



# 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

## Education in children's homes

March 2008



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**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 (LAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of The Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

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

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## Introduction

- 1 In its remit for 2007-2008, the Welsh Assembly Government asked for an audit of the education provided in new independent schools that provide education for organisations that operate children's homes and other small establishments that have registered with the National Assembly for Wales since the Education Act 2002. These establishments had not been required to register their education provision prior to the Act. This report contains information about that provision.
- 2 This project is undertaken in the context of the strategic direction established by the Welsh Assembly Government in 'Wales: A Better Country'. It takes particular account of the Government's vision for supporting inclusive education based on evidence of effective practice.
- 3 Across Wales, there are a number of small privately operated children's homes that house fewer than five children of compulsory school age. Most, if not all, of these placements are publicly funded, either because the child is in public care or because they have a statement of special educational needs. Some of these children do not receive education in maintained schools, often because they have records of non-attendance or have been permanently excluded, and are educated at home. Since the introduction of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, 20 small, privately operated children's homes have needed to apply to the National Assembly for Wales to register their education provision as independent schools. This remit focuses largely on this provision.
- 4 The Welsh Assembly Government also asked that this report should include information about the education of young people who live in children's homes that have not applied for registration with the National Assembly for Wales to provide independent school education. The education provision for these young people has been an important aspect for this remit.
- 5 The report describes the working practices in independent schools that cater mainly for 'looked-after'<sup>1</sup> children. In particular, it focuses on:
  - meeting the needs of learners;
  - curriculum organisation;
  - resources; and
  - the well-being of learners.

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<sup>1</sup> These are children for whom the local authority has legal parental responsibility. The term is used to describe all children who are the subject of a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours.

6 The report draws on:

- a detailed questionnaire response from headteachers and residential care managers of children's homes;
- a short questionnaire response from a sample of learners;
- meetings with teachers, headteachers, residential care managers and pupils in a range of schools and children's homes across Wales;
- discussions with maintained schools and local authority officers;
- scrutiny of policies and schemes of work provided by schools;
- reports provided by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) following annual visits to children's homes;
- Estyn notes of visits to new independent schools following registration inspections; and
- reference to other relevant studies carried out in England, Scotland and Wales.

## Background

- 7 The Education Act 2002 defines an independent school as any school that provides full-time education for:
  - five or more pupils of compulsory school age; or
  - one or more pupils with a statement of special educational needs or who is in public care that is not a school maintained by the local education authority.
- 8 The Education Act 2002 requires that all independent schools must be registered with the National Assembly for Wales and comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003<sup>2</sup>.
- 9 The Welsh Assembly Government has agreed procedures with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Estyn for evaluating a school's compliance with the regulations and readiness for operating. These involve registration inspections of the premises, education provision and the school's documentation and day-to-day procedures. A school that does not meet the 'Standards' is required to produce an action plan for the Welsh Assembly Government that specifies the steps it will take to improve. Estyn monitors the school's progress against the plan and reports to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 10 Since September 2003, 29 new independent schools have applied for registration. Of these, 22 schools have successfully completed the registration process and the registration of four other schools is currently being considered. Two new independent schools were unable to meet the requirements of the regulations because their premises were unsuitable and they have withdrawn their applications. One other school has closed.
- 11 Twenty of the newly registered independent schools only educate looked-after children who live in private children's homes, many of whom have statements of special educational needs.
- 12 The majority of children's homes, whether state maintained or privately operated, make arrangements for young people to receive education provided by the local authority in which the home is situated. This provision may be:
  - at a local maintained special or mainstream school;
  - at a pupil referral unit maintained by the local authority; or
  - from home tutors who visit the children's home.

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<sup>2</sup> see Annex 1

- 13 Since the Education Act 2002, of the organisations that operate private children's homes and have registered independent school provision exclusively for young people in their care, the organisation may operate:
- a 'satellite' school on one site to educate young people who travel to the school from its different children's homes in the locality (one school);
  - a school based in an on-site annex for young people living in the children's home (four schools); or
  - a small school within the children's home itself that is similar to home tuition provision (15 schools).
- 14 The young people attending these newly registered independent schools all live in children's homes that accommodate fewer than five young people; most only accommodate one or two. Each home is run by a residential care manager. The young people are also supported at home by teams of care staff who are usually involved in the education programme. Their roles vary from school to school.
- 15 Research carried out in 2004 by the Care Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in Scotland entitled: 'Residential Care and Education: Improving practice in residential special schools in Scotland' found that:
- “where practice was good, key workers and key teachers worked closely together to support young people in developing their competences in learning, interpersonal relationships and a range of independent living skills”.
- 16 In the children's homes that are not registered to provide independent education but were visited as part of this remit there are a variety of arrangements to provide education for their residents. Monitoring these arrangements is the responsibility of the local authority in which the children's home is placed geographically. The arrangements for education are noted by CSSIW in their annual reports of visits to each home. CSSIW recognise the importance of education in these reports.
- 17 For the purpose of this report, newly registered independent schools are referred to as 'RI schools'.



