Section 3: Summaries of Estyn remit surveys

Annual Report 2010-2011

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE | Gold

Iechyd ar Waith
CYRRAEDD Y NOD
THE CORPORATE STANDARD
Health at Work

Contents

Every year, the Welsh Government and Estyn agree a programme of education and training issues to look at in detail. We carry out survey work into these issues in addition to our inspection work. We present our findings and advice in reports sent directly to ministers and provide recommendations for the Welsh Government[1].

Reports also contain recommendations for providers and local authorities. In the full reports, you will also find examples of good and excellent practice as well as recommendations on how to improve. This helps leaders, managers and practitioners to improve the work they do.

[1] Subsequent to the publication of all remit reports, the Welsh Government publishes action plans to address the recommendations from each report.

Literacy and the Foundation Phase

The impact of the Foundation Phase on the wellbeing of children has been positive and, in the majority of schools, five to six-year-olds achieve well. In a minority of schools, this is not the case, often because leaders and practitioners do not understand the principles and practice of the Foundation Phase. Leaders and practitioners generally have not evaluated the Foundation Phase robustly enough to identify where it is working well and what needs to be improved. In a few schools, staff are not convinced about the educational value of the Foundation Phase or do not know enough about it to ensure that it is implemented effectively.

In the majority of schools where leaders and practitioners have implemented the Foundation Phase well, there is a focus on raising standards particularly in literacy. However, in a significant minority of schools, there is not enough direct teaching of reading, and appropriate opportunities for children to practise and use their reading skills are not always provided. While the Foundation Phase in nearly all schools provides rich contexts and motivating opportunities for writing, the range and quality of children's written work in many schools are often limited because writing tasks are formulaic and undemanding.

The wellbeing of many children benefits from the implementation of the Foundation Phase. Generally, the benefits are in children's increased motivation and enjoyment of learning. Active learning approaches and the use of the outdoor learning environment are helping boys to be more engaged in their learning.

The development of the outdoor learning environment is progressing well in the majority of schools. However, there is often not enough support from practitioners to maximise children's learning, particularly in reading and writing. In a minority of schools, there is limited or no outdoor provision.

Outdoor learning

The Foundation Phase places great importance on children using the outdoors to experiment, explore and take risks. Many schools and settings have invested a lot of time, energy and money in improving provision for outdoor learning to meet these aspirations.

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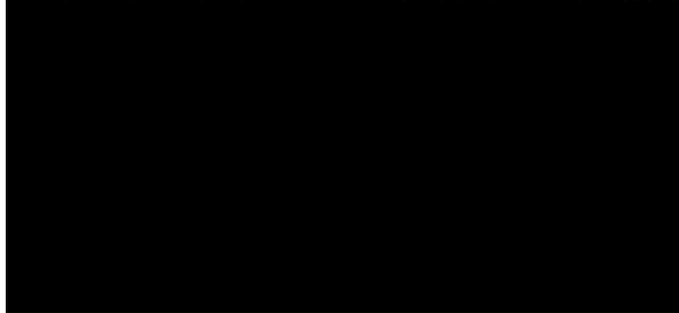
The first cohort of children has not yet completed the Foundation Phase. This means that there is little data available currently that could be used to quantify the benefits of the Foundation Phase. The lack of data also makes it difficult to compare providers. This data will be available from summer 2012.

In two-thirds of the sessions observed as part of the survey, learning experiences in the outdoors were good or better. The provision for outdoor learning has been more successful in schools than in non-maintained settings.

Most schools and settings are making at least adequate use of the outdoors and children's learning generally benefits from this. In most cases, children's enjoyment, wellbeing, behaviour, knowledge and understanding of the world, and their physical development improve as a result of using the outdoors. However, the outdoors is not used enough to develop children's reading and writing, Welsh language, creativity, or their ability to use information and communication technology.

Practitioners tend to assess children's learning less often and less well outdoors than indoors. They do not track the progress children make in developing their skills outdoors well enough. With children spending more time outdoors, this means that important milestones in their development may be missed.

