceiriog Valley Federation
- Ceredigion County Council
- Christchurch Primary School
- Cogan Nursery School

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- Cogan Primary School
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Copperworks Infant and Nursery School
- Cornist Park Primary School
- Court Special School
- Cyfartha High School
- Cyfartha Junior School
- Drury Primary School
- Ewloe Green Primary School
- Glanhwy Primary School
- George Street Primary School
- Georgetown Primary School
- Gwynedd Council
- Harwarden High School
- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Llandrindod High School
- Llangynwyd Primary School
- Llanilltud Fawr Primary School
- Llswerry High School
- Maesglas Primary and Nursery School
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- Milford Haven Junior School
- Monkton Priory Primary School
- Morryston Comprehensive School
- Morryston Primary School
- Olchfa Secondary School
- Porth Infants School
- Portfield Special School
- Powys County Council
- Risca Comprehensive School
- Swansea County Council
- Pembroke Primary School
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Penglais Comprehensive School
- Pentrechwyth Primary School
- Radyr Primary School
- St Christopher's School
- St Cyres Comprehensive School
- The Meads Infant and Nursery School
- Undy Primary School
- West Monmouth Comprehensive School
- Woodlands Community Primary School
- Y Bont Faen Primary School
- Ysgol Bodfeurig
- Ysgol Bro Ddyfi
- Ysgol Bro Gwydir
- Ysgol Bryn Celynnog

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- Ysgol Bryn Collen
- Ysgol Cedewain
- Ysgol Cefn Coch
- Ysgol Crug Glas
- Ysgol Clywedog
- Ysgol Cynwyd Sant
- Ysgol Dyffryn
- Ysgol Erw'r Delyn
- Ysgol Gymuned Llanfechell
- Ysgol Gwynedd
- Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin
- Ysgol G Aberaeron
- Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydaman
- Ysgol Heol Goffa
- Ysgol John Bright
- Ysgol Maes Y Coed
- Ysgol Maes Y Mynydd
- Ysgol Merlyn
- Ysgol Tregarth
- Ysgol Tre-gib
- Ysgol Trefferthyr
- Ysgol Ty Coch
- Ysgol Uwchradd Caereinion
- Ysgol y Berwyn
- Ysgol Y Bont
- Ysgol Y Castell

Appendix 2

References

Estyn publications

- Annual Report 2011-2012 (Estyn, 2013)
- Annual Report 2010-2011 (Estyn, 2012)
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- How linkages can be improved between CPD, school development plans, performance management and raising standards (Estyn, 2005)
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Other publications and research

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