## Main findings

- 18 The arrangements for educating young people in children's homes are complex because of the diversity of provision. The nature and quality of the provision depend on how important education is as a priority for the organisations that run children's homes.
- 19 Most new independent schools are unfamiliar with the detail of the requirements for registration when they first apply for it. However, they generally make good progress in following recommendations to meet the requirements for opening. A small number of schools give cause for concern because they do not do enough to improve provision within a reasonable timescale.
- 20 Most of the schools that have been registered by the National Assembly for Wales since September 2003 are small establishments that provide education for looked-after children and pupils with special educational needs. The provision of education in almost all these schools is usually sound although the quality varies.

### Registered independent (RI) schools

- 21 In the 15 small schools that operate in children's homes, pupils do not all receive the same entitlement to education. The amount of time that the teacher spends with pupils varies too much from school to school. In almost all of these schools, care staff are expected to support the education programme by supervising follow-up activities when the teacher is not on-site. The quality of these activities is too varied and the activities do not always link well enough to the topics pupils are studying in lessons.
- 22 In the most effective RI schools, teachers and care staff work very well together to plan appropriate tasks and projects. Too often, care staff do not know how to help pupils with follow-up activities well enough so the value of these activities can be limited.
- 23 When education is not valued enough by everyone in the RI school, pupils behave less well and are difficult to engage.
- 24 Only a small number of RI schools assess new pupils thoroughly or monitor their progress regularly in order to use the information to make sure that lesson planning is appropriate to meet pupils' needs. The schools that do this help pupils to make progress and the pupils achieve more success.
- 25 Placing authorities<sup>3</sup> from across the UK neglect their role as corporate parents in regard to the education of looked-after children in placements in Wales. Most are too slow in providing pupils' records for RI schools; they do not keep information up-to-date or monitor pupils' progress well enough.

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<sup>3</sup> Placements of looked-after children may be arranged and financed by education or social service departments of the child's home local authority or by the local health board in that area. Placements may involve more than one of these bodies but the child's home authority's social service department is ultimately responsible for monitoring the placement as a corporate parent.

- 26 Very few placing authorities seek consent for placing pupils with statements of special educational needs in RI schools prior to placement. As a result there is a potential for pupils to be placed in schools that cannot meet their needs. Retrospective application for consent may result in a pupil being moved again if the school is not considered suitable and this is not acceptable for these vulnerable pupils. For example, a pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder was placed in a school where staff did not have enough knowledge of her needs to make adequate provision for her.
- 27 A small number of RI schools are not aware enough of their responsibilities for pupils with statements of special educational needs. They do not plan or monitor these pupils' progress well enough.
- 28 Challenging pupils in very small RI schools make best progress when teachers have appropriate experience and clear expectations, and plan and monitor individual education programmes that are pitched to meet individual needs.
- 29 No RI schools offer pupils a full range of National Curriculum subjects or programmes of study but all offer pupils experience in the seven areas of learning as required by the 'Standards'<sup>4</sup>. Schools generally offer a mixed programme that includes basic skills in literacy and numeracy plus appropriate courses in life-skills. Physical activity is a strong feature of the curriculum in almost all schools. Experience of creative activity is the weakest area and although a few pupils have art lessons, there is very little provision for music.
- 30 Reward systems work well where they are applied consistently across education and care with all parties working together.
- 31 About half the new RI schools do not comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Regulations (Wales) 2003. They do not plan well enough for disabled pupils who may wish to join the school or for disabled staff and visitors.
- 32 Overall, Estyn's registration inspections identify a reasonably secure basis for education in most RI schools that have the potential to lead to higher standards and better outcomes for pupils, if the recommendations are followed through successfully.

