Estyn

Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

The Annual Report of
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales

2008-2009

Summaries of Estyn remit surveys

BUDDSODDWYR | INVESTORS
MEWN POBL | IN PEOPLE

Iechyd
ar Waith

Health
at Work

Contents

14-19 Area inspection

1   We carried out a survey of the quality of education and training for learners aged 14 to 19 in one of the 22 local authority areas this year (Caerphilly).

2   Area inspections look at a particular aspect of education and training for young people who are aged 14 or over in an area in Wales. Among other things, the inspections look at the standards of provision in schools, further education colleges and work-based learning providers. In most cases, the area is a local authority area.

3   Overall, we found that the performance of learners in Caerphilly improved as they moved from key stage 4 into post-16 education and training. At key stage 4, the performance of learners in Caerphilly was improving, but it was still one of the lowest-performing authorities in Wales. When compared to similar schools, those in Caerphilly performed below expected benchmarks. However, at post-16, learners in schools and colleges who take A levels performed well and many achieved better than expected when compared to their performance at GCSE. In the colleges that serve the area, overall completion and attainment rates were above national comparators, and performance was generally good in work-based learning providers. The participation rate of post-16 learners in full-time education and work-based learning was good overall. The proportion of learners not in education, employment or training has improved over the last two years.

4   We found that there had been a lot of progress in establishing sound partnership working and collaborative provision over the last two years. Learners aged 16-19 now had access to a wide range of general and vocational courses. However, at key stage 4, there were not yet enough vocational courses at level 2 to allow all learners to follow courses that best suit their needs and aspirations. All learners benefited from good personal support and most learners received advice and guidance of suitable quality. However, a few learners did not have enough access to impartial advice and guidance when choosing options at key stage 4 and post-16.

5   We found that strong strategic direction and a clear vision drove the work on implementing Learning Pathways 14-19. Procedures for evaluating the network as a whole were not yet fully operational and not all providers monitored standards and provision for their learners closely enough when learners were in partner institutions. At key stage 4, there was adequate and improving value for money. The provision for post-16 learners offered good value for money.

Play and active learning: A toolkit for Foundation Phase practitioners

6   The aim of the toolkit is to offer practical support to practitioners in schools and settings in implementing a play and active approach to learning.

7   The toolkit supports the 'Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds' by encouraging Foundation Phase practitioners to evaluate how well they are delivering this key feature of the Foundation Phase. The toolkit poses questions for practitioners to ask of themselves when planning, delivering and assessing learning. It identifies characteristics of good practice in play and active learning and provides case studies from schools and settings in Wales where the Foundation Phase is thriving.

8   The toolkit and case studies should help practitioners to:

• raise standards of children's achievement by considering how well they are currently providing quality play and active learning experiences;

• identify and celebrate their strengths in providing quality play and active learning experiences;

• recognise where good quality provision needs to be maintained;

• identify areas where there is room for improvement;

• make decisions about how to improve; and

• promote good practice.

Local authority support for the education of children of migrant workers

9   Estyn visited eight authorities and 20 schools in order to find out how well they meet the educational needs of children of migrant workers.

10   In general, the best local authority support for the children of migrant workers is provided in the city areas of Wales. In these areas they have extensive experience of providing support to schools for learners whose first language is not English or Welsh.

11   In all schools sampled, children of migrant workers generally make good progress and achieve well overall. They are usually very well motivated and behave well, especially once they have had time to settle into school life.

12   The children of migrant workers are usually punctual and generally attend school regularly. However, a significant number of learners in most schools take extended holidays to their home countries. These exceptions to the generally positive picture have an adverse effect on attendance levels in a few schools and local authority areas.

13   Many children of migrant workers often arrive at school without notice. In these cases, schools receive very little personal information on the learners or any information of their previous attainment. As a result, schools find it difficult to put in place effective early support.

14   Many local authorities do not monitor the work of centrally employed specialist staff well enough. This means that managers generally do not know enough about the strengths and weaknesses of their specialist staff.

The impact of 'unlocking the potential' funding on promoting the use of special schools as community focused resource bases

15   The 'unlocking the potential' pilot was very successful. It raised awareness of the skills required by teachers in special schools and gave special school staff a chance to try out long-standing ideas and to build trust between special and mainstream schools.

16   Outreach and training programmes by special school staff were a particular strength and helped mainstream school staff improve how they work with pupils with additional learning needs.

