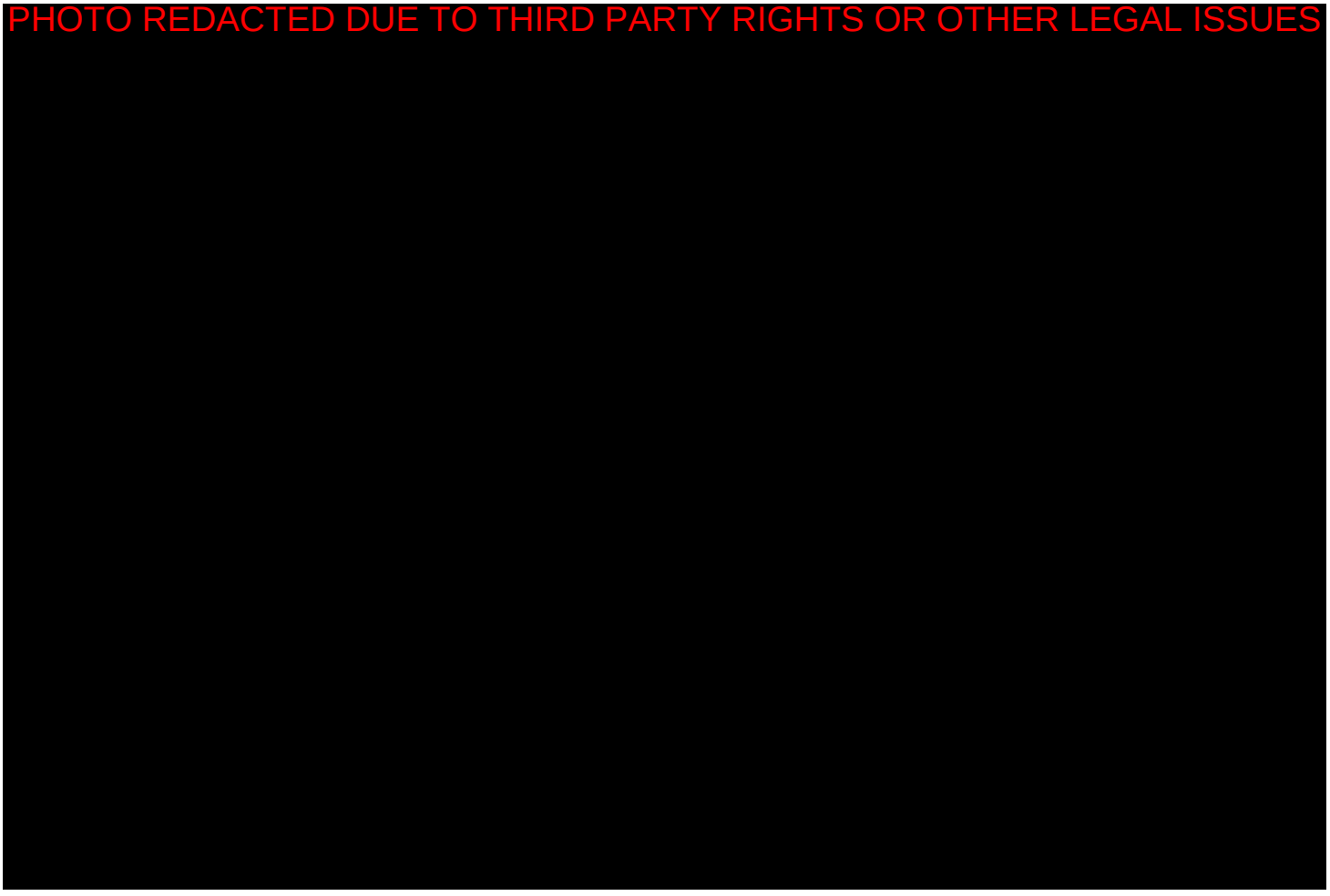
Estyn

estyn.llyw.cymru
estyn.gov.wales

Summary of findings from our national thematic reviews

for 2016



The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- primary schools
- secondary schools
- special schools
- pupil referral units
- independent schools
- further education
- independent specialist colleges
- adult community learning
- local authority education services for children and young people
- teacher education and training
- Welsh for adults
- work-based learning
- learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others
- makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to walespublications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

Foreword

I hope that you will find this compendium, and the full set of reports on which it is based, informative and relevant. Estyn's thematic reports in 2016 cover a range of important aspects of education and training in Wales. They report on standards and provision across a range of education sectors and themes, including modern foreign languages, the validation and moderation of teacher assessment, as well as national reviews of the quality of education and training in adult health and social care and adult community learning.

Estyn works closely with Welsh Government officials to plan the programme of thematic reports that is requested in the annual remit letter to HMCI from the Cabinet Secretary. This programme takes into account the key priorities of the Welsh Government and this year included surveys with case studies of practice in developing pupil participation, leadership and primary school improvement, and creative arts in secondary schools.

Estyn's thematic reports address matters that are of central concern to policy-makers. In 2016, we published three surveys relating to progress of groups of vulnerable learners: mapping provision of those learners educated other than at school, raising the ambitions and attainment of looked after pupils, and learner progress and destinations in independent specialist colleges.

Our reports are intended to contribute to wider thinking and to current debates in policy areas such as planning for the new 3-16 curriculum, as well as sharing case studies of practice across all sectors. The forthcoming programme of thematic reports during 2017 promises to be equally relevant with reviews underway focused on curriculum areas such as science and design technology at key stage 2, humanities at key stage 2 and key stage 3, as well as topics on healthy relationships, financial education, and play and active learning in Year 1 and Year 2.

We hope that our thematic reports are being used widely by providers to improve their practice and enhance outcomes for learners in Wales. This compendium of all the thematic reports published so far this year brings together main findings and recommendations from each report for easy reference. The full reports, including case studies, are available on our website: http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/thematic-reports

Meilyr Rowlands
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Contents Page

Title: The impact of the Additional Training Graduate Programme (Teach First) in Wales

Main findings

1 Around half of the Additional Training Graduate Programme (ATGP) participants achieve good standards and a few excellent standards. Many participants make good progress in their teaching, but too few achieve their potential of becoming excellent teachers. A few participants do not complete the programme successfully and do not achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

2 Most participants display very good professional values and attitudes and establish effective relationships with teachers and pupils. They are highly motivated to improve their teaching, are reflective and make valuable links between educational theory and classroom practice. For example, they use their research into tackling poverty in schools to identify approaches to support disadvantaged pupils.

3 Many participants set very high expectations for themselves. In a minority of cases, participants experience difficulties in managing deadlines for lesson planning and for assignments, and this has a negative impact on their health and wellbeing.

4 Most participants have good subject knowledge, and nearly all participants plan lessons thoroughly. Many use a wide range of often innovative teaching strategies. However, around half of participants do not consider carefully enough how best to teach the skills, knowledge and understanding of their subject.

5 Many of the participants who achieved QTS were still in teaching posts in September 2015, two years after starting the ATGP programme, but only a minority are teaching in Wales.

6 The university-based training (‘summer institute’) provides participants with a wide range of useful experiences to start to develop their knowledge and understanding of teaching. Written assignments give participants valuable opportunities to explore educational theory and to make useful links to their teaching. Tutors’ marking generally gives participants helpful formative feedback.

7 In the school-based training, most mentors support participants to be creative in their planning. However, around half of mentors give participants feedback on their teaching that is too generous or too superficial and not sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils make in lessons as a measure of successful teaching. These mentors do not provide participants with challenging enough targets and this limits participants’ ability to achieve more highly.

8 In a few schools, subject departments do not have the capacity to support participants effectively. In these weaker departments, mentors do not monitor pupils’ work carefully enough. As they do not identify weaknesses in their own practice, they are not able to improve aspects of the participants’ teaching.

9 Participants find the first few weeks in their schools very demanding. There is too much variability in participants' first experiences of teaching in their placement schools, and this means that participants do not make enough progress in the first term of teaching. A few schools have developed approaches to mentoring that support participants well in the first few weeks of taking up their post, and this has had a positive impact on participants' confidence, progress and wellbeing.

10 A majority of schools report that the participants have brought new ideas to the department in which they work. A minority of schools say that their participants have had a positive impact on the attitudes and performance of some small groups of pupils in the classes that they teach. A few departments have found that participants challenge established practice and bring new ideas to teaching and schemes of work.

11 In a majority of departments, where participants have taught for two years, pupils' performance at GCSE has improved. However, it is difficult to attribute these improvements directly to the school's partnership with the ATGP programme. The evidence is not robust enough to show that the ATGP programme has made a positive impact on schools, departments or pupils.

12 Programme leaders have gathered a wide range of evidence to inform self-evaluation processes, including the views of participants and partner schools. Programme leaders have improved communications with schools, and developed the programme team, the programme content, and mentor training and guidance well. However, self-evaluation does not focus well enough on the training in school, and this has limited the improvement of mentors' assessment. Schools are unsure as to how to evaluate the impact of the ATGP programme and this limits their ability to plan sustainable strategies to improve outcomes for pupils.

Recommendations

To strengthen the ATGP and other routes into teaching, the Welsh Government should:

R1 Ensure that teacher training providers in Wales help trainees to develop the most effective pedagogies for their subject and phase

R2 Consider strategies to improve the quality of mentoring in schools, to enable trainee teachers to make good progress and to achieve their potential

R3 Ensure that all programmes for initial teacher training support trainee teachers effectively in the first few weeks of teaching

R4 Improve the collection of data in initial teacher training to evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes

Title: Learner progress and destinations in independent specialist colleges

Main findings

1 There are six independent specialist colleges (ISCs) in Wales that provide education for learners from 16 years of age who have a range of learning difficulties and disabilities. Learners' educational placements at ISCs are funded directly by the Welsh Government.