Senior leaders and managers have not always received enough training on the Foundation Phase to identify good practice, challenge less effective practice, or make cost-effective decisions on improving outdoor provision and facilities.

> " *"Practitioners tend to assess children's learning less often and less well outdoors than indoors."*

Supporting more able and talented pupils in primary schools

Overall, too few pupils across Wales achieve above the levels expected for their age in teacher assessments at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Estyn evaluated the effectiveness of strategies that primary schools and local authorities use to support and challenge more able and talented pupils. We also evaluated the impact of Welsh Government guidance and training on these strategies.

Provision for more able and talented pupils varies considerably across Wales. A minority of primary schools do not identify these pupils effectively and do not provide appropriate support for them. Teachers in these schools do not have the expertise to provide an appropriately challenging curriculum to enable these pupils to achieve the highest standards possible.

In a few schools with the best provision, there is a whole-school approach to data analysis and assessment that identifies more able and talented pupils accurately. Parents understand the school's approach to providing additional support for all pupils, including the more able and talented. In these schools, all pupils are entitled and have equal access to relevant provision.

Transition between primary and secondary schools is a significant factor in the long-term success of more able and talented pupils. Where transition arrangements are weak, more able and talented pupils may become frustrated, develop negative attitudes to school and become disengaged from learning.

Very few schools and local authorities evaluate the impact of strategies for addressing the needs of more able and talented pupils. A few local authorities have not taken full advantage of the availability of Welsh Government training to improve provision for these pupils.

"*Very few schools and local authorities evaluate the impact of strategies for addressing the needs of more able and talented pupils.*"

Evaluation of the impact of the non-statutory Skills Framework at key stage 2

A very few schools have used the Skills Framework as a starting point for planning their new curriculum. This is mainly due to schools, in the first instances, concentrating on the statutory National Curriculum documents.

However, many schools track coverage of thinking, communication, number and information and communication technology (ICT) against the Skills Framework. In most schools, there is insufficient emphasis placed on teaching skills progressively and not enough use is made of the developmental phases within the strands of the Skills Framework. However, the Skills Framework itself does not offer enough guidance to teachers.

Thinking skills are becoming a central feature of many lessons at key stage 2. Teachers regularly ask a range of good questions to stimulate learners' thinking. Learners are encouraged to work things out for themselves and work collaboratively with their peers. Many schools have received effective training on implementing thinking skills.

Many key stage 2 learners have good opportunities to influence what they are learning and are engaged and enthusiastic learners. Through the introduction of a more skills-based curriculum, many learners are beginning to become aware of how to improve their own learning skills.

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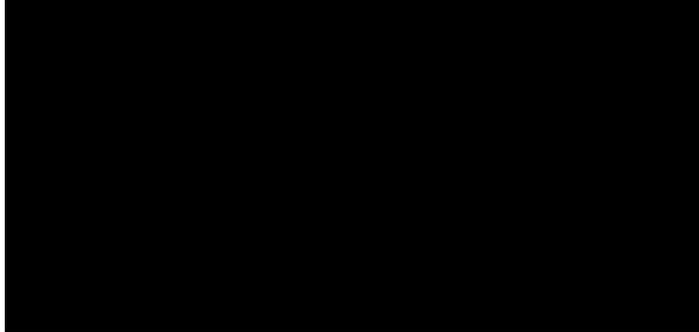
> " *"Teachers regularly ask a range of good questions to stimulate learners' thinking. Learners are encouraged to work things out for themselves and work collaboratively with their peers."*

Money Matters –The provision of financial education for 7 to 19-year-olds in primary and secondary schools in Wales

Nearly all learners have opportunities in school to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of financial matters. Overall, learners have adequate financial knowledge, understanding and skills. The recent increased emphasis on financial education in schools, and in particular secondary schools, has led to an improvement in learners' knowledge and understanding of certain aspects of financial matters, such as of different types of credit cards.

Most schools, particularly secondary schools, provide financial education mainly through personal and social education lessons. However, these lessons are not enough on their own to make sure that learners have a good knowledge and understanding of financial matters or develop the skills to make sound financial decisions when they are older.