17   Special schools made good progress towards becoming bases for training and resources, for modelling good practice and as providers of relevant advice and guidance. By sharing their skills, special school staff felt that others valued their work more. However, a very small number of the projects focused only on special schools and their pupils.

18   Special and mainstream school pupils benefited from working with each other. Often, pupils in special schools improved their performance, and mainstream pupils gained a better understanding of disability. A few projects helped pupils to move on at pre-16 and post-16 and gave parents/carers more information. This reduced parents' concerns.

19   Where a few projects did not work as well as they could do, it was because managers did not keep to the aims and terms of the grant, or did not analyse the benefits that stemmed from the funding. Not enough projects focused on working with other agencies. A few local authorities did not consult all their special schools or include the projects in their Children and Young People's Plan. Despite the success of the projects, not enough staff know enough about what is working well across Wales.

The impact of RAISE
(Raise attainment and individual standards in education)

20   Across Wales, and at all key stages, pupils entitled to free school meals perform significantly less well than other pupils. This gap in performance is wider in secondary schools than in primary schools. There is also a wide variation between different local authorities in the level of performance of free-school-meal pupils and the rates of improvement over the last three years.

21   After two full school years of the RAISE initiative, there have been no major changes in the performance of free-school-meal pupils against the main performance measures. It is still early to assess fully whether RAISE has had any long-term impact.

22   Many of the pupils who are disadvantaged do not directly benefit from RAISE-funded work. This is because nearly all the schools that receive RAISE funding identify their targeted pupils by using criteria other than disadvantage. As a result few average or more able disadvantaged pupils benefit from RAISE-funded activities.

23   In most schools, the achievement of pupils involved in specific RAISE-funded work has improved a great deal, especially in literacy. One of the most important benefits of RAISE has been its impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, and on the development of personal, learning and social skills.

24   Most schools do not do enough to monitor the achievements and progress of all disadvantaged pupils. Very few schools have comprehensive strategies to close the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

25   Schools plan to continue with their activities and/or build on what they have learned as a result of their involvement in RAISE. Many schools appreciate the importance of developing pupils' social and emotional skills and of the impact this can have on behaviour, attendance and standards of achievement. They also see the impact that targeted support can have on pupils. As a result, most schools wish to continue with the existing activities using mainstream funding.

26   One of the main legacies of RAISE is the increased capability of teachers and teaching assistants, largely through the acquisition of new skills, for example in teaching reading or running nurture groups, and by the development of leadership roles.

Local authority placements of pupils with additional learning needs in independent special schools with linked 52-week residential provision

27   Estyn conducted a survey and made visits to local education authorities and independent special schools with linked 52-week residential provision to see how well these schools meet pupils' complex needs.

28   The strategic planning for placing children with complex needs in independent special schools with residential provision is not good enough. There are too may weaknesses in the way local authorities provide flexible local services, including family support, for pupils with complex needs, such as extreme social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and/or other difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

29   In April 2008, local authorities in Wales placed just over 50 statemented pupils in independent special schools with linked residential provision. Nearly all of these pupils are looked-after children placed out of their own area to receive education and care.

30   The cost of this provision is high, ranging from £40k to £500k per pupil. In 2007, local authorities in Wales spent approximately £16m on this type of provision, or roughly £320k per pupil within these settings.

31   Inspection visits found that placing authorities had focused too often on finding a school that could meet the pupils' most challenging needs (often behavioural) rather than making sure the school could meet all their complex needs.

32   Most local authorities:

✗   do not monitor the quality of provision well enough;

✗   do not know if the provision meets pupils' needs; and

✗   do not know if they are getting value for money compared to other supported provision that might be provided more flexibly or locally.

33   Joint regional work between local authorities provides the potential for reducing these costs. However, collaborative working arrangements, including pooling of budgets and other resources between local authorities and their health partners, have not progressed well enough. These arrangements have yet to make an impact on the quality of services for most pupils with complex needs.

The impact of schools' race equality policies

34   Estyn visited 25 schools across Wales to assess the degree to which race equality policies and action plans are effective in managing practice and securing improved outcomes for learners from minority ethnic groups in primary, special and secondary schools.

35   Most schools provide care, support and guidance of good or outstanding quality. They treat everyone equally and fairly regardless of their racial group.