2 In four of the six ISCs, pre-entry assessment of learners is well defined with clear aims and objectives. The assessments are purposeful with a strong focus on making sure that the provision will be the best placement for the learner. Four ISCs clearly list the information they require in advance of the learner's placement. They use this information well to make sure that education and care facilities are appropriate and to help the learner to settle quickly. There is a strong emphasis on obtaining a thorough understanding of any barriers to learning and also the areas of learning that learners particularly enjoy. However, too often, ISCs do not receive the full range of information they need before the learner starts.

3 Four of the ISCs encourage learners to visit the ISC in advance of their placement as part of their pre-entry assessment and use the visits to verify the information they have previously gathered. In one ISC, learners undertake a three-day visit while staying at the residential accommodation. This visit fulfils valuable purposes for the provider and the learner is informally assessed by education and residential staff.

4 Most ISCs use a wide range of data to measure learner progress. They use pre-entry and baseline assessments of skills from which to measure progress and record these well using commercial data packages. Nearly all ISCs use these pre-entry and skills baseline assessments to set targets on individual learning plans (ILPs). However, a majority of ILPs, across nearly all providers, do not have targets for small steps of learning or a clear focus on the learner's desired destination. Staff in two ISCs use learners' ILPs well to inform their planning and delivery of lessons.

5 Four ISCs are making good progress in expanding their use of data. Their data now goes beyond achievement of qualifications and units of credit to include broader skills and learner progress against ILP targets. They supplement the formal assessments with teachers' and care managers' knowledge and expertise. For example, they establish how well a learner can cope with personal hygiene or choose what to wear to suit the weather. However, many ISCs do not make sufficient use of staff expertise and specialists to establish learners' skills baseline starting points in areas such as communication and behaviour.

6 The colleges that set robust learner targets also have better data on learner progress. Four ISCs review learner progress against ILP targets at least weekly. However, in two ISCs reviews are not robust enough and learner progress is difficult to identify or measure. These ISCs are also unable to collate enough information to meet Welsh Government requirements.

7 One of the most important methods ISCs use for measuring learner progress and capturing data is individual learning plans (ILPs). The most effective ILPs:

- set a clear direction for the learner that helps them to move towards their future aspirations
- include short-term, medium-term and long-term targets
- include the learner's preferred or likely destination
- plan short steps of learning for the learner to achieve a positive outcome
- take good account of the full range of skills the learner needs to develop

8 A majority of the ISCs offer a broad range of learning programmes including agriculture, horticulture, wood crafts and catering. Most ISCs plan programmes of learning that are tailored to meet the needs of individual learners. Most of these programmes contain a good balance between work and leisure activities and many include appropriate opportunities for physical exercise. Nearly all ISCs review their learning programmes termly to make sure that they remain relevant to the learner. However, learning programmes do not take enough account of learners' desired destinations or possible future employment opportunities.

9 In general, ISCs do not strike the right balance between the number of qualifications a learner takes and their general skills development. Many ISCs rely too much on qualifications and certificates of learning as a means of assessing and measuring learner progress.

10 All ISCs use a range of baseline assessments to identify the literacy and numeracy skills learners need to develop. They use these assessments well to set literacy and numeracy targets on ILPs. Most teach literacy and numeracy skills through contexts that the learners can relate to easily. However, a few of these targets are too general. This means that they are difficult to achieve and progress against them cannot be measured easily. In a few colleges, there is an over-reliance on worksheets in skills classes.

11 All ISCs have a clear focus on developing learners' independence and life skills. They make the most of opportunities for learners to develop their social skills and they encourage learners to take responsibility for areas relevant to independent living such as managing their money. However, although there is anecdotal evidence to support learner progress in these areas, ISCs do not set targets, assess progress and record evidence of this learning that could help them evaluate the effectiveness of their work and meet Welsh Government requirements.

12 Many learners across all ISCs benefit from work experience opportunities. These are effective in helping learners to improve their employability, self-confidence and self-esteem. However, tracking the value of work experience is underdeveloped and many work placements are not specific enough to the learners' desired destinations.

13 Learners move from ISCs to a range of destinations that include further education, higher education or employment. A few move to supported living or to independent living. A minority, from residential colleges, move back to live with their parents. Most ISCs plan well for learners' transition out of college once their preferred destination is established. However, arrangements for transition out of college are based too often on what is available rather than where the learner would wish to be.

14 In two ISCs, most learners achieve the destination of their choice. However, around a half of learners in ISCs do not have secure destination goals when they start their course. For a minority of learners, there is a delay in finding a suitable destination placement. Communication between stakeholders is slow and delays occur where there have been changes of social worker or where learners are from a different local authority to the site of the ISC.

Recommendations

Independent specialist colleges should:

R1 Make sure all pre-entry assessments are relevant to learners' full range of needs including communication and behaviour

R2 Make sure all ILPs:

- recognise the learners' desired destination
- briefly identify short, medium and long-term measurable targets and set out plans to achieve these targets
- are regularly reviewed

R3 Develop clear processes to set targets, and to assess, track, monitor and evaluate learner progress in independence skills

R4 Develop processes to measure the value and outcomes of work experience

R5 Reduce the reliance on generic worksheets to teach literacy and numeracy skills

Local authorities should:

R6 Co-ordinate the information that travels with learners between providers and at transition points

R7 Make sure that plans and processes for learner destinations beyond the ISC are in place early enough for there to be a positive outcome and a smooth transition

The Welsh Government should:

R8 Review the information requested from ISCs to make sure that it is clear and specific and includes a focus on learner progress and the learner's desired destination, as well as achievement of qualifications

Title: The quality of education and training in adult health and social care

Main findings

1 There has been an increase in the numbers of learners undertaking training for working in the adult health and social care sector in work based learning and further education providers. However, there is a variable picture of completion, attainment and success rates across the diploma levels in both types of provider.

2 Learners' progression through the levels of qualification is dependent on the nature of job roles and the willingness of an employer to provide opportunities for learners to gain experience, receive training and coaching, and be assessed for a higher qualification. As the role of a care worker is busy and demanding, circumstances at work are often not conducive to extra training and, as a result, progression is often difficult.

3 Most providers work well with employers to ensure that teaching takes place at times to suit both the employer and the learner. In the best instances, learners' needs are met by flexible approaches to delivery and assessment, such as evening and weekend visits by assessors that accommodate shift patterns.

4 The teaching of person centred approaches at all levels is ineffective in the majority of cases. The standard of learner work within their portfolios is too varied, and learners at all levels are only vaguely able to describe person centred approaches and their value within a care setting. About half of learners are unable to give a knowledgeable definition of person centred approaches, in their portfolios or when questioned, although assessors had still signed off the unit as acceptable.

5 Staff working in care settings need a good level of literacy and numeracy skills in order to understand and convey instructions, write reports and give medication. They also need to communicate effectively both orally and in writing with colleagues and people receiving care.

6 Providers carry out initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills for all learners studying for more than five hours a week. Learners are occasionally given extra specialist support, but assessors' correction of grammatical errors in coursework is patchy and they often miss opportunities to use these written examples to help learners improve their literacy skills. In a few cases, assessors do not have good enough levels of literacy and numeracy skills themselves. Although many learners at level 5 have very good practical skills, initial assessments show that their levels of literacy and numeracy are too low for them to carry out management roles effectively.

7 Providers use a broad range of methods to assess technical skills, support each learner and meet their individual needs. In a few cases, the assessor's questioning is not rigorous enough to ensure that learners have a good grasp of underpinning knowledge. In a few cases, assessors encourage people receiving care to be involved in feedback to learners. They then use this feedback to support assessment and to plan further training for the learner.

8 Across all further education and work-based learning providers visited, the standard of work observed in portfolios varied too much. Written feedback from assessors in learners' portfolios is too variable.

9 In work-based learning, many assessors visit learners regularly and keep in contact with their learners between visits via text, email and telephone. A few visits concentrate too much on completion of work-based learning paperwork, receiving written work and setting targets for the next visit. In these cases, there is not enough discussion or testing of knowledge.

10 The majority of providers promote Welsh language skills and the culture of Wales positively. Learners who speak Welsh are encouraged to use Welsh when speaking with service users whose first language is Welsh, but there is no consistency of approach. There is no data collected or analysed about the number of learners who train in Welsh or evidence of impact of this on the workforce. A majority of learners are offered the opportunity either to undertake their diploma entirely through the medium of Welsh or to complete their training and portfolios in English but be assessed through the medium of Welsh. In reality, these options are not always possible due to a lack of Welsh language materials and Welsh-speaking tutors and assessors.

11 Employers are generally happy with the knowledge and ability of trainers and assessors from further education and work-based learning providers when they are delivering level 2 and level 3 qualifications. However, in a few of the care homes visited, managers complained that the poor level of knowledge of trainers and assessors was contributing to an acceptance of low standards when observing and assessing learners' work.

12 At level 5, there are some examples of poor training and assessor knowledge. In a few cases, assessors' qualifications are at a level below the qualification they are helping learners to achieve.

13 Many providers use staff development budgets and workforce development plans well to ensure that trainers and assessors for level 2 and level 3 are qualified to the appropriate level. Where providers' staff are also working in the sector, many providers use the knowledge and recent experience of these staff to good effect during in-house training events. However, a few assessors for level 5 courses do not have the relevant training or experience.