A minority of schools have carefully planned and mapped opportunities for financial education in particular subjects or through topics across the curriculum. These schools often have a co-ordinator with overall responsibility for this work and involve most staff in the delivery of financial education. However, the majority of schools do not plan opportunities well enough for learners to reinforce and apply their financial skills in different contexts across the curriculum. These schools do not make sure that there is continuity and progression in financial education learning experiences.

There is a lack of Welsh-language resources for financial education. A minority of resources have been translated into Welsh, but teachers do not always know how or where to access these resources. National financial institutions have produced resources such as interactive games that appeal to learners, but most of these are not available in Welsh.

Numeracy for 14 to 19-year-olds

GCSE results and international comparisons show that performance in numeracy in Wales is lower than in the other home nations and below the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In Estyn inspections, standards of numeracy are judged as lower than communication in English or Welsh and information and communication technology.

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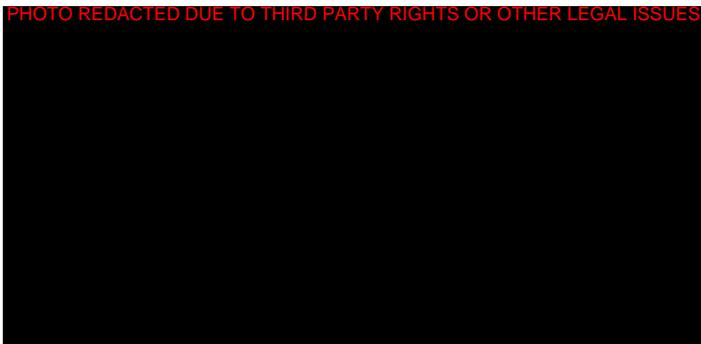
The number of learners in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers who gain application of number qualifications has increased substantially over the last five years. However, too many of these learners gain qualifications at too low a level relative to their ability. By taking qualifications at too low a level, these learners do not improve their numeracy skills enough.

Only a minority of schools plan to develop numeracy systematically across the curriculum. Only a few schools track the progress of learners in numeracy, including those who previously received support for numeracy in key stage 3, well enough. Around a half of the schools surveyed do not provide specific support for key stage 4 learners with poor numeracy skills. Although schools assess pupils' numeracy skills, they do not share this information well enough with others when their learners attend courses at other providers.

Further education colleges and work-based learning providers assess the level of learners' numeracy skills at the start of courses. These providers generally use this information well to identify whether learners need specific support. As a result, many learners have suitably negotiated numeracy targets as part of their individual learning plans and benefit from a range of appropriate support strategies.

Area inspection report on the quality and standard of provision for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Flintshire

In our inspection of 14-19 provision in Flintshire, we judged that current performance is good and that there are good prospects for improvement.

Learners' attainment is good overall. At key stage 4, there has been a significant trend of improvement over the last three years in the performance of Flintshire secondary schools. Outcomes in Deeside College are consistently well above national comparators and expectations. Across work-based learning provision, the rates at which learners gain their full qualification frameworks and other qualifications compare well with national comparators and benchmark data.

Participation and attendance levels are high. A higher proportion of Year 11 pupils in Flintshire continue in full-time education than the Wales average. The proportion of Year 11 leavers not in education, employment or training has fallen and continues to be well below the Wales figure.

The 14-19 network has a shared vision and a clear focus on providing the best learning experiences for young people in Flintshire. It has a good track record in developing collaboration between providers and sectors. The Learning Core Centre located at Deeside College offers a high-quality environment for the delivery of collaborative courses.

There is a strong commitment to evaluating the quality of collaborative provision, and responsibilities for the quality assurance of all aspects of collaborative provision have been clearly defined. The network makes extensive use of learner voice to inform its quality assurance processes.

The current pattern of post-16 provision in schools is unsustainable. Around half of Flintshire secondary schools have too many small post-16 classes. In around a quarter of schools, as many as one-in-four post-16 classes have fewer than five learners. There is also unnecessary duplication of courses on offer in a few schools.