36   Although most of the schools visited have race equality policies, only around half have adapted these to reflect their particular circumstances. Other schools, mainly where numbers of minority-ethnic pupils are low, do not see the development of race equality policy and practice as a priority.

37   Most schools develop pupils' awareness of diversity and equality through assemblies and a variety of subject lessons. Pupils from minority-ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language are well supported. Most schools have positive measures to encourage good behaviour and to discourage bullying, but a few have no procedures for reporting racist incidents.

38   Although few schools track the progress of their pupils by minority-ethnic group, many schools say that pupils from these groups are highly motivated and achieve well. However, only a few schools have data to demonstrate this. Few schools make use of data on academic attainment by ethnic group collected by the Welsh Assembly Government to identify underachievement in order to target improvement.

39   Schools with significant numbers of minority-ethnic pupils place a high priority on staff training, sometimes provided by the local authority, to raise awareness of diversity and equality. However, many local authorities do not currently see this as a priority for them.

Best practice in mathematics of pupils aged 3 to 7 years

40   Estyn analysed national data and inspection reports and visited 15 schools and two local authorities to survey best practice in mathematics for 3 to 7-year-old pupils.

41   From 2003-2008, key stage 1 assessment results remained static with 87% of pupils reaching the required level 2 or better. Overall, girls continue to perform better than boys by four percentage points. However, the number of pupils gaining level 3 has fallen from 25% in 2004 to 22% in 2007 and 2008.

42   The percentage of pupils achieving level 1 remained constant during this period (2004-2008). Schools report that support programmes, such as 'Maths recovery', help pupils to make better progress. In the Foundation Phase, early indications suggest that more practical approaches are especially valuable in helping raise boys' standards of achievement in mathematics.

43   Not all teachers accurately assess the ability of more able pupils at the end of Year 2. Consequently, teachers in key stage 2 tend not to challenge these pupils enough and often give them work that is too easy. Some teachers have insufficient subject knowledge to be able to diagnose what pupils should learn next. Schools and local authorities need to work together more effectively to address these issues.

44   There is significant variation in assessment outcomes of 7-year-olds across local authorities in Wales. Not all local authorities take a consistently strong approach to evaluating and challenging standards of mathematics in schools and some have a greater impact than others in raising standards.

45   Pupils' learning in mathematics is most successful when schools:

✓ plan well-differentiated activities that challenge pupils at all levels;

✓ plan for and ensure that all pupils have opportunities to apply what they know to real-life situations and applications;

✓ do not follow published schemes slavishly, but use them to plan for and to meet the real needs of pupils;

✓ involve all staff in planning and assessing mathematics; and

✓ develop progression in numeracy across the curriculum.

Best practice in the reading and writing of pupils aged five to seven years (key stage 1)

46   Estyn analysed inspection and research findings to identify successful ways of learning and teaching reading and writing for pupils aged five to seven years of age.

47   Standards of reading and writing in English and Welsh as a first language in key stage 1 have remained much the same since 2000. Improving the outcomes for pupils in Wales is a key priority because the ability to read and write accurately, fluently, and with confidence and understanding, is crucial to pupils' success at school.

48   Across Wales, many pupils gain good reading and writing skills in English and Welsh as a first language that enable them to progress well in their learning.

49   Most pupils achieve higher standards in reading than in writing. Overall, girls attain higher standards than boys in English and Welsh. The difference between the performance of boys and girls has been around nine percentage points for the past eight years. The widest difference is in their standards of writing, where girls are 12 percentage points ahead of boys in English and 15 percentage points ahead in Welsh.

50   In the best practice, schools:
   ✓ develop oracy, reading and writing skills together, so that pupils see that they are connected and that they are useful and effective tools for thinking and communication;
   ✓ have carefully balanced plans for teaching reading and writing skills directly and alongside play-based activities that motivate and enable pupils to gain secure literacy skills;
   ✓ provide opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in authentic situations where there are audiences other than the teacher;
   ✓ avoid formulaic and undemanding writing tasks and provide pupils, including those who are more able and talented, with reading and writing tasks that stretch and challenge them; and
   ✓ use a range of performance data well to track pupils' progress and techniques, such as assessment for learning, so that pupils know where they are, what they need to do to improve and how to bring about improvements.

51   Many schools are better at using assessment information to improve the standards of pupils' reading than their writing. In a few Welsh-medium schools, curriculum planning and teaching do not take enough account of the particular learning needs of pupils who do not speak Welsh as a first language fluently.