14 Caseloads for assessors vary greatly and this can result in infrequent visits to learners. Such infrequency of visits means that learners do not get the support they need to progress in their learning. A significant number of assessors believe that their caseloads are too large and that they are under pressure from providers to complete qualifications with their learners in as short a time as possible.

15 In many cases, service level agreements between the learner, assessor and employer are not effective and providers do not take advantage of the skills and experience of employers or involve employers closely enough with the on-the-job learning and assessment.

Recommendations

Providers should:

R1 Improve learners' understanding of person centred approaches and the teaching and assessment of these approaches

R2 Improve learners' literacy and numeracy and the support, assessment and action plans for these skills

R3 Ensure that assessors have manageable workloads so that their visits to trainees are frequent and long enough

R4 Make sure that assessors have knowledge and skills at suitable levels to support learners fully

R5 Improve service level agreements with employers and involve employers more in the training and assessment of learners

The Welsh Government should:

R6 Support providers to improve assessment practices and the training and competency of assessors by working with employers, the Education Workforce Council, ColegauCymru and the National Training Federation for Wales to provide professional development events

R7 Improve the collection of data on the destination of learners

Title: Education other than at school

Main findings

1 Overall, Education other than at school (EOTAS) provision does not give pupils the same access to their education entitlements as their peers. A minority of pupils have to wait for more than 15 days to access provision, receive a restricted curriculum, or follow courses that are not challenging enough.

2 Pupils receiving EOTAS do not usually have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that enables them to gain qualifications that meet their needs and potential. Only a very few pupils are taught by subject specialists. A lack of resources and facilities for subjects such as science limits the curriculum for too many of these pupils. This shortfall means that pupils miss out on important aspects of education, which can impact on their future chances of employment and training.

3 Pupils receiving EOTAS do not always receive the full-time education (usually 25 hours a week) to which they are entitled. Most pupils for whom local authorities provide home tuition are educated for a maximum of 10 hours a week. They then follow a restricted curriculum because there is not enough time to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Many of these pupils have had extended periods of school-based intervention and support through a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) to help them manage their behaviour.

4 Pupils who have previously been attending Welsh-medium schools have extremely limited opportunities to continue their learning in Welsh when they start EOTAS. When providers recruit staff to work with these pupils, they do not always recruit qualified teachers.

5 Pupils with additional learning needs do not often receive the specialist support they need, even when this is set out in a statement of special educational needs. They do not consistently receive the specialist multi-agency support they need.

6 Nearly all pupils who receive EOTAS in Years 10 and 11 remain in EOTAS for the rest of their school career. They rarely re-integrate into school.

7 For many pupils, EOTAS provides them with a second chance to succeed. Many pupils' attendance improves and they are more motivated to learn because they have interesting learning experiences.

8 Many pupils who receive EOTAS study vocational courses. These experiences often motivate pupils to do well. They learn the skills needed to access further training or work. They gain qualifications that are relevant to the area of work they wish to pursue.

9 Many pupils develop good relationships with staff. They appreciate staff understanding the difficulties they experience. Over time, these relationships help to support pupils to improve their behaviour.

10 Very few pupils continue to be friends with pupils from their mainstream schools. They develop new friends in EOTAS, but these pupils often do not live nearby and it is difficult to meet up with them outside of school time.

11 Nearly all local authorities experience difficulties ensuring that pupils receiving EOTAS access the expertise of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Staff do not get the specialist advice and guidance they need to support pupils' needs.

12 Overall, local authorities' referral processes for learners to gain access to EOTAS are unclear and not well understood. In most local authorities, these processes do not make sure that assessment and other information is transferred promptly from school to the EOTAS provider.

13 Across Wales, there is a lack of understanding about the registration requirements for pupils receiving EOTAS. A very few headteachers, who have dual registered pupils receiving EOTAS in Year 11, remove them from the register of the school in January. This means that the attainment of these pupils, which is often not in line with their peers, does not count in the school's performance data. Their local authorities endorse this practice.

14 Most local authorities do not monitor or oversee EOTAS or alternative provision robustly enough. In most cases, they know how many pupils are receiving the EOTAS they provide or commission from independent providers. Very few know how many other pupils are also accessing full-time offsite alternative provision, often in the same providers, but directly commissioned by schools.

15 Most local authorities collect data on the qualifications gained by pupils receiving EOTAS. Only a minority of local authorities monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils receiving EOTAS. Overall, local authorities do not track the ongoing progress of pupils well enough to ensure that all pupils meet their potential. They monitor attendance and behaviour, but they do not all keep records of pupils' learning needs or their progress against learning targets. In a few cases, procedures to track pupils' daily punctuality and attendance and to ensure pupils' safety are not followed.

16 Very few teachers of EOTAS, especially those employed by independent providers, have access to training and support that would keep them up-to-date with the latest practice and curriculum requirements. They do not usually know where to go to get the best advice or to see good practice. Local authorities do not encourage their specialist teachers and educational psychologists to share their expertise with independent providers of EOTAS.

17 Welsh Government regulations require independent providers of full-time provision for five pupils or more, and one pupil with statements of special educational needs, to be registered as independent schools. A minority of local authorities commission

full-time EOTAS for large groups of pupils from providers that are not registered as independent schools. The majority of local authorities visited maintain unregistered PRUs. They operate tuition centres and other non-registered centres to provide education for up to 25 hours a week.

18 Elected members are unaware of all the aspects of EOTAS for which they are responsible. They are unsure about how well pupils receiving EOTAS progress or how much the local authority spends on EOTAS. They do not know if the pupils who received EOTAS go on to further education, employment or training. This means they cannot judge whether the EOTAS they provide is effective or gives value for money.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government should:

R1 Strengthen guidance to local authorities and schools regarding the requirement to:

- notify the Welsh Government of all EOTAS they provide or commission, including tuition centres, PRUs and independent provision
- maintain records of all pupils receiving EOTAS provision, and those who receive alternative provision arranged by schools independently of their local authority
- maintain records of the numbers of pupils receiving EOTAS who go on to become not in education, employment or training (NEETS)
- improve accessibility to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and other specialist agencies for pupils who receive EOTAS

R2 Publish attainment and attendance data for EOTAS learners at local authority level

R3 Consider revising the threshold for providers to register as independent schools

Local authorities should:

R4 Notify the Welsh Government of all EOTAS provision they provide or commission

R5 Check carefully the registration status of each provider they use to ensure that, where appropriate, provision that they commission is registered as an independent school with the Welsh Government

R6 Ensure that EOTAS referral procedures are understood by schools and include the requirement for assessment and other information to transfer promptly from school to EOTAS provider

R7 Monitor the quality of all alternative provision provided or commissioned for pupils in their local authority, including that arranged by schools or through 14-19 Networks

R8 Provide pupils with suitable education within 15 days of a decision being made that they should receive EOTAS

R9 Provide all pupils receiving EOTAS with a full-time curriculum that meets their needs, enables them to achieve their potential and ensures that they are re-integrated wherever possible

R10 Provide Welsh-medium EOTAS for pupils who have received their education in Welsh

R11 Meet the statutory requirement to ensure that pupils with a statement of special educational needs receive the support noted on their statement or Individual Development Plan

R12 Provide elected members with all the information they need about EOTAS to enable them to judge its effectiveness and value for money

Schools should:

R13 Work closely with their local authority and provide them with comprehensive timely information about all pupils they refer for EOTAS and alternative provision, including through 14-19 Networks

R14 Check carefully the registration status of each provider that they use and check whether they should be registered if they are not

R15 Ensure that providers of EOTAS who are educating pupils from their school receive good quality information about pupils' learning and behaviour needs

R16 Keep in touch with pupils from their schools receiving EOTAS, monitor their progress, including academic performance, and re-integrate them wherever possible

R17 Work closely with EOTAS providers to ensure curriculum continuity for pupils from their school

Title: Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after – a best practice report

Main findings

1 The schools that are most effective in supporting children who are looked after have the following features:

- a clear vision and strategy for supporting children who are looked after
- high aspirations for children who are looked after
- a member of the school senior management team who has responsibility for delivering the school's strategy for children who are looked after
- a clear understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of children who are looked after
- comprehensive tracking systems that are used routinely by staff and analysed by the designated teacher
- staff that are aware of the children who are looked after, their needs and what strategies are available to support them
- strong support for children who are looked after to develop their literacy and numeracy skills
- strong pastoral systems that are tailored well to the emotional needs of children who are looked after
- support to build resilience, self-esteem and confidence that is planned and well matched to the needs of children, for example through nurture groups
- a named individual who provides support such as learning coach
- provision of access for children who are looked after to after-school clubs and other extra-curricular activities such as trips or work experience
- a committed designated governor with a strong understanding of the needs of children who are looked
- targeted work with carers to develop their skills and understanding better to support the children they look after
- a clear focus on developing the life skills of children who are looked after and planning for their transition and leaving care
- regular evaluation of their approaches, including seeking feedback from children who are looked after, further to improve outcomes and provision for this group

2 In many of the schools visited, headteachers and senior leaders provide a clear vision for their work with children who are looked after and create a supportive ethos. They recognise that these children may need additional support and guidance to succeed and they ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for this to happen. In these schools, the senior management team takes responsibility for improving the work of the school with children who are looked after.

3 A strong feature of many of the schools visited is the comprehensive range of approaches taken to support children who are looked after. In these schools, leaders and managers adapt effective whole-school systems to meet the needs of children who are looked after.

4 Many schools recognise that children who are looked after are often in need of additional emotional and academic support and are flexible in providing this additional support, particularly at times of personal difficulty. Many schools have a particular focus on providing additional support for literacy and numeracy.