### **Non-registered education provision**

- 33 The quality of education provided for young people in children's homes that are not linked to a registered independent school varies too much. Many learners from these children's homes attend maintained provision in a local school or pupil referral unit while others receive a mix of home-tuition, part-time outdoor education or no education at all. It is a cause for concern that this provision is rarely monitored well enough by either the local authority in which the children's home is situated or by the placing authority.
- 34 A small number of private children's homes in the sample visited offer education but have not registered their provision as independent schools. There is uncertainty about the requirement to register because these children's homes almost always only arrange a part-time programme of education activity that is not planned by a qualified

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<sup>4</sup> see Annex 2

teacher. However, learners in those children's homes are not receiving their full education entitlement and the education provision is not monitored well enough.

- 35 In children's homes that are not linked to independent schools and where young people do not attend maintained education provision, there are shortcomings in planning for the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Generally, this results in too much personal and social activity such as shopping, laundry and cooking or informal activity determined by the young people.

## Recommendations

### **The Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R1 consider seeking formal arrangements with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to report directly to the Welsh Assembly Government where young people in children's homes are not educated in maintained provision; and
- R2 ensure that registered independent schools:
- maintain daily attendance registers that comply with regulations; and
  - fulfil the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Regulations (Wales) 2003.

### **Local authorities should:**

- R3 provide RI schools with pupils' education records more promptly and ensure that these include up-to-date information;
- R4 take a more positive role as corporate parents by maintaining better contact with RI schools and attending all statutory review meetings of pupils with statements of special educational needs; and
- R5 implement more effectively the recommendations from Estyn's report of March 2007 entitled "Local authority practice in monitoring the location of pupils being educated outside the school setting and those missing from education".

### **Registered independent schools should:**

- R6 carry out an initial assessment of new pupils, monitor their progress effectively and use the information to plan appropriately to meet pupils' learning needs;
- R7 involve teaching and care staff in planning a varied programme across the seven areas of learning that has clear learning outcomes, appropriate activities and uses a range of resources, particularly for art, design technology and music;
- R8 further develop opportunities for pupils to take accredited courses;
- R9 evaluate and monitor more rigorously the education programmes of study for pupils who attend other institutions for part of their education;
- R10 keep accurate daily attendance registers that comply with regulations and monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils more effectively; and
- R11 offer better professional development for staff.

**Organisations operating children's homes without independent school registration should:**

R12 ensure that young people in their care receive full education entitlement either in maintained provision or by providing appropriate home tuition or by complying with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

**Estyn and CSSIW should:**

R13 continue to work in partnership to monitor the education provision for all young people living in children's homes and provide information for the Welsh Assembly Government about whether the provision meets regulatory requirements.

**Estyn should:**

R14 further develop reporting procedures for cross-border placing authorities.

## Meeting the needs of learners

### Educational provision

- 36 There are 126 children's homes across Wales, including state-maintained and privately operated homes, that accommodate looked-after children. A few local authorities in Wales operate children's homes to accommodate young people from their local area, often to provide short-term respite care.
- 37 There are 95 privately operated children's homes in Wales. These homes almost always accommodate young people aged 11-16 with special educational needs that include very challenging behaviour. Many young people have moved placement many times and most have a history of failing in education at previous schools. These young people are often placed, at short notice, in emergency and many are very far from home. The majority of these learners are placed by authorities from outside Wales.
- 38 The National Assembly for Wales Guidance on the 'Education of Children Looked-after by Local Authorities' (2001) states that "local authorities should secure a suitable education placement for a looked-after child within 20 days after the child becomes looked-after". However, authorities where children's homes are situated may find it difficult to provide appropriate education placements and can be reluctant to accept responsibility for challenging pupils who enter the authority from elsewhere.
- 39 The arrangements for educating young people living in privately operated children's homes vary from full-time mainstream schooling to almost no education at all.
- 40 Most new registered independent (RI) schools are in rural areas and are geographically isolated. All of them provide healthy meals. None has a school uniform. Pupils are almost always driven, by care staff, to off-site activities such as local sports centres in vehicles owned by the organisation. Pupils attending the 'satellite school' are also driven by care staff to and from school.
- 41 A few young people living in children's homes near the border with England attend independent schools that are registered with DCSF<sup>5</sup> in England.
- 42 In five private children's homes visited as part of this project that have not registered to provide education, the quality of young people's education provision is not monitored well enough. These young people are not receiving their educational entitlement. Three of these five homes are providing education. In another two homes, young people are not receiving appropriate education. In one case the local authority had failed to make provision despite the care manager's and the placing authority's efforts. In the other, the organisation had failed to make any arrangements. One CSSIW report describes the education provision in one home as 'rudimentary'.
- 43 Most children's homes have fewer than four young people in residence and sometimes there is only one. When the young people are educated in the home,

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families

they have little opportunity to meet with others of a similar age. While this may be advantageous for the young people's own safety, they do not have enough opportunities to develop social skills.