Food and fitness in schools: an update, April 2009

52   As part of its 2007-2008 remit to Estyn, the Welsh Assembly Government requested a report on how well schools were working towards improving pupils' health with an emphasis on physical activity and healthy eating. This report, published in May 2008, was based on evidence from school inspection reports published between September 2005 and December 2007.

53   In 2008-2009, the Welsh Assembly Government requested an update to the earlier report. This update report, which was published in March 2009, is based on a review of reports on primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units inspected between January and November 2008. The report also includes a number of good practice case studies.

54   Overall, it is still too early to judge the full impact of the measures undertaken by schools and local authorities to address the recommendations from the 2008 report.

55   The findings from school inspection reports published between January and November 2008 are similar to those outlined in the earlier 'Food and fitness in schools' report we published in May 2008.

56   The more recent inspection reports from January to November 2008 show that most schools are continuing to do well or very well in assuring the healthy development, safety and wellbeing of pupils. Inspectors awarded nearly 90% of schools a grade 1 or 2 for the question relating to healthy living in the common inspection framework and almost all schools continue to use a wide range of effective strategies to encourage pupils to be healthy.

57   The earlier report showed that only a very few schools had separate policies for food and fitness. The situation is improving and now around half of secondary and special schools, and about a third of primary schools, have an effective policy on the provision of healthy food and the promotion of physical exercise.

58   The way schools take account of the views of learners has improved a lot. Now around half of primary school reports and a significant minority of secondary and special school reports highlight the important role played by school councils in influencing schools to promote regimes of healthy living.

59   The number of primary schools that promote pupils' awareness of the importance of fresh fruit in a healthy and balanced diet almost doubled from 29% at the time of the previous report to 56% in the update report.

60   The 'Food and fitness in schools' report published in May 2008 indicated that only a very few schools had effective internal systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of healthy living work. This continues to be the case.

Good practice in parental involvement in primary schools

61 Estyn visited 17 primary schools to find out how they involve parents and if this involvement has an impact on standards that pupils achieve. In this guidance, Estyn considers the effectiveness of parents' involvement and identifies examples of good practice.

62 The most important factors in getting parents involved in school are the enthusiasm and accessibility of the headteacher. When a school plans and implements positive policies to involve parents, this can have a big impact on improving pupils' wellbeing, particularly in relation to standards of behaviour and school attendance. Parents report that they like schools to have clear and consistent rules.

63 Almost all the schools we visited believe that they involve parents enough in the daily life of the school. Most, but not all of them, recognise that this involvement has a positive impact on their pupils' learning.

64 Most parents are keen to be involved in traditional activities, for example helping children with homework, supporting fund-raising and social events, and attending parents' meetings. A few parents, usually mothers, get involved in the school spontaneously, particularly those who are confident and well educated. For example, they become school governors.

65 A few schools plan successful, innovative projects to encourage 'hard-to-reach' parents, with the provision of refreshments a popular incentive.

66 Parents feel more confident to participate positively if they:

✓ feel the school knows them personally;

✓ receive clear information about induction and day-to-day matters; and

✓ have a basic understanding of the school curriculum and what their children are going to learn.

Improving modern foreign languages in secondary schools in Wales

67   This survey report updates Estyn's advice and guidance on good practice for schools and local authorities in improving modern foreign languages in secondary schools. It takes account of recent inspection evidence and new curriculum requirements. It links with the update of Languages Count, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for the promotion of modern foreign languages in Wales, which was first published in April 2002 against a background of a continuing fall in numbers of pupils studying modern foreign languages in key stage 4.

68   The report uses information from Estyn school inspection reports and school questionnaires, and from interviews and lesson observations carried out during visits to successful modern foreign language departments. It describes performance in schools across Wales as measured by teacher assessments and examination results.

69   Overall, standards of achievement as judged by inspectors in Section 28 inspections are generally good in modern foreign languages and similar to those in other subjects. In the schools visited for this survey, standards were much higher than the average for Section 28 inspections. Where standards are outstanding, pupils show concentration, enthusiasm, confidence and a willingness to participate and have a go, even when the work is difficult.

70   The pupils who study modern foreign languages in key stage 4 and at A level generally get good results. The proportion achieving the expected level at the end of key stage 3 is improving, but it is still relatively low compared to other subjects.