5 Form tutor discussions, as a planned mentoring activity for children who are looked after, happen in a minority of schools. In a few schools, there are formal mentoring sessions for these pupils with members of the senior management team and mentors that are external to the school. These schools are effective in raising the aspirations and ambitions of children who are looked after.

6 All of the schools have tracking systems that are helpful in monitoring the progress of children who are looked after. These tracking systems are particularly effective when all staff understand and regularly update individual tracking information.

7 In many schools, there are very strong pastoral support systems. These include key members of staff for each child who is looked after. A very few schools allocate learning coaches to pupils for the duration of their time at the school. Very often, these members of staff are the first people children who are looked after will turn to when they need advice, support or comfort.

8 A minority of schools have established nurture groups to support children who are looked after. Through work in small, structured teaching groups, nurture groups allow pupils to build trusting relationships with teaching staff and develop the social skills and behaviours that they need to learn effectively in larger classes. Where nurture groups exist, pupils who are looked after respond positively and improve how they engage with staff and other pupils.

9 A minority of schools have established after-school clubs specifically for children who are looked after. In the clubs, pupils may have access to additional support in literacy and numeracy or use a range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. In the best examples, extra-curricular activities also help children who are looked after to develop their independence and prepare for leaving care. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in after-school clubs are too limited across Wales.

10 Many schools hold annual training for staff on vulnerable groups of learners. However, schools do not use training sessions well enough to raise staff awareness of the typical childhood experiences of children who are looked after and how these experiences may impact on their behaviour and attitude to learning.

11 In around half of schools, headteachers provide clear reports to governors on the impact of their work with children who are looked after. A minority of schools benefit from the personal commitment, wider experience and knowledge that the designated governor for children who are looked after brings to their role. However, the effectiveness of governing bodies in providing suitable and appropriate challenge to headteachers varies too much across Wales.

12 In many schools, children who are looked after have a wide range of opportunities to express their views about their school. The majority of schools use feedback from learners well, along with a range of information, to evaluate their work with children who are looked after. A minority of schools have regular pupil-teacher consultation events and a very few schools explicitly seek the views of children who are looked after to inform the school's development plan.

13 Nearly all schools build effective relationships with foster carers. A very few schools have appointed family engagement officers that provide direct support to foster carers. The majority of local authorities provide comprehensive training for their carers to enrich their knowledge and understanding of the social and emotional vulnerabilities of children who are looked after.

14 All schools were using the PDG/LAC grant specifically and appropriately to address the emotional and academic needs of children who are looked after. However, many schools are unaware of the priorities in their regional consortium's spending plans for the PDG/LAC grant. The Welsh Government, regional consortia and local authorities have not ensured that these plans meet the complex needs of children who are looked after well enough.

15 The local authorities and regional consortia that are most effective in raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after have the following characteristics:

- senior managers and elected members who understand the particular needs of children who are looked after in their area, their own responsibilities and the local strategy to support this group
- a LACE co-ordinator who provides strong leadership to schools and facilitates joint working between schools, the education department and social services
- a pro-active approach to seeking out and sharing best practice in relation to how schools support children who are looked after
- robust tracking systems, which are used well to support close scrutiny of the effectiveness of the local authority's work with schools to improve the attainment, achievement and ambition of children who are looked after
- comprehensive training for school staff and carers to help them understand and support the social and emotional needs of children who are looked after
- a shared understanding of and match between regional, local and school priorities for children who are looked after
- high-quality personal educations plans that are jointly developed and focus on clear outcomes, including goals for personal development and independence
- regular evaluation of their approaches, including seeking feedback from children who are looked after, carers and schools, further to improve outcomes and provision for this group

16 Most local authorities' policies for children who are looked after link well with other corporate policies, such as encouraging all children who are looked after to remain in education, employment or training when they leave school. However, in a very few cases, local authorities do not have a policy for children who are looked after or set appropriate targets for their attainment.

17 In all of the local authorities visited, there is effective communication through annual reporting to scrutiny committees and other stakeholders. In the majority of the local authorities visited, elected members have received training in aspects of provision for children who are looked after. However, as corporate parents, their effectiveness in raising the attainment and achievement of children who are looked after is too variable across Wales. In a very few local authorities, the strategy for children who are looked after is not up-to-date and the role of the corporate parenting panel is unclear.

18 In most cases, local authorities' strategies focus strongly on improving how different services and schools work together to support children who are looked after. Looked after children's education (LACE) co-ordinators are an effective link between education and children's services. LACE co-ordinators are integral to the success of local authorities in raising the attainment of children who are looked after and the quality of the leadership and the work of the LACE co-ordinator is strong in nearly all local authorities visited. Nearly all LACE co-ordinators work well with different partners to ensure that personal education plans are produced within 20 days. However, the quality of personal education plans varies too much and a minority do not focus well enough on outcomes or include targets for personal development and independence.

19 Most LACE co-ordinators have a good understanding of where best practice exists in their local area and provide helpful advice to schools. However, overall, local authorities are not pro-active enough in evaluating what they do or seeking out and sharing best practice with schools. In addition, most local authorities do not focus their support and training for schools well enough on how schools can better understand and support the social and emotional needs of children who are looked after.

Schools should:

R1 Build on best practice in line with the features of effective schools identified in this report

Local authorities should:

R2 Build on best practice in line with the features of effective local authorities identified in this report

The regional consortia should:

R3 Improve how they plan for the PDG/LAC to make sure that schools are clear on the priorities for the use of the grant and that their plans take enough account of the complex needs of children who are looked after

The Welsh Government should:

R4 Consider broadening performance measures to include progress that is relative to the child's starting point and extends beyond statutory school age

R5	Make sure that the regional consortia's spending plans are appropriate to local need and based on a sound analysis of the needs of children who are looked after

Title: Modern Foreign Languages

Main findings

Key stage 3

1 In the lessons observed in key stage 3, most pupils achieve good skills in their oral work and in their reading and writing in the assessed language. Many show a good understanding of the grammar of the assessed language. This is a significant improvement when compared with Estyn's findings about learners' understanding of grammar in 2009.

2 However, too many learners make repeated mistakes with intonation and pronunciation, particularly when reading aloud, or they prepare conversations in written form before practising them as spoken conversations. This detracts from their ability to speak the language fluently.

3 The percentage of learners achieving the expected level (level 5) or above in modern foreign languages has improved over the last seven years, but it is still too low (84%), (Welsh Government, 2015b). It is the second-lowest level of performance in the National Curriculum subjects. Boys generally perform worse than girls in modern foreign languages.

Key stage 4

4 In the lessons observed in key stage 4, learners generally have a good understanding of the language skills they require for examinations. Most learners make effective use of technology to support their language learning.

5 However, too many learners, even the more able, do not speak the language fluently enough. Often this results from learners preparing for spoken examination by writing out and learning by heart written paragraphs on the prescribed topics.

6 Examination outcomes for those who take modern foreign language GCSEs are good, (Welsh Government, 2015d). The proportion of GCSE entries into modern foreign languages achieving grades A*-C was 77% in 2015. This was better than in most other National Curriculum subjects (Welsh Government, 2015c).

7 However, of those learners who achieved the expected level in modern foreign languages at key stage 3, only 28.2% went on to enter at least one modern foreign language GCSE, (Welsh Government, 2015c). At GCSE, boys continue to perform less well than girls in modern foreign languages (Welsh Government, 2015e).

A level

8 A level results are good in modern foreign languages and compare well with those in other subjects, (Welsh Government, 2015d). In 2015, the proportion of A level

entries in modern foreign languages gaining grades A*-C was 82%, (Welsh Government, 2015c). The trend of high performance at A level has persisted over time.

9 However, the decline in entries at A level is greater than at GCSE, (Welsh Government, 2015f). The number of boys taking an A level in modern foreign languages is a much smaller proportion than the number of girls, and the proportion has stayed at a similar level over time. In 2015, only 204 of the 700 entries in modern foreign language at A level were boys (29%). Since 2009 this proportion has shown small fluctuations, but has generally stayed at just under a third (Welsh Government, not published).

Teaching

10 The quality of teaching in many modern foreign language classrooms is adequate. In a few cases it is good and in a very few cases it is excellent.

11 Most teachers in the lessons observed are subject specialists with appropriate qualifications to teach modern foreign languages. They speak the languages they teach with a good degree of fluency and accuracy. A few teachers do not have a firm enough grasp of the most effective way to teach a modern foreign language. In most of these cases it is usually because they are teaching the modern foreign language as a second subject.

12 Increasingly, teachers are using developments in digital technology in lessons to good effect. In a few cases, teachers are using technology well to support homework tasks.

13 The extent to which teachers teach through the assessed language has declined. Too often teachers use English to explain simple classroom instructions.

14 In many less effective lessons, teachers allow teaching grammar to dominate at the expense of learners developing the key modern foreign language skills of speaking and listening.

15 In too many classrooms, teachers require pupils to prepare conversations in written form before practising the spoken language. This hinders pupils from developing a good level of fluency in the assessed language.

16 Most teachers mark and assess learners' work effectively on a regular basis. However, the effective use of assessment for learning techniques has declined since Estyn's last report in 2009.

Provision, leadership and management

17 Most heads of department and modern foreign language teams share a vision of the modern foreign language provision they wish to offer. However, increasingly, many do not support this through a written policy that sets out a shared vision for modern foreign languages teaching and learning within the school. This leads to varied practice within the department.

18 On average, learners experience three hours of modern foreign language learning across a two-week timetable. However, this is less time than the two hours per week recommended in Estyn's last modern foreign language report.

19 Nearly all departments have a well-planned modern foreign language curriculum that links well to National Curriculum level descriptors for the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

20 However, only in a very few departments do teachers plan in effective ways to prepare learners to use the assessed language in everyday transactions in the classroom.