- 44 One organisation employs a headteacher to oversee the education of pupils within each of its seven children's homes. These pupils have good but rare opportunities to meet together as a group for special days out.
- 45 One registered school is unusual in providing most of its teaching on-line via the internet and links with another school each week so learners can experience practical activities and meet other young people.

### **Assessment and record-keeping**

- 46 Placing authorities are often very slow to provide RI schools with records of new pupils' education history and, when it does arrive, the information can be out-of-date and incomplete.
- 47 RI schools' arrangements for assessing new pupils when they first arrive in a school vary too much. In many cases, learners have missed large amounts of education because they have moved placements, been excluded from schools or have not attended. Most are working at levels well below their chronological ages. Teachers need to assess new pupils promptly so as to plan an appropriate programme of education.
- 48 In the best practice, when new pupils arrive, about 25% of RI schools use their own thorough systems to assess these pupils' basic skills. They keep detailed records and monitor pupils' progress carefully at regular intervals. These schools use assessment well to plan appropriate individual programmes of work for pupils so as to meet their needs and can show very good evidence of pupils' progress. In a small number of cases, the school appropriately employs an educational psychologist to provide a more detailed assessment. RI schools that assess pupils carefully almost always complete pupils' personal education plans (PEP)<sup>6</sup> well and understand that learners value these plans.
- 49 In just less than half the RI schools, initial assessment is weak and this has a significant impact on the quality of education planned for and provided. Many pupils do not have a PEP despite the recommendation of the National Assembly for Wales in 2001<sup>7</sup> that "every looked-after child should have a PEP".
- 50 RI schools receive very mixed responses when seeking information about pupils from placing authorities across the UK. The requirement to ensure that every looked-after child has a PEP within 20 days of joining a new school depends on whether information has been received from the placing authority. The lack of this information is usually an important shortcoming that affects the schools' ability to comply with the requirement.

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<sup>6</sup> see Annex 3

<sup>7</sup> Guidance on the education of children looked-after by local authorities (National Assembly for Wales Circular 2/2001)

- 51 A further matter of concern is the need to take more account of the large number of cross-border placements of looked-after children in Wales. In its publication 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future', the Welsh Assembly Government sets out requirements for local authorities to coordinate the needs of young people in care in their area more effectively but coordinating with other UK placing authorities is complex.

**Meeting the needs of learners with statements of special educational needs**

- 52 Almost all new RI schools educate pupils with significant special educational needs. Almost all pupils in these schools have social, emotional and behavioural disorders (SEBD) but only about half of these pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- 53 Placing authorities are required to seek consent from the Welsh Assembly Government prior to placement of a pupil with a statement of special educational needs in an RI school. This is to ensure that the school is appropriate for meeting that pupil's needs. Very few placing authorities seek consent prior to placing pupils and therefore there is no measure of the RI school's suitability. Retrospective application for consent may result in a pupil being moved again if the school is not considered suitable and this is not acceptable for these vulnerable pupils.
- 54 RI schools do not always receive a copy of a pupil's statement of special educational needs from the placing authority and this affects the school's ability to plan appropriate provision. Pupils' statements of special educational needs are often out-of-date. For example, on one recent visit, a statement was dated 1997, when the pupil was age 4, and there was no updated information to help the school plan appropriately for the pupil who is now 14.
- 55 A small number of RI schools have very good knowledge of the statementing process and the related regulatory requirements. They meet placing officers either at the school or travel to the authority (often at some distance) and make sure that appropriate written records and reports are in order. These arrangements often involve cross-border placements that are difficult to follow up because schools do not have enough knowledge of placing authority arrangements and personnel.
- 56 In a very few cases, RI schools are not aware enough of their responsibilities for pupils with statements of special educational needs. They are unfamiliar with the procedures for annual review meetings and reporting to placing authorities.
- 57 Very few placing authorities, in Wales and the rest of the UK, arrange to attend pupils' annual review meetings at these small RI schools. Therefore, pupils' progress is not monitored well enough and pupils' efforts are not recognised and celebrated.