71   The report analyses and describes in detail the features of high standards and good teaching. It goes on to identify and describe other factors that affect pupils' achievement, including:

- pupils' and parents' attitudes;

- the promotion of modern foreign languages;

- school curriculum arrangements and option systems;

- collaboration between subject departments and schools;

- support for language teaching;

- continuing professional development; and

- teacher supply.

72   The report makes recommendations for secondary schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government. Above all they need to ensure that modern language departments provide challenging, high-quality teaching, that teachers receive regular professional development, and that pupils and parents realise the importance of studying languages.

An evaluation of the delivery of key skills qualifications at key stage 4 in schools that are not piloting the Welsh Baccalaureate

73   Estyn surveyed 28 secondary schools to evaluate the arrangements for the delivery of the main key skills qualifications of communication, application of number and information and communication technology (ICT) at key stage 4. The report focuses on schools that are not participating in the pilot of the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4.

74   Standards in pupils' key skills have improved steadily in secondary schools and they are now good or better in 70% of schools. However, most schools do not enter pupils for key skills qualifications at key stage 4.

75   In 2005-2006, the majority (56%) of key skills qualifications went to 16 to 18-year-olds. Only 3% of all key skills qualifications went to learners at key stage 4. Nearly 50 (22%) secondary schools in Wales enter pupils for one or more key skills at key stage 4, but about half of these enter very few pupils. Only one school enters almost the whole cohort for all three main key skills qualifications (communication, application of number and ICT).

76   Many schools deliver the key skills of communication through subject work for English or Welsh and application of number through work for mathematics, supplemented by work in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils collect portfolio evidence for key skills qualifications from one or two subjects only, because teachers find it difficult to assemble evidence from a wide range of subjects. A major barrier to the more widespread take up of key skills qualifications is the perceived time-consuming nature of the collation and assessment of the portfolio evidence.

77   Schools that successfully encourage a greater take-up of these qualifications at key stage 4 have a whole-school strategy and a clear sense of direction for developing pupils' key skills.

An evaluation of post-18 offender learning in Wales

78 Prisons and probation areas offer a wide range of learning choices and qualifications and many offenders achieve well. This helps them to find employment at the end of their sentence. Staff also help offenders develop their personal and social skills. Resettlement staff in prison prepare offenders well for further education, training and employment. In probation areas, staff help offenders settle back into their communities.

79 The smooth transition of learning between custody and community is sometimes hindered by poor transfer of learning documentation. In the community, there is comprehensive provision to get offenders into work or learning, but there is little overall co-ordination across different agencies.

80 The leadership and management of learning for offenders are generally good. However, managers in prisons and probation do not always manage offenders' attendance well enough.

81 Overall, providers pay good attention to a range of diversity issues. However, there is not enough provision in the Welsh language or for those with poor basic skills. A minority of offenders do not have their needs assessed well enough, especially those with the most complex learning needs.

82 Offenders in Wales do not have enough access to information, advice and guidance services.

Evaluation of the extent and impact of remodelling on learning and the school workforce

83   Estyn surveyed over 50 schools across Wales to see how well they have implemented the national agreement on workforce remodelling and to find out what impact this has had on school staff and pupils.

84   The national agreement is having a very positive effect in schools. All teachers, irrespective of the size of the school or phase they are working in, are reporting benefits to their roles as a result of changes associated with workforce remodelling and workload reduction. Schools generally feel that the morale of teachers has improved as they have a better work/life balance. They also feel that the changes that have taken place have significantly improved the professional status of support staff. However, schools are finding it more difficult to implement leadership time and dedicated headship time fully.

85   The delivery of specified work during teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time is undertaken in most schools by teachers. Higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) deliver specified work in only a minority of schools, while a few schools employ a range of other adults.

86   In about a half of primary schools, the teachers who cover PPA time teach the pupils specific subjects, for example information and communications technology, music or physical education. In this way, the pupils are taught the subject by the same specialist each week. This specialist teaching helps to raise standards in these subjects.

87   There are concerns in schools about the resources and support available for workforce remodelling, especially with regard to leadership time, dedicated headship time and examination invigilation. Only about six in every ten schools feel they have enough resources to comply fully with all requirements of the national agreement. Also, more than a half of schools in ten local authorities across Wales feel that they do not receive enough guidance and support from the authority to implement the elements of the national agreement effectively.