21 In nearly all departments, there were a good range of resources to support modern foreign language learning. Many modern foreign language teachers run effective extra-curricular activities for helping to encourage young people to take a modern foreign language to examination level.

22 The examinations that learners take in modern foreign languages are mainly at GCSE or A level. A few schools use other examinations to accommodate learners who may have stronger skills in speaking, listening and reading, but with less emphasis on writing. At present, there is no GCSE that links language learning and business skills. Many teachers regard this as a significant gap, especially in attracting pupils of a wider range of ability to study a modern foreign language in key stage 4.

23 Most headteachers and senior leaders are supportive of learners having the opportunity to learn at least one modern foreign language to examination level. However, nearly all report that this is challenging, due to the dominance of the core subjects at key stage 4.

24 The structure of option choices at the end of key stage 3 often means that learners do not study a modern foreign language because the subject was in an option column with another subject that they particularly wanted to study. As a result, there are a small number of schools in Wales where learners do not study a modern foreign language at key stage 4.

Recruitment of modern foreign language teachers

25 Headteachers with modern foreign language departments with few or no learners in key stage 4 and post-16, and headteachers in the west of Wales, report that it is often difficult to recruit teachers for modern foreign language departments.

26 Quite often, the linguists applying for posts in schools with little provision for modern foreign languages are only able to offer one modern foreign language. This reduces flexibility on the timetable and in the number of options available to learners.

27 In 2014-2015, initial teacher training centres recruited at most half of the quota for modern foreign language trainees allocated to them by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Recommendations

Teachers of modern foreign languages should:

R1 Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages by ensuring that they:

- increase the use of the assessed language as the language of instruction across key stage 3, key stage 4 and post-16
- help learners to gain a secure grasp of the rules of pronunciation of the language they are learning
- help learners to use an extensive range of strategies to prepare confidently for oral examinations, so that learners develop oral fluency at levels in line with their abilities
- make sure that learners of all abilities are fully challenged and engage in creative language activities that develop their mastery of the language
- keep an appropriate balance between the teaching of grammar and the four language skills, particularly speaking and listening
- assess learners' work using meaningful assessment for learning strategies

R2 Attend and engage with regional network groups and regional training to develop high-order skills in modern foreign language teaching and learning

Headteachers and senior leaders should:

R3 Improve learners' uptake of at least one modern foreign language at examination level through reviewing their curriculum planning and timetabling arrangements

R4 Make sure that their modern foreign language teachers are able to take advantage of the 'Global Futures' continuing professional development offered within and across regions to improve the quality of learning and teaching of modern foreign languages

Title: Best practice in the creative arts in key stages 3 and 4

Main findings

Outcomes in the creative arts in the most effective schools

Art and design

1 In art and design at key stage 3, many pupils explore a good range of two-dimensional processes. They practise their skills independently to achieve effective results in paint, pastels and pencils and, in a minority of schools, in printmaking. However, even where there is good practice, pupils do not explore a wide enough range of three-dimensional media and only a minority use information and communication technology (ICT) software to create digital images.

2 Many pupils at key stage 3 gain a good understanding of why artists work as they do, and the intentions behind their work. They use their analysis of the work of other artists imaginatively to improve their own work.

3 At key stage 4, most pupils gain increasing mastery of techniques and processes so that they are able to communicate their ideas effectively. Their sketchbooks are personal and lively explorations of ideas and processes. Through investigation and experimentation, most pupils' work becomes increasingly more original. They improve their drawing skills through responding imaginatively to innovative drawing tasks and by exploring techniques independently. Most pupils refine their ideas by researching thoroughly, and integrate their studies of the work of other artists in imaginative ways that show a high level of understanding.

Drama

4 At key stage 3, nearly all pupils show a good understanding of ideas in performing and the conventions of a variety of dramatic forms. Most pupils collaborate effectively to devise simple pieces, improvised performances and tableaux. They structure their performances to express a broad range of concepts. Most pupils investigate the use of movement, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and voice with enthusiasm and increasing skill to develop characters. They work well, individually and in groups to refine their skills. A majority of pupils develop their vocal and physical skills effectively. Most pupils practise and perform scripted pieces of drama with commitment. However, a minority of pupils in Welsh-medium schools use English too frequently to discuss their ideas when working in groups.

5 By the end of key stage 3, many pupils also demonstrate a good understanding of the skills of directors and technicians, and a minority experiment imaginatively with sound, voice and lighting to create atmosphere.

6 At key stage 4, many pupils identify important stylistic features in the work of set practitioners. Most pupils use their bodies and voices creatively and with control,

and explore abstract movement and proxemics to create devised pieces that communicate ideas effectively. Those pupils working with the technical aspects of theatre develop their skills well. They work closely with their peers following the acting route to enhance their performances.

Music

7 At key stage 3, many pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points, although pupils arrive in Year 7 with a range of experiences that are broader in music than they are in art and design or drama. Most pupils develop their performance skills well by mastering an increasingly demanding repertoire. With practice, most pupils sing and play competently in parts. Most pupils explore the musical elements, analyse a range of musical styles and employ music technology effectively to compose short pieces.

8 At key stage 4, a majority of pupils perform with expression and precision. They demonstrate a sound grasp of the conventions of a wide variety of musical styles. They are self-disciplined and well-motivated to rehearse, both independently to ensure technical mastery, and collaboratively to develop a sense of ensemble and performance. Many pupils appraise critically a variety of increasing complex musical forms and styles. They listen intelligently to compare and contrast different performances of the same piece, using well-reasoned responses. However, in a few schools where pupils achieve well, pupils' literacy skills let them down in appraisal activities.

9 Many pupils at key stage 4 compose pieces with a high degree of originality that draw on their own strengths as performers. In many successful schools, pupils use technology very effectively to devise compositions.

The contribution of effective teaching and learning in the creative arts to pupils' wellbeing

10 Pupils improve their wellbeing through well-structured experiences in the arts. The arts help pupils to increase their confidence and self-esteem, improve their social skills and develop their understanding of the views of others. Through learning in the arts, many pupils gain important life skills of independent learning, planning, and problem-solving.

11 Many pupils value the opportunities that the creative arts give them to express their own ideas. Pupils find that practice in presenting their personal responses gives them greater confidence in other areas of school life and work. Furthermore, pupils say that celebrating their arts skills in public through exhibition and performance has had a significantly positive impact on how they view themselves and their future.

Standards in the creative arts across Wales

12 At key stage 3, across Wales, most pupils achieve the expected level 5 or above in art and design and in music. Pupils' achievement in the arts is a little higher than in the core subjects of English, Welsh or mathematics.

13 At key stage 4, art and design is the most popular of the arts subjects, with around 25% of pupils entering GCSE. Each year around 9% of pupils take GCSE drama. Music is the least popular of the arts subjects at GCSE, with around 8% of pupils taking this option. In those schools where provision is of a high quality, take up is often higher than these averages.

14 Many pupils in Wales who opt for art and design, music or drama at GCSE achieve an A*-C grade. Pupils' achievement in music is better than in art and design and in drama. Pupils' achievement in the arts subjects at key stage 4 is much higher than their achievement in English and mathematics and slightly higher than their performance in Welsh.

15 In a very few schools, pupils achieve well in all three arts subjects at keys stage 4. It is more usual that pupils' outcomes are higher in one of the arts subjects. This is because the success of these departments is the result of strong subject leadership and consistently good teaching. In addition, there is little correlation between schools where pupils perform well in the arts and those in which pupils perform highly in the core subjects.

16 At key stage 4, girls' performance is better than that of boys in all of the arts subjects. Of the three subjects, a higher proportion of boys opt for music and their achievement is better than boys' achievement in art and design or in drama.

17 Pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) perform better in the arts than in many other subject areas. Of the three arts subjects, a greater proportion of eFSM pupils choose to take GCSE art and design than opt for GCSE drama or music, and their achievement is better. The gap in performance between eFSM pupils and non-eFSM pupils is smaller in art and design than it is in drama or music, and much smaller for each than the gap in English, in Welsh first language, and in mathematics.

Learning experiences in the creative arts in the most effective schools

18 In the most effective departments, pupils develop their knowledge skills and understanding very well at key stage 3, which provides them with a solid foundation for success at key stage 4. These good practice departments also make valuable links with their feeder primary schools that help to bridge the transition in learning between key stage 2 and 3.

19 In many good arts departments, provision is made for more able and talented pupils that helps them to make the most of their abilities. The most effective provision is through extra-curricular work linked to arts agencies and practitioners. However, in lessons, a minority of teachers do not extend the progress of more able pupils well enough.

20 In schools where there is good practice in the arts, teachers plan well to develop pupils' literacy. This has a positive impact on pupils' standards, especially in writing and in oracy. However, many departments do not pay good enough attention to the development of pupils' numeracy skills.

21 Many good arts departments plan well to develop pupils' digital skills. However, even where there is good practice, in a minority of schools, in art and design and in drama there are not enough opportunities for pupils to produce creative work using digital media.

22 In schools where pupils achieve well in the creative arts, there is a wide range of art-related extra-curricular activities that are of particular benefit to disadvantaged pupils who may not have the home benefits of their more advantaged peers. Many schools provide opportunities for pupils to use specialist spaces and equipment outside lessons, for example.

23 In nearly all schools where pupils achieve well in the arts, teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and many are active practitioners and participants in the arts. They use their expertise to explain and model techniques proficiently, and maintain a serious approach to the rigour and discipline essential to good outcomes in the arts.