The education of Gypsy Traveller pupils

The most important factors in improving outcomes for Gypsy Traveller pupils are improving attendance and attitudes towards school. Although local authority traveller education staff often provide high-quality support to schools and the traveller community, the attendance rates and attainment levels of Gypsy Traveller pupils remain low. This is often because of the negative attitudes of many Gypsy Traveller parents to formal secondary education.

Few schools have policies or practices that specifically address the needs or views of these pupils and their parents. In most schools, the curriculum does not actively promote Gypsy Traveller culture.

Too few local authorities and schools use attendance, exclusions or attainment data to measure the impact of their support for Gypsy Traveller pupils. National data collected on Gypsy Traveller pupils is not always accurate and this can lead to inequalities in funding. Most local authorities use aspects of the Welsh Government's circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to inform their policy and provision, but its overall impact has been limited.

In Estyn's report on 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller Learners' (2005), we made five recommendations. Only one of these has been addressed; the Welsh Government has established an All-Wales Co-ordinators group. This group meets regularly and provides a forum for sharing good practice in provision for these learners. However, its work has not yet impacted widely on the work of most secondary schools.

> "Most local authorities use aspects of the Welsh Government's circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to inform their policy and provision, but its overall impact has been limited."

Review of disability equality schemes and practice in schools and pupil referral units

Over the last three years, mainstream schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) have improved the way they promote disability equality and access. However, special schools are more effective in this work than both of these sectors.

Almost all schools and PRUs have a published accessibility plan and a disability equality scheme that includes an updated action plan, approved by their governing body.

Schools' schemes, action plans and practice vary considerably in scope and quality. The best action plans identify intended actions, include appropriate timelines and indicate those people with responsibility for implementing specific actions. However, the majority of schemes focus on learners with physical or visible disabilities, rather than the full range of disabilities. Most parents and learners are unaware of these plans and schemes. Schools and PRUs do not evaluate the impact of their schemes well enough.

In most schools and PRUs, better partnership working is improving outcomes for people with disabilities. Partnerships between special and mainstream schools widen the opportunities and improve support for learners with disabilities.

Most learners with disabilities and their parents are positive about the learners' educational and social progress. Most schools and PRUs make favourable adjustments and adaptations to the curriculum and the school environment that are appropriate to learners' individual needs.

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"Most learners with disabilities and their parents are positive about the learners' educational and social progress."

Tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools

The few schools that support disadvantaged learners well have systematic, whole-school approaches. These schools make sure that the curriculum and teaching methods are flexible enough to suit all learners, including those who are disadvantaged. Staff also assess and track the progress of these learners carefully to spot improvement or deterioration. Individual support such as mentoring or help with basic skills and homework is provided for these learners.

The barriers to high achievement for disadvantaged learners are varied and complex. Boosting learners' self-confidence is often the key to improving behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning. Improving these aspects are often the necessary first steps to raising educational attainment. Disadvantaged learners often suffer from poverty of aspiration and cultural opportunities. The best schools try to overcome these limitations by providing learners with extra-curricular and out-of-school-hours experiences that they would not get otherwise.

Schools cannot tackle the effects of poverty of aspiration and cultural disadvantage on their own. They need to work with the community and with other services. By offering parents and community groups access to facilities, family learning and social, health and police services, the most effective schools try to foster trust between schools, services and the local community. A culture of mutual respect and trust is needed before schools can successfully co-ordinate 'team around the child' support from various services for disadvantaged learners and their families.

School leaders generally have not received much training on working with the community or services in this way, or on using data to evaluate the impact of initiatives to tackle disadvantage. Schools do not share best practice or collaborate effectively with each other in this area. Most local authorities do not do enough to offer schools practical guidance on how to work with local communities and services, or how best to analyse outcome data for disadvantaged learners.

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The impact of deprivation on learners' attainment in further education and work-based learning

Estyn evidence shows that there is a strong link between poverty and low educational attainment in schools. Pupils from poorer families are more likely to attain at lower levels than other pupils.

School leavers from deprived areas have good opportunities to continue their education and training through work-based learning and further education. The financial support that these learners receive is a major factor in helping them complete their education or training. There are a variety of means-tested grants and training allowances available for learners on further education or work-based learning programmes. The majority of learners interviewed felt that they would not be able to continue studying without this financial help.