88   The changes associated with the national agreement have been far-reaching in all schools. The benefits of the changes for teachers represent good value for money. However, their impact in terms of improvements in the standards pupils achieve is far more limited.

Physical education for pupils with learning difficulties: identifying good practice

89   Estyn looked at standards and quality of provision for physical education and school sport (PESS) for pupils with learning difficulties within 29 schools. The report also identified good practice.

90   Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in physical education. In special schools, standards are very high, particularly in outdoor and adventurous activities.

91   Many pupils with special educational needs respond well to their full inclusion in the physical education activities of mainstream classes or schools. In a very few schools, pupils with special educational needs are not included enough in the main activities of mainstream classes or schools.

92   Teaching skills are usually good, but in a few schools teachers do not have enough subject knowledge to plan progressive tasks to challenge pupils effectively. This means that the learning is not as good as it could be and pupils lose interest easily.

93   There are generally good subject links between schools in a PESS partnership. However, special schools are not always included in cluster arrangements and therefore opportunities are missed to disseminate good practice in both mainstream and special schools.

94   There are not enough professional development opportunities for teachers to help them in teaching physical education to pupils with specific learning needs.

95   In many schools, pupils who usually have the support of a learning assistant in the classroom do not receive this support during their physical education lessons. As a result, these pupils do not make enough progress.

Listening to the community: How good are providers at finding out the learning needs of adults in their local communities?

96   Estyn used inspection evidence from adult community-based learning and remit reports, and completed questionnaires (from learning network co-ordinators, adult community-learning managers and 300 community learners) to see how well providers are finding out about the learning needs of adults in their local communities.

97   Many tutors and development workers regularly consult with learners about their experience of learning. However, most providers and learning networks are not consistent about learner consultation. The outcomes of consultations are not used well by providers. Learners rarely receive feedback from providers about how these consultations influence the development of learning in the area.

98   In a few cases, providers and learning networks use project funding well to help communities to identify their local learning needs. In these cases, providers involve learners well, especially from disadvantaged communities, and they help them to develop local solutions to their learning needs.

99   Very few workers and managers have a good understanding about how national policies, such as the Beecham Report, should influence their work. Providers and networks do not use learner-centred approaches consistently well in their work with communities. Few create good opportunities to help learners to take part in consultations that help to influence and improve local services.

100   Current guidance from WAG is not clear enough to help community-learning networks involve learners consistently, to encourage participation in citizen consultations, and to make sure that all networks in community settings link more successfully with each other.

The effectiveness of performance management and review (PMAR) in further education institutions

101   Estyn inspected 15 further education colleges to see how well colleges were implementing the nationally-agreed performance management and review system (PMAR).

102   The national scheme for performance management and review (PMAR) has provided all 15 further education institutions visited as part of this survey with a system that they use well to establish broadly consistent arrangements for managing the performance of teaching staff.

103   The system is based on a comprehensive appraisal of teachers' performance as well as their developmental needs. All institutions visited have good arrangements for managers to observe teachers working with learners. The lesson observation schemes are rigorous and identify appropriate actions for improvement.

104   All the institutions visited have integrated the performance management of teachers into their other arrangements for managing quality effectively. The PMAR scheme has led to much better management of teachers' performance compared to the findings of the previous inspection cycle. However, in a few cases, providers do not place enough emphasis on the impact of teachers' performance on standards and learners' outcomes. A few institutions have begun to work together to share good practice in lesson observations in relation to performance management.

105   Overall, most institutions manage the threshold progression scheme rigorously and fairly. Most institutions have found that the introduction of the arrangements for performance management have encouraged teachers to take part in more continuing professional development activities. Teachers' involvement in industrial secondments has been particularly effective in a few institutions.

Management information in local authority youth services

106 Evidence from inspection shows that youth services do not identify and collect enough data on what learners achieve. Without this analysis and evaluation, youth services are not able to judge what impact they are having on the lives of young people. In particular, youth services need to analyse and evaluate more data on social inclusion and the personal development of young people.

107 The planning of services at all levels does not benefit from a clear evaluation of how well youth services are meeting young people's needs. With a few exceptions, the self-evaluation reports of local authority youth services focus too much on describing the activities they offer, rather than evaluating the quality of the provision or the outcomes that learners achieve.