## Curriculum organisation

### Entitlement to education

- 58 The recommended requirement in Wales for education provision for pupils aged 11-16 years is 24 to 25 hours per week<sup>8</sup>. The National Assembly for Wales Circular 47/2006 entitled 'Inclusion and Support' states that:
- "Provision of full-time education within the timescale is not always possible for pupils who may have become deeply disengaged from education. Alternatively, their current circumstances may be such, that a rapid reintroduction into full-time education is likely to be unsuccessful. For these pupils the plans for their future education should cover specifically how the move to full-time education is to be achieved".
- 59 RI schools that educate pupils with special educational needs, including those without statements of special educational needs, interpret this statement and organise the curriculum in a variety of different ways.
- 60 In the best practice, RI schools provide a full-time programme of education, delivered by qualified and experienced teaching and support staff. These arrangements are the norm in 'satellite' and 'annex' schools. However, direct teaching provided by RI schools within children's homes is usually organised on a part-time basis with the full-time provision relying on care staff supporting the teacher to provide follow-up activities.
- 61 Direct teaching time in RI schools within children's homes can vary from 5 to 26 hours of 1:1 teaching per week. Where the teaching time is less than the recommended requirement, these schools usually arrange for care staff to oversee a range of organised physical, and personal and social activities for the rest of the day. A few pupils do not value follow-up activities or homework enough and do not use their time well to make the progress they could.
- 62 Two RI schools organise their daily part-time curriculum effectively over almost a full 52-week year so that pupils settle into a working routine that is not disrupted by long school holidays. Overall, this goes some way to balance the lack of 24 or 25 hours' weekly provision.
- 63 However, offering more direct teaching time does not always result in lessons of good quality or positive outcomes for pupils. For example, in one RI school where direct teaching time is very limited, lesson planning is of high quality, relationships between all involved are very good and pupils make noticeable progress over time in improving their attitudes and achievements. This is because everyone in the school community works well together to promote learning.
- 64 A small number of privately operated children's homes do not make sure that their young people receive education that meets their needs. A few young people receive no formal education at all. The reasons for this are identified in Estyn's earlier

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<sup>8</sup> NAW circular 47/2006 Section 5, paragraph 1.8: 24 hours for key stages 3-4, 25 hours in Year 11

publication "Local authority practice in monitoring the location of pupils being educated outside the school setting and those missing from education" (2007). Some staff in children's homes are not aware enough of their responsibilities for young people's education and do not do enough to make sure they attend regularly or make sure that the programme is suitable. For example, one young person in one home had access only to outdoor education.

- 65 Placements in maintained schools can break down easily if pupils present challenging behaviour. One setting reports that the pupil who attends a local pupil referral unit is excluded too often. Another children's home provides home tuition but this is not monitored well and evidence suggests that it does not meet the learners' needs. Local authorities do not monitor this provision well enough either. The same problem was highlighted in England in a report on "Children in care missing out on education" in 2001 but little has changed to improve either the placing or receiving authorities' fulfilment of their roles. Authorities are often involved in cross-border placements of children and neglect these children's education.

### **Breadth and balance**

- 66 The Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 specify that a school's curriculum must give pupils of compulsory school age experience in seven areas of learning that include: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative. As part of the registration process, Estyn inspectors consider how far new schools provide pupils with a balance of suitable activities within each of the seven areas. Initial registration inspection identified shortcomings in the curriculum plans of about half the schools. Almost all schools took swift action to implement Estyn's recommendations to improve the curriculum and now make adequate provision.
- 67 No RI schools offer pupils a full range of National Curriculum subjects or programmes of study. These small schools do not always have staff with enough specialist subject knowledge to cover the whole National Curriculum, with the result that the content may not always be appropriate for the pupils. However, most schools use some elements of the National Curriculum in planning work. In the best practice, teachers are very resourceful in broadening the curriculum by drawing on the knowledge and interests of care staff and making good use of local facilities.
- 68 Other RI schools generally offer a mixed programme that includes the basic skills of literacy and numeracy plus appropriate courses in life-skills such as cooking and managing finance. Many schools adapt and extend commercially published schemes of work well to make sure that pupils have enough experience in each of the seven areas of learning.
- 69 Physical activity is a strong feature of the curriculum in almost all schools and pupils participate willingly. Pupils have good opportunities to use local facilities such as swimming pools and, in some cases, they belong to sports clubs and teams. Experience of creative activity is the weakest area and although a few pupils have art lessons, there is very little provision for music. The one exception is a school that provides very good quality music therapy.

- 70 While one RI school teaches pupils via the internet, the majority do not provide pupils with internet access, either for personal or safety reasons. Almost all looked-after children have access to computers but can only use the internet under supervision in their local library and this limits the time at their disposal to develop research skills.