24 In most schools where pupils achieve well in the creative arts, teachers focus successfully on developing pupils' critical thinking skills. This helps pupils to develop the skills needed to evaluate their own work and to make good progress. They plan well for pupils to study the work of creative practitioners, and to experience creative work at first hand.

Leadership of the creative arts in the most effective schools

25 In all the schools where pupils achieve well in the creative arts, senior leaders give high status to the arts. They recognise the importance that the arts play in developing a strong ethos in the school, and their value in promoting a stimulating, creative learning environment for all pupils.

26 In these schools, senior leaders support their departments to enable pupils of all abilities, including those pupils who are at risk of disengagement, to achieve to the best of their abilities. However, even in a few of the good practice schools, the Pupil Deprivation Grant is not used well enough to support pupils eligible for free school meals to achieve more highly in the arts.

27 Senior leaders in these good practice schools recognise their arts departments are often a source of excellent practice in developing pupils' creativity and thinking skills. A few senior leaders share these teaching approaches successfully across the school to improve practice and outcomes. Only in a few schools are senior leaders beginning to investigate in a structured way the development of creative learning across the school as a response to Successful Futures (Donaldson 2015).

28 All the good practice schools benefit from strong subject leadership in the arts. These middle leaders are often good and excellent teachers, with a high level of expertise in their subjects. They lead their teams well, and have a dynamic approach to developing their subject.

29 Most subject leaders analyse the work of their departments well. However, in a few schools, departmental evaluations do not focus sufficiently well on the outcomes of

groups of pupils, or on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the department. As a result, departmental action plans in a few departments are not sharp enough to identify specific areas for improvement.

30 Subject leaders in many schools where there is good practice in the arts develop their practice through working as examination board moderators, and many teachers in the arts benefit from the subject training days offered by the examination boards. Otherwise, there are not enough structured opportunities for professional learning specifically for teachers in the arts.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1 Learn from the best practice described in this report

R2 Make sure that there are enough opportunities in lessons for more able pupils to extend their learning

R3 Maximise opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, when appropriate, in arts lessons

R4 Make sure that arts departments make the best use of opportunities to create art works that develop pupils' digital competences

R5 Evaluate closely pupil performance, and the strengths and areas for development in teaching in the arts to inform departmental planning

R6 Analyse the contribution that arts departments make to pupils' skills, and develop strategies for creative learning across the school

R7 Make better use of their grant funding to support disadvantaged pupils in the creative arts

R8 Develop provision and practice in the arts to take account of the recommendations of Successful Futures

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R9 Provide more support for schools to develop effective self-evaluation and planning for improvement in the arts

R10 Offer professional learning experiences for teachers and subject leaders in the arts

R11 Support schools in the effective use of grant funding to support disadvantaged pupils and to work with arts agencies and arts practitioners

R12 Help schools to review their curriculum development and design towards meeting the recommendations of Successful Futures

Title: Moderation of teacher assessment at key stage 2 and key stage 3: a review of accuracy and consistency

Main findings

1 In-school moderation of teacher assessment is effective where there is enough evidence available. However, in a minority of schools, the range of evidence does not cover all areas of the level descriptor or show evidence of drafting or teacher support in completing work. In these cases, schools award the level despite a limited range of evidence. Where the evidence focuses on final versions or selected best pieces, this leads to inflation of levels achieved.

2 In cluster moderation, most schools bring either work that illustrates secure or higher-end version of levels. As a result, meetings focus too much on moderating levels of work that teachers already know to be accurate. This means that clusters waste time in focusing on activities that do not add value. There is not enough focus in the cluster moderation meeting on discussing pupils' work that is on the borderline between levels.

3 In a few cases, teachers consider the whole range of a pupil's work, including whole workbooks and drafts, during in-school and cluster moderation meetings. This means that teachers can gain a more holistic, 'best fit' view of the pupil's standards, by sampling from the whole range of the pupil's work during moderation. This strengthens the moderation process by reducing unconscious bias in using selected pieces of work, such as final drafts, that make up a learner profile.

4 Only a minority of schools refer to their own or to Welsh Government exemplification and standardisation materials to check their decisions during internal moderation meetings. In most cluster moderation meetings, exemplification and standardisation materials are available, but these materials are rarely referred to or used.

5 Nearly all schools undertake additional assessment work to prepare learner profiles for the cluster moderation meeting. These include extensive labelling of learners' work, identifying the evidence for each element of the level descriptor, and preparing 'pupil commentaries' to explain the level awarded. While this practice is useful in strengthening teachers' understanding of the criteria for levels, it is often an unnecessary task for cluster moderation meetings, as the profiles submitted generally illustrate a secure level and there is little disagreement about the levels.

6 Cluster reports following moderation meetings focus mainly on procedural matters with very few identifying actions to review and amend the levels of learner profiles. While many schools would alter the level of individual learner profiles if directed by the cluster, the extent of agreement found in cluster moderation meetings limits the need for further action. Schools do not routinely review and amend the levels of learner profiles for the rest of the cohort.

7 Local authorities and regional consortia support most schools well in the procedures for moderation. However, the role of local authorities and regional consortia representatives in the moderation of standards is unclear regarding their role in ensuring consistency of levels across clusters.

8 This year, cluster moderation focused on English and Welsh. The range of evidence to support pupils' standards in writing is stronger than that for reading, especially in secondary schools. In a few secondary schools there is not enough variety or opportunity in pupils' work to assess the different types of reading skills, particularly higher-order skills such as synthesis. In a minority of primary and secondary schools there is either too little recorded evidence or evidence of poor quality to support teacher assessment of oracy.

Recommendations

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R1 Develop training opportunities for schools to ensure consistency in the judgements for oracy, sufficiency of the evidence base, better application of the 'best fit' method, and moderation of work on the borderline between levels

R2 Review their role in ensuring consistency of standards across clusters, authorities and regions

Schools should:

R3 Take account of a wide range of pupils' work when assessing and moderating levels

R4 Take appropriate account of the level of support, drafting processes, the impact of teachers' marking and the sufficiency of evidence when awarding a final level

R5 Focus on pupils' work that is on the lower borderline of levels when moderating in schools and in cluster meetings

R6 Make sure that all levels are reviewed and adjusted suitably after internal and cluster moderation and before submitting final levels

R7 Refer to standardised materials when assessing, moderating and standardising in schools and in cluster meetings

Title: Leadership and primary school improvement

Main findings

1 There is scope for all schools to improve and some need to improve more than others. Good leaders recognise the need to adapt their leadership styles and adopt different strategies according to a school's position on its improvement journey. Although there are different strategies for different stages, there are also some common tasks that all schools need to address at all stages of their development.

- Define clearly the **vision and strategic direction** of the school; this vision evolves as the school improves
- Establish and maintain a culture where **improving standards and wellbeing** for all pupils is the main priority
- Make **improving teaching** the key process that contributes to improving standards
- Deliver a **curriculum** that fully **meets the needs of all pupils**
- Sustain a consistent focus on improving pupils' **literacy and numeracy** skills, including higher-order thinking and reasoning skills
- Make sure that **continuous professional development** of staff improves the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils
- Make all staff, especially those in management roles, **accountable** for their areas of work
- Make sure that **self-evaluation** outcomes derive from **first-hand evidence** and are **linked closely to school improvement priorities**
- Provide **governors** with clear, understandable and honest analyses of how well the school is performing and encourage them to challenge underperformance

Starting the journey

2 In nearly all schools where standards of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory:

- Strategic leadership is weak, school improvement processes are ineffective and there is poor resource management
- Arrangements to manage the performance of staff are often underdeveloped and do not lead to improved professional practice or outcomes for pupils
- Teachers are unaware of the need to improve their own practice because they are working in isolation
- Leaders do not identify aspects of professional practice that require improvement, through first-hand self-evaluation activity such as lesson observations
- Teachers do not receive enough professional development opportunities to meet their needs or improves the quality of their work

3 In order to improve from a low starting point, schools normally require direct leadership to establish expectations regarding the quality of day-to-day work, particularly the quality of teaching and learning. In schools in greatest need of

improvement, the headteacher is usually the main driving force in establishing a base for improvement. In many cases, schools in these circumstances make changes to their leadership. However, a change of senior leadership does not always represent the best or only option to improve unsatisfactory schools.

4 Where schools have succeeded in improving from low starting points, the leaders often demonstrate the following characteristics:

- a clear vision for improvement that focuses on addressing the school's key priorities at that time
- well-developed professional skills, knowledge and experience to identify areas in need of improvement
- the capacity to establish quickly that the school is a place for teaching and learning and that teachers are there to improve outcomes for pupils
- a strong commitment to supporting others to improve within a culture of accountability
- the determination to deal with difficult staffing issues
- high expectations of themselves and others and the ability to model high professional standards
- a sound understanding of effective educational pedagogy and educational research
- good decision-making powers and the ability to prioritise improvement goals
- the drive to implement new structures and systems that support rapid improvement, which they often direct personally
- the ability to evaluate pupil data and the professional performance of teachers
- an understanding of what effective teaching looks like
- a focus on improving teaching and learning to raise standards
- the communication skills to ensure that parents and the wider school community engage with the school and support children in making progress

5 The school leader, whether new to post or otherwise, must understand the need to invest in developing staff, so that they improve the quality of their work and raise standards for pupils.