Providers do not analyse their learner data well enough to make sure that they attract enough learners from deprived areas. Providers need to work more closely with schools to identify learners from deprived areas and make them more aware of the personal and financial support available to them when making career choices and before they decide on the best further education or training options available for them.

Further education colleges and work-based learning providers provide good care, support and guidance to learners from deprived areas. However, providers do not analyse data on learners' completion and attainment rates well enough to show that care, support and guidance have a positive impact on performance and that learners from deprived areas are achieving their potential. Only a small number of providers compare the achievements of learners from deprived areas, or the achievements of learners in receipt of financial support, with the performance of other learners.

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The developing thinking skills and assessment for learning programme

The teaching and learning techniques that make up the 'Developing thinking skills and assessment for learning' programme are recognised as good practice. In a few of the schools visited, where teachers apply programme strategies consistently, pupils' behaviour and attitude improve and their thinking and learning become more structured.

These changes in teaching and learning do not necessarily lead to sustained or easily measurable progress in standards or skills. The evidence that the programme has improved standards in end-of-key-stage assessments or standardised tests is limited.

The programme's techniques are essentially content-free, which leaves the challenge of embedding its approaches in the wider curriculum to teachers. The need to apply the programme's techniques within an overall curriculum plan that is designed to develop pupils' skills progressively has not generally been well understood. Consequently it has not had a clear impact on the teaching or learning of literacy.

In many of the primary schools visited, there have been improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning. The interaction between pupils and adults has improved and pupils are more willing to listen to the views of others. In particular, the confidence and engagement of lower-ability pupils have improved. Pupils generally are more enthusiastic about their work and have a greater sense of pride in it.

The programme has changed the classroom practice of many of the teachers involved. These teachers have become more confident and creative in using a wider range of teaching styles. This has been achieved more consistently in the primary schools than in the secondary schools visited.

> " *In many of the primary schools visited, there have been improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning.*"

Skills for older workers and the impact of adult community learning on the wellbeing of older learners

There are 16 adult community learning (ACL) partnerships across Wales that support the delivery of lifelong learning. All of these partnerships work with older learners in community settings. Many of these older learners are keen to continue learning, especially in updating their information and communication technology skills.

All of the ACL partnerships do well, and in a few cases very well, working at the grassroots of communities with many learners who are not in work or employment or who are in groups that are hard to reach.

Many older people use their learning sessions well to develop their employability skills. However, there are other older learners who also need the opportunity to use education and skills development for another phase of their lives. With the emphasis for the delivery of learning in Wales currently stressing skills for employment, there are gaps in the delivery for many of the ACL learners who are retired and in isolated and vulnerable situations. This means that the curriculum offered currently to older learners, especially those over 70, is not always able to provide lifelong-learning opportunities that maintain and develop skills for continued wellbeing into older age.

A follow up survey of progress by stakeholders in addressing shortcomings in professional youth worker training in Wales

In 2011, Estyn looked at the progress key stakeholders had made in addressing the recommendations it had made in 2010 for improving youth and community worker qualification training. Estyn found that there have been some good initiatives that have begun to improve communication among stakeholders. However, there has been slow progress in setting a clear strategic vision for this important qualification training.

Not enough is known about the size, qualifications, skills levels and deficits, and the on-going training needs of the local authority and voluntary sector youth service workforce. There is therefore an urgent need to carry out an up-to-date 'all Wales' strategic analysis of this sector.

Communication between universities, local authority youth services and the Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) has improved. There has been an increase in consultations and stakeholder meetings. However, this increase has developed in an unplanned manner, rather than in response to a strategic analysis of what needs to be done, and how best to achieve it. As a consequence, the new demands on local authority officers and lecturers from higher education institutions for time to attend meetings are hard to manage.

Stakeholders have begun to improve the way they work together to ensure there are sufficient accessible and appropriate work placements for future youth and community workers. However, employers and universities remain concerned about the costs of placements, and their respective capacity to provide the support needed to make sure that placements provide suitable experiences.