### **The quality of planning**

- 71 Individual pupils all have very specific needs and interests. It is particularly difficult for schools to plan and develop appropriate courses for very small numbers of pupils when there is a regular turnover of pupils. Placing authorities may move pupils at short notice for social reasons or because of funding decisions that are outside the school's control.
- 72 Many RI schools plan appropriate lessons and projects that take good account of pupils' needs and interests. In the best practice, RI schools plan in detail and teachers have innovative ideas that motivate pupils and stimulate their desire to learn. Where pupils have been out of education for some time, this is essential if they are to make progress.
- 73 In a few RI schools, planning is imaginative. For example, a teacher holds a pupil's attention by using a short period of 1:1 direct teaching time to provide a wide range of well-designed, practical activities across different areas of learning, so that the pupil does not get bored or become challenging. Another RI school plans a project to grow vegetables for the kitchen involving a range of numeracy activities, including recipes, graphs and measures.
- 74 It is important for pupils that teaching and care staff work closely together. Outcomes are best for pupils when teachers involve care staff fully in planning the education programme so that everyone understands the learning objectives and care staff are confident in knowing the purpose and value of follow-up activities. In many RI schools, care staff provide good support for pupils in the classroom and join in activities so that pupils realise the value of education to everyone in the school community.
- 75 The case study below illustrates how one RI school plans good additional learning opportunities for pupils that involve care staff.

## **Case study 1**

### **Context**

A rural RI school in a children's home with three pupils on the school roll age 14-16 years. The case study illustrates an example of good planning that involves care staff.

### **Strategy**

The teacher plans an individual programme of lessons for each pupil and delivers one-to-one teaching for one session of approximately one hour each day. A trained learning support assistant is involved in the planning process and supervises the other two pupils. These two staff spend half a day in the school and provide a programme of appropriate follow-up activities for the rest of the school day that care staff will supervise.

### **Action**

In addition, this school designs optional daily topics for the month, that go beyond the school day and give care support staff good ideas for work that supplement the daily curriculum should pupils wish to extend their learning.

Reward points are published on the topic sheet so pupils know what they could achieve. Ideas include a month of 'special days' where pupils can research and write about historical events in that month, for example in 1911 when the Mona Lisa was stolen, the first Americas' Cup in 1851 or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech of 1963.

### **Outcomes**

Outcomes show that pupils enjoy the challenge and work hard to gain extra reward points. Care staff are positive about having specific topics to support.

- 76 'Annex' schools (a school based in an on-site annex to a children's home) almost always have effective handover meetings when staff shifts end when pupils, teachers and care staff discuss and evaluate the day's or evening's events formally. These meetings provide good opportunities for everyone to talk about pupils' learning, celebrate success and plan future activities.
- 77 Where pupils attend the 'satellite' school (a school belonging to the organisation where pupils from different children's homes travel to school) there are good home-school links via a weekly record book.
- 78 In a few RI schools, teachers do not use schemes of work or published materials well enough to develop projects that motivate pupils. Pupils are particularly challenging when work is not interesting and tasks are not age-appropriate. For example, many pupils do not respond well to photocopied worksheets that repeat tedious tasks that have already failed to interest pupils when they attended other settings.

- 79 In private children's homes where learners do not attend a school or pupil referral unit, there are shortcomings in the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Generally, this results in too much personal and social activity such as shopping and cooking or informal activity determined by the young person. In the worst cases, young people will not get out of bed even for this kind of activity, because staff do not know how to engage and motivate the 'hard-to-reach' or to plan suitably challenging activities.

## Outcomes

- 80 The educational attainment of looked-after children in Wales is variable across different local authorities but is generally poor.
- 81 The National Assembly for Wales 'Guidance on the education of children looked after by local authorities' 2001, stated that:

"Lack of reliable data about the educational circumstances and outcomes of looked-after children as a discrete group, and of detailed information about their individual progress, has been one of the major obstacles to raising their attainment".

There has only been limited progress in collecting data since then.