Making progress

6 As schools start to improve, headteachers begin to hold staff more accountable for the quality of their work and the standards that their pupils achieve. Headteachers often achieve this by:

- agreeing with staff a common vision and sense of purpose that is about raising standards and appropriate expectations
- establishing clear roles and responsibilities in a staff structure that meets the school's needs, including a range of specific leadership positions
- ensuring that improving the quality of teaching is fundamental to securing improvement and developing of agreed whole-school approaches and expectations regarding classroom practice

- developing self-evaluation processes that focus on quality of teaching and learning
- using pupil performance data to identify strengths and areas for improvement at whole-school, cohort, group and individual level
- establishing performance management systems that link to pupil performance and agreed whole-school priorities
- establishing networks of professional practice within and beyond the school
- exemplifying and celebrating good practice within the school
- challenging underperformance rigorously

7 In these early stages of improvement, the headteacher usually leads most improvement initiatives and sets the agenda for change. However, as school improvement gathers pace, there is often an emphasis on developing leadership capacity throughout the school and an increased willingness to delegate responsibilities. This is a development in many schools following the initial establishment of an appropriate staff structure. At this stage, effective leaders often:

- involve staff in reviewing the strategic vision and direction for the school
- allocate specific leadership roles to others in positions of responsibility
- ensure that leaders know what is expected of them
- invest in the development of leaders, for example through school-based coaching and mentoring or external courses, so that they develop their own skills and increase the school's capacity for improvement
- ensure that leaders in all positions contribute to improve the quality of the school's work
- train leaders at all levels to implement, monitor and review the school's developing systems effectively
- maintain a professional dialogue with leaders at all levels and monitor the work of these leaders closely
- provide staff with a platform to develop and display their leadership skills, for example through leading staff meetings
- involve other senior leaders in self-evaluation activity and school improvement planning
- identify other staff with leadership skills or leadership potential
- begin to establish an aspirational leadership culture, through an environment where staff at all levels show a desire to lead at some level
- develop professional learning communities within or beyond the school to accelerate improvement and involve all staff in improvement processes

Building momentum

8 As the momentum for school improvement increases, headteachers begin to adopt a more collaborative style of leadership alongside a direct approach. They enable senior and middle leaders to become more influential in securing improvements. Leaders identify and develop other staff with leadership potential, including those at relatively early stages in their careers.

9 In nearly all the case study schools, staff who had become leaders and received training and development to perform their roles, gained high levels of professional satisfaction from their work. They enjoyed leading. As senior and middle leaders become more experienced and confident, their roles have an increasingly positive impact on school improvement. These leaders remain highly accountable to the school's top-level leader at all times, but as the school improvement journey evolves:

- All leaders contribute to the school's vision for improvement
- There is a strong leadership base that ensures a common strategic direction and consistency across all areas of the school's work
- Leaders at all levels ensure that the school runs smoothly each day and that agreed systems are followed, even in the absence of the headteacher
- Leaders at all levels deal effectively with issues relating to behaviour or discussions with parents; for example senior leaders, such as the headteacher, are confident that other leaders have the capacity to deal with such situations
- All leaders understand and carry out their roles well in relation to improving standards of teaching, learning and wellbeing
- Leaders at all levels have the skills to evaluate the impact of their actions on professional practice, standards and school improvement
- Leaders at all levels contribute to self-evaluation work, improvement planning, the performance management of staff and continuous professional development
- Rigorous and comprehensive self-evaluation processes underpin all improvement work
- Staff at early stages in their careers have opportunities to lead or to work closely with other leaders
- There is a culture of succession planning; promotion of senior or middle leaders creates opportunities for other staff to progress in their careers, and often, though not exclusively, promotions are from within the school, because senior leaders have developed individuals with the skills to fill senior roles
- Leaders make effective use of the National Leadership Standards to set performance targets and inform professional development
- Leaders use high-level professional learning opportunities to develop staff at all stages in their careers
- Leaders at all levels become confident in using a variety of leadership approaches
- Leaders at all levels have the autonomy to make decisions in the best interests of pupils, for example involving the seeking out partnerships with other schools, arranging training for staff or procuring resources
- Leaders create a mutually supportive team ethos
- Leaders begin to innovate, for example by supporting teachers to reflect on their professional practice by filming lessons and evaluating pupils' progress
- A culture of reflection by senior and middle leaders with the involvement of all staff ensures a cycle of improvement that impacts positively on professional practice and outcomes for pupils
- Governing bodies having a clear understanding of the school's work and perform effectively as critical friends

Sustaining high standards

10 Many of the schools identified in this report that maintain high standards have benefited from continuity in leadership. This is not to say that prolonged periods of headship guarantee or are required for success, which depends on the vision, drive and skills of individual headteachers and other leaders. The schools in this report develop a depth of leadership talent with a strong record of delivering improvements in many aspects of their work. This feature is particularly helpful to practitioners in the early stages of their careers, as they benefit from working in positive and forward-thinking environments and alongside effective role models.

11 Schools that sustain high standards of teaching, learning and wellbeing over extended periods demonstrate all of the features identified in the stages above. In addition, leaders strive to ensure that these schools have the following characteristics:

- There is an evolving vision with a focus on raising standards, based on the views of all stakeholders, which is aspirational, challenging and achievable
- The headteacher possesses highly-effective leadership qualities and uses a wide range of leadership styles that they adapt to address different circumstances
- Leaders are highly committed to the continuous professional development of all staff at all stages in their careers
- Leaders keep standards at the forefront of their thinking at all times and there is a culture where all staff contribute consistently to improving outcomes for pupils
- Senior leaders have a proven track record of taking action to secure improvements
- All school improvement processes, including, self-evaluation, improvement planning, performance management and continuous professional development, are woven together and impact on each other particularly well
- Leaders are confident and inspire confidence in others, supporting staff to innovate and enhance pupils' learning
- Leaders maintain effective procedures for challenging under-performance
- Leaders influence and lead the work of other schools, for example by implementing cutting-edge techniques or by providing support to help them improve

12 Leaders in consistently successful schools often demonstrate their commitment to improving the education system in Wales through their involvement in school-to-school support. These arrangements often benefit the school that provides the support as well as the school that receives it, for example by providing increased opportunities for aspiring leaders to develop their skills in a different environment. There is capacity within schools in Wales for school-to-school support work, but this work needs careful planning to ensure that the schools providing additional support are not over-stretched.

Small schools

13 Most of the schools featured in this report are medium-sized or large schools. Only a few are small. It is important to acknowledge the difficulties that small schools face in developing a wide leadership base. In such schools, the headteacher is normally accountable for all aspects of leadership. A few of our case study schools have adopted innovative approaches to broadening the leadership base in such circumstances. For example, Ysgol Friog in Gwynedd used governor expertise to support the school in implementing its post-inspection action plan.

14 In small schools, where leaders have limited management time, effective headteachers prioritise carefully how they will use this time to improve teaching and standards. This means that, although their systems are not as sophisticated and all-encompassing as those in larger schools, they can be effective in raising standards.

Title: Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

Main findings

1 The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) are providing a useful framework for local authorities to plan their Welsh-medium education provision. While the WESPs have the potential to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education strategy, at present there are weaknesses in how many of the plans are being developed and implemented. This is borne out by the slow progress being made against many of the targets within the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education strategy.

2 Many of the initial WESPs required extensive modifications when presented for Ministerial approval. This is partly because they were not aligned well enough with the Welsh Government's vision for Welsh-medium education. The partnership between local authorities and the Welsh Government in developing the WESPs, particularly in relation to setting targets, has been weak. The targets set by local authorities when aggregated do not align with many of the aspirations of the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education strategy.

3 All local authorities have consulted with key stakeholders at relevant stages when developing their WESPs in accordance with the statutory guidance. The effectiveness of this engagement varies greatly and the overall awareness of the WESPs by education practitioners within local authorities is limited.

4 In most authorities, Welsh-medium education fora contribute to developing and monitoring of the WESPs. The membership of the fora includes parents, governors, local authority officers, elected members, education professionals and representatives from groups with a particular interest in Welsh-medium education. In a few cases, local authority officers use these fora effectively, for example to plan and monitor outcomes and to help in setting suitable targets. In a few local authorities, fora meetings are held too infrequently, roles and expected contributions of stakeholders are unclear, and proposed actions are not stated precisely enough or evaluated adequately.

5 In local authorities where the progress made against the targets in the WESPs is good, there is a strong commitment by strategic leaders, elected members and senior officers to support Welsh-medium education. In these local authorities, the emphasis placed on delivering the WESP is high and improving Welsh-medium provision is a strategic priority. In a few local authorities where developing Welsh-medium provision is not a strategic priority, the WESP is often the responsibility of middle-tier officers. As such they do not feature prominently in strategic planning, progress is not scrutinised robustly at a high enough level, and progress against targets is slow.

6 A few authorities lack systematic approaches to measuring demand for Welsh-medium education. These local authorities tend to be reactive rather than proactive to increases in the demand for Welsh-medium education, resulting in provision having to catch up with the demand.

7 Most local authorities take appropriate steps to promote and raise awareness of Welsh-medium education provision in their area. In a minority of authorities, the information available to parents is limited and does not explain the longer-term provision from the early years to key stage 4.

8 Several terms are used for schools where Welsh is used extensively as the medium of teaching, such as 'Welsh schools', 'bilingual schools', 'traditional Welsh schools' or 'natural Welsh schools'. These terms do not explain well enough the extent of the provision for pupils through the medium of Welsh and English. Official Welsh Government categorisations (see appendix 2) are not always used consistently by schools and local authorities. This makes it challenging for parents to make informed decisions about their children's education.

9 There is considerable variation in the emphasis given by local authorities to increasing the proportion of learners taking GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh. Only a minority of local authorities see this as a priority. Although half of the local authorities track the number of Welsh-medium courses in key stage 4, only a very few set targets for individual schools to increase the number of pupils who follow them.