108 Where management information systems are good, staff can track the development of young people, monitor their outcomes, secure additional resources and remodel services on the basis of informed evaluation. However, the report highlights a great deal of inconsistency in the quality of management information systems in local authority youth services across Wales. Most do not use robust management information systems. Even where the collection of management data has improved, there has been little use of it to improve the delivery of the service.

Local authority intervention and support for schools causing concern

109 During inspections, inspectors identify a small number of schools across Wales as requiring special measures or significant improvement.

110 Nearly all local authorities support these schools well after inspection and the schools improve within the expected time. However, local authorities are not always able to improve these schools quickly enough before their inspection to avoid inspectors judging them a cause for concern.

111 A range of factors contributes to this. Most local authorities know their schools well and many now focus more sharply than in the past on the schools that need the greatest improvement. However, a minority of local authority officers do not use data well enough to challenge schools or to evaluate rigorously enough the quality of leadership and management in a school.

112 In a few cases, the governing body is not aware that the school needs to improve or is reluctant to take firm action to address poor performance. In addition, local authorities do not always keep elected members fully informed about the performance of schools. In a few schools causing concern, attendance is poor and there are many exclusions. In these cases, different services do not work closely enough together to help all aspects of the school to improve. A few schools remain very difficult to improve because their local authorities do not use the full range of powers that are available to them.

Using data to plan strategically for children and young people

113 Estyn used inspection reports and visits to a sample of five local authorities to judge the extent to which local authorities and their partners use data to plan strategically for children and young people. The report also evaluates the range and impact of data used by local authorities and their partners.

114 Overall, local authorities and their partners use a wide range of data to assess children and young people's needs. Through strategic partnerships, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership, providers are slowly increasing and improving their use of data to inform the planning of services. However, only a very few partnerships can currently identify outcomes for children and young people accurately.

115 Local authorities and their partners struggle to collate data on outcomes for children and young people other than data on school examinations and teacher assessments.

116 There are gaps in the data used by local authorities and their partners. This is mainly because the data required is not available at a local level or for the specific age group targeted. There are also limited national data sets to help partnerships benchmark against each other effectively.

117 Often, local authorities and their partners know the priority areas where services are required, but do not use the available information to deliver services and resources to the children and young people who need them.

How effective is provision for learners aged 16 to 19 years with English language acquisition needs?

118   The quality of provision for learners with English language acquisition needs varies between providers and sectors. There is no consistency between providers from similar institutions and there is a greater divide between school and other post-16 sectors. There is a disparity in funding between the sectors that leads to an inequality of English language educational support.

119   In many providers the initial assessment of learners' needs is informal and lacks structure. Front line teaching staff are not equipped with the skills to support, develop and enhance learners with English language acquisition needs. Providers are not always aware of the number of these learners within their institutions and LLWR does not have the capacity to extract the data.

120   There is little local or national planning for the transition stages of learning when a learner moves from one level of education to another (for example between GCSE and AS level). Communication between key partners is weak. Information about a learner's prior language support and ability with the English language does not transfer with them between providers.

121   Two different divisions within the Welsh Assembly Government support these learners. The provision lacks a clear national strategic lead to bring together the various agencies and government departments working with learners with English acquisition needs.

Evaluation of the quality and value of the education and training funded through the Wales Union Learning Fund

122   Since 1999, the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) has funded over 127 projects in companies across Wales. It encourages employees, whether members of a trade union or not, and their family members, to engage with education and training.

123   There has been an increase in the take-up of learning by people who have no previous tradition of learning as well as an overall improvement in skills within the workforce.

124   Many employees have returned to education and training for the first time since leaving school, with some gaining a formal qualification for the first time in their lives.

125   Many employees benefit from learning opportunities in the safe and supportive environment of their workplace. Without the support of the funding, it is highly unlikely that they would have returned to education.

126   The strong partnership working between unions, employers and employees has been key to implementing the programme successfully. Recognition within companies of the benefits of lifelong learning has improved the motivation, self-esteem and confidence of many employees.

127   Union learning representatives, who support the projects, help employees start to overcome their barriers over returning to education and training. This enables them to match carefully the opportunities available through the WULF programme to the needs of the learners. This has resulted in a high staying-on rate for many courses, often in excess of 90%.

128   However, in many cases, the starting date of a course is delayed by poor planning so that the two-year funding runs out before employees have completed their training.