- 82 According to the Local Government Data Unit<sup>9</sup>, up to 31 March 2005, the last date for which specific data about looked-after children is available, only 35% of 15 year old looked-after children in Wales attained at least 2 GCSEs. On leaving school, 58% failed to attain a single GCSE or equivalent qualification<sup>10</sup>.
- 83 It is not appropriate to compare the attainment of pupils in RI schools with local and national averages, since these schools cater for a very small number of pupils whose ability and prior educational attainment differs from year to year.
- 84 In RI schools, many pupils are working at levels that are well below their chronological age although they do not necessarily lack ability. Pupils' records and staff confirm that many of these pupils have not been educated in one place for long enough to gain success in accredited courses.
- 85 Almost all RI schools are gradually developing the scope of their provision to offer pupils opportunities to follow accredited courses that will lead to qualifications. These developments in all RI schools are at an early stage because the schools are new. Nevertheless, teachers are investigating different options appropriately, attending training to increase their personal knowledge and skills, and broadening the range of courses and options available to pupils.
- 86 The range of courses in RI schools may include Basic Skills, GCSE or NVQ courses at appropriate levels. However, opportunities for GCSE courses are usually very limited because of teachers' limited subject knowledge, the difficulties in setting up appropriate courses for individual pupils and lack of interaction between the RI school and other local providers that could offer support.

<sup>9</sup> The Local Authority Data Unit collects information annually from maintained schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). The data does not include specific information about looked-after children.

<sup>10</sup> This information refers to looked-after children who are pupils in maintained schools.

- 87 All schools offer pupils opportunities to gain various recognised life-skills awards such as those offered by ASDAN. These courses are effective because they allow pupils to work individually and develop projects of interest to them although the quality of pupils' work is variable. A few teachers do not have high enough expectations and do not learn how to moderate pupils' coursework well.
- 88 Almost all RI schools arrange for pupils to have suitable opportunities to gain accredited sports awards through link outdoor education providers and sports clubs.
- 89 In two RI schools where pupils have particularly good opportunities, pupils' successes often encourage the efforts of other pupils in the school.
- 90 Two of the 20 RI schools have particularly good records of success. In one school, pupils who are looked after attain better results in GCSE courses than the national benchmarks for similar groups. Another school has achieved notable success with a pupil who is looked after being supported to move on to a university degree course. Both schools provide good teaching and have stable senior teaching staff. These schools also make their expectations clear and provide pupils with consistent support.
- 91 The study 'Going to university from care' 2005, found that "the quality of the final placement seemed to be more important than the overall number of placements, which ranged from two to 33". The case study below is an example of a looked-after child's progress to university from a registered independent school in a children's home.

## **Case study 2**

### **Context**

The school is a children's home in a large town in south Wales. Three young people aged 14-18 live there, two of whom are pupils in the school. One young person lived in the children's home for two and a half years. During this period she was on the roll of a local college for 4 days per week, studying for a National Vocational Qualification. She also attended the RI school for 1 day per week to follow ASDAN<sup>11</sup> courses. However, the young person was a reluctant student at college and her attendance was low at 62%. In 2004, a new teacher joined the staff at the RI school.

### **Strategy**

The new teacher introduced a more rigorous system of basic skills assessment and worked hard to develop a positive relationship with pupils. The teacher also developed detailed individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils. Initially, the young person refused to cooperate but over time, her attendance at school and college improved to 100% and she became more willing to participate in regular assessments. Her scores in basic skills tests show significant improvement over a two year period.

### **Action**

The young person required consistent support from the RI school teacher and care staff in the children's home to enable her to complete college coursework. College tutors would contact the children's home and staff there would make every effort to ensure that the young person's work was completed on time. The young person was ultimately successful in attaining success in her NVQ and ASDAN courses.

This young person was able to attend university open days with care staff and the RI school teacher supported her in completing her application and personal statement. The college also supported her in preparing for interviews.

### **Outcome**

The young person's university application was successful and she is now in the second year of a degree course.

The success of this student can be attributed to the:

- RI school teacher's clear expectations and careful planning based on appropriate assessment;
- subsequent improvement in the student's behaviour and self-esteem;

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<sup>11</sup> ASDAN offers a wide range of Awards and Qualifications for young people of all abilities. They aim to recognise and reward their skills as they complete 'Personal Challenges' in such areas as sports, healthy living, community involvement, work experience, expressive arts, relationships, citizenship, personal finance and enterprise.

- teamwork and support of the teaching and care staff in the children's home and the positive links they made with the college; and
- the importance given to education by the organisation operating the children's home.