10 Most local authorities' WESPs explain the actions they propose to take to increase the percentage of 16-19 learners who study subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools. Although further education institutions and work-based learning providers are outside the scope of local authorities' WESPs, there are a few examples where effective partnerships through 14 -19 learning pathways networks result in collaborative Welsh-medium courses being provided in key stage 4 and in some cases in post-16.

11 Most of the eight local authorities visited have undertaken an appropriate audit of Welsh-medium additional learning needs (ALN) provision during the last five years. However, the majority do not conduct these audits regularly enough or in enough detail to evaluate provision in terms of quality or capacity. As a result, they fail to identify gaps in provision or to implement improvement plans in a timely manner.

12 Partnership working between local authorities and regional consortia in relation to developing the WESPs is at a very early stage. The WESPs provide a useful framework to facilitate conversations between officers and to promote collaborative working within and between local authorities. There are a few examples of good cross-authority work impacting well on provision and standards.

13 All the local authorities visited had undertaken a linguistic skills audit of their teaching workforce. Only in a few instances do local authorities consider their current Welsh-medium workforce capacity, along with their recruitment and retention challenges, when considering their school organisation projects and longer-term provision planning.

14 Progress against the targets in the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy varies across the seven outcomes:

Outcome 1: More seven-year-old learners being taught through the medium of Welsh

Over 1,200 more Year 2 learners in the Foundation Phase were assessed in Welsh language (language, literacy and communication skills – Welsh) in 2015 compared to 2011. However, as the overall number of Year 2 learners in Wales has also increased, the proportion being assessed through the medium of Welsh has remained at around 22% (Welsh Government, 2011, Welsh Government, 2015a). The Welsh Government target for 2015 of 25% has not been met (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Outcome 2: More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school

Since 2011, the number of learners at Year 9 (14-year-olds) assessed in Welsh has declined, and so has the overall number of learners. There has been a slow but steady upward trend in the proportion of Year 9 learners assessed in Welsh, from 16.3% in 2011 to 17.8% in 2015 (Welsh Government, 2015c). The Welsh Government target for 2015 of 19% has not been met (Welsh Government, 2015b). Across Wales, despite the small increase in the proportion of learners who are being assessed in Welsh at Year 9, around 13% of learners who are in Welsh-medium education in Year 6 do not continue in Welsh-medium education in Year 9 (Welsh Government, 2015b). This figure has stayed generally static since 2011. As a result, these learners do not develop their Welsh language skills to the best of their ability.

Outcome 3: **More learners aged 14-16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh**

Between 2011 and 2015, there has been an overall decline in the proportion of learners who take two or five level 1 or level 2 GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh (in addition to GCSE Welsh first language). The decline is steepest for learners taking five additional subjects. Welsh Government targets for 2015 for both these indicators have not been met (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Outcome 4: More students aged 16-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh, in schools, colleges and work-based learning

Since 2011, the proportion of learning activities carried out by learners aged 16-19 through the medium of Welsh or bilingually has stayed generally static in schools, at around 21%. There is also a largely static picture in work-based learning, with the proportion remaining between 3 and 4%. In further education institutions, the proportion of learners studying in Welsh or bilingually has increased by around three percentage points to 8.5% in 2014 (Welsh Government, 2015b). These Welsh Government targets for 2015 have been met by schools, further education institutions and work-based learning providers.

Outcome 5: More students with higher-level Welsh-language skills

The proportion of learners taking both A level Welsh first language and A level Welsh second language, in comparison to the take up of their respective GCSEs, has declined since 2011. Welsh Government targets for 2015 for both A level qualifications have not been met. The number of entries for A level first language has fluctuated between around 250 and 300 since 2011. The number of entries for A level Welsh second language has declined substantially over the same period (Welsh Government, 2015d).

Outcome 6: Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN)

No data is collected at a national level to measure the availability of Welsh-medium provision for pupils with ALN.

Outcome 7: Workforce planning and continuing professional development (CPD)

Around a third of registered teachers in Wales are Welsh speakers, with slightly fewer able to teach through the medium of Welsh. The proportion of teachers joining the profession as newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who are Welsh speakers is marginally higher than this proportion, as is the proportion of NQTs who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh (Education Workforce Council, 2015).

Recommendations

Local authorities should:

R1 Ensure that the WESPs are a strategic priority

R2 Have systematic processes in place to measure the demand for Welsh-medium provision

R3 Work with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh

R4 Work with schools to set targets to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who continue to study Welsh as a first language and follow specific subject areas through the medium of Welsh

R5 Make effective use of their Welsh-medium education fora to help to develop their WESP and to monitor progress

R6 Evaluate their Welsh-medium additional learning needs provision to identify any gaps

The Welsh Government should:

R7 Ensure that the targets agreed in the WESPs reflect the aspirations in their Welsh-medium education strategy

R8	Ensure that all local authorities place enough strategic importance on delivering the targets within the WESPs
R9	Monitor the implementation of the WESPs rigorously

Title: Adult Community Learning

Main findings

1 Over recent years, success rates[1] for ABE, ICT and ESOL are around 10 percentage points below completion rates[2]. This is because on average one in ten adult learners undertake and complete their course, but they have either not attempted or may not have been successful in the level undertaken.

2 In most ACL partnerships, financial reductions have had a significant impact on provision and staffing levels. In many cases, ACL partnerships have had to reduce courses and the number of venues. Nearly all partnerships have reduced the number of teaching staff, leading to a loss of expertise, especially in digital literacy. Reductions in administrative staff also mean that venues are open for shorter hours. This restricts the timetabling of classes leading to a more limited choice of courses, and means that many learners have greater distances to travel to classes.

3 ACL partnerships maintain a strong commitment to providing learning for hard-to-reach learners, such as the long-term unemployed, single parents, minority ethnic groups, people with physical and mental health needs, the isolated and the elderly, and those who have had poor experiences of statutory education. In many cases, partnerships have formed new alliances with other providers that have access to funding, but do not have the capacity to deliver the required courses.

4 Nearly all ACL partnerships are committed to providing 'leisure' or wellbeing courses, such as those in modern foreign languages, creative writing, art, craft and needlework, general household maintenance, gardening, and yoga and fitness training classes, on a full-cost recovery basis. However, this arrangement results in inequality of opportunity for learners who are less affluent or have difficulty accessing suitable transport.

5 Leaders of some ACL partnerships have successfully persuaded a number of tutors and learners from long-standing classes to form self-funding clubs where the social function of the class has become as important as the learning itself. In these cases, learners take charge of hiring the tutor and venue and organising the class themselves, facilitated through the partnership. This reduces the need for public funding, while still providing activity that supports wellbeing.

6 ACL partnerships have continued to apply quality assurance procedures to maintain the quality of teaching and learning. They are using the outcomes of their quality assurance well to inform self-evaluation and make decisions about ways forward. However, wider financial cuts in local authorities mean that many senior leaders in the ACL sector have moved jobs or left the service, resulting in fewer experienced staff to assure the quality of teaching and learning.

[1] Success rates are calculated by dividing the learners' number of learning activities (courses) followed and attained by the number of courses terminated (completed or withdrawn).
[2] Completion rates are calculated as the number of learning activities completed divided by the number of learning activities terminated

Recommendations

ACL partnerships should:

- continue to assure the quality of the teaching and learning to provide all adult learners with value for money

The Welsh Government should:

- review its policy and funding strategy for the ACL sector

Title: Pupil Participation: a best practice guide

Main findings

1 Pupil participation is strong in schools that have the following characteristics:

- Pupil participation and building positive relationships are an integral part of the school's **vision and ethos**. Leaders and managers have a clear strategy for promoting participation and for fostering good relationships. They support and encourage open and honest participation. Leaders create an ethos where pupils respect the rights of others and understand the importance of diversity and equality.

- There are clear **roles and structures** in place across the school to capture the views of all pupils on a wide range of issues relating to school improvement. Staff take the views of pupils seriously and act on them. Pupils, staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to participation. Leaders can demonstrate the impact of participation on school improvement planning.

- Pupils have a breadth of **opportunities to participate** within and beyond the school to contribute to debate and influence decisions across a wide range of issues that affect them. These opportunities encourage pupils to develop the skills needed to become active citizens.

- Pupils and staff access good quality **training and continuous professional development** that is well targeted to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to have pupils' voice heard in discussions and in decision-making.

2 Where pupil participation is strong, pupils make a valuable contribution to school improvement by influencing decisions on wellbeing, learning experiences, and the quality of teaching, and by helping to identify the school's future priorities. Many schools report that pupil participation contributes to an improved school environment and ethos, and to better relationships between all in the school community.

3 There are also benefits for pupils in greater participation, including improved health and wellbeing, improved engagement and behaviour, and improvements in learning, achievements and school performance. Through their greater involvement in decision-making, pupils develop valuable personal and social skills, such as listening, communication, negotiation, prioritising, and working with others. They also gain a better understanding of the rights of other members of the school community and of the consequences of actions that affect others. Pupils are better prepared to become ethical, informed and active citizens of Wales and of the world, and attitudes towards active citizenship become more positive.

4 Nearly all schools inspected between September 2013 and July 2016 comply fully with the School Council Regulations. In almost all schools, the school council makes a worthwhile contribution towards improving the school learning environment. In these schools, pupils' views are taken into account and influence decisions on school life.

5 Estyn gathers pupils' views through a questionnaire issued before inspecting all schools, pupil referral units and non-maintained settings. Most learners feel that staff respect them and help them to understand and respect others. Most learners are encouraged to do things for themselves and to take responsibility. Many learners also feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect and that their school listens to their views and makes changes they suggest. A summary of the questionnaire findings is in Appendix 1.