## Resources

### Staff qualifications and deployment

- 92 Almost all RI schools employ teachers with UK or overseas teaching qualifications although in about half the schools, they are not qualified or experienced for the age group of pupils they are teaching.
- 93 In the best practice in about 15% of schools, teachers have significant experience and the confidence to make good provision for some very challenging pupils. However, a small number of teachers do not have enough experience to know how to plan appropriately and this impacts on pupils' behaviour and progress. These teachers almost always work alone in very small RI schools where there is little opportunity for them to observe other teachers in lessons or discuss and share their experiences with colleagues. These same teachers have confirmed that they do not know enough about the good work in similar schools.
- 94 Most of the 15 very small RI schools within children's homes employ only one teacher. In these schools, of course, the quality of that individual teacher is particularly significant. A few schools allocate too little direct teaching time for pupils to receive their full educational entitlement. However, if the time allocated is very well-planned and care staff are fully involved to support good quality follow-up projects, pupils can make better progress and improve their attitudes to learning more rapidly than in schools that offer more time but poorer teaching.
- 95 Occasionally, teachers in the smallest RI schools find educating challenging pupils too difficult and quickly move on. The turnover of staff is disruptive for the education of very vulnerable pupils, particularly if there is only one teacher in the school.
- 96 A few teachers have very good knowledge and experience of pupils with statements of special educational needs and use this well to plan appropriately and help less-experienced staff.
- 97 Two 'annex' RI schools that educate pupils with significant special educational needs use other qualified professional staff effectively to support the education programme. These include educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and music and art therapists.
- 98 Almost all RI schools arrange to send staff on appropriate training courses to promote pupils' well-being, for example in first aid. In a very few schools, care workers are encouraged and supported to gain qualifications as learning support assistants so as to develop their skills to help pupils in and out of lesson-time. In these schools, the staff team work well together to promote education but this does not happen often enough in other schools.
- 99 The opportunities for teachers to attend curriculum training vary too much from school to school. In the best practice, teachers attend courses regularly to develop their skills and learn more, for example, about accredited courses. About 30% of RI schools do not do enough to support teachers to develop their knowledge of the curriculum and teaching strategies.

**Provision of learning resources**

- 100 The accommodation for education in RI schools is almost always good enough. 'Annex' RI schools have very good premises and grounds with specialist, well-equipped subject rooms. Almost all RI schools within children's homes provide suitable separate rooms for education. The exception is a school that provides education via the internet and where pupils work in their living accommodation but attend a link-school weekly for classroom-based activities. The arrangement is very new and it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.
- 101 All RI schools make very good provision for pupils' physical activities by accessing local facilities including swimming pools, sports centres, parks, outdoor education providers and sports clubs.
- 102 Most pupils have appropriate access to technological equipment that includes computers, television, video and music players.
- 103 In most RI schools, the provision of books and other learning resources is adequate but limited in quantity. Schools generally have few resources for practical subjects such as art, design technology and music.
- 104 Most pupils have good opportunities to visit local places of interest. For example, one RI school developed a good quality humanities project about a pupil's interest in castles and visited several in south Wales. The RI schools within children's homes often plan a follow-up programme that involves visits to museums, galleries and libraries but the quality and purpose of this work vary too much.
- 105 Too many RI schools do not comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination (Wales) Regulations 2003. They do not plan well enough to meet the needs of disabled pupils who may join the school in the future or for the needs of staff and visitors.

## **Well-being of learners**

### **Attendance and punctuality**

- 106 Only a few RI schools maintain daily attendance registers that comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. Most schools do not realise the importance of maintaining accurate daily registers that record reasons for pupils' absence and punctuality. As a result, they cannot monitor patterns of pupils' late arrival and non-attendance well enough.
- 107 In RI schools in children's homes, attendance is often a problem. Pupils may be reluctant to get up in the morning and arrive late for lessons and disrupt other pupils' learning. In the worst cases, pupils are aggressive to staff or abscond from school. This is less likely where lessons are interesting and appropriately planned, where all staff work well together to promote the importance of education and reward systems are used effectively.
- 108 Children's homes that are not linked to RI schools are not required to keep daily education attendance registers and there is inadequate monitoring of these young people's attendance for education.

### **Reward systems**

- 109 Almost all RI schools have effective reward systems.
- 110 In RI schools in children's homes, pupils are usually awarded points towards vouchers, special trips or extra pocket-money. Most pupils respond well when the system is used consistently across education and care. Staff and pupils usually communicate well, for example at handover meetings where pupils may receive praise for success and good behaviour or have their misdemeanours discussed.
- 111 There are shortcomings in about 10% of schools where expectations are unclear to pupils and staff do not work together well enough to provide a consistent approach.

### **Links with other education providers and the community**

- 112 Many RI schools build good links with local maintained schools and colleges with the aim of re-engaging their pupils in full-time education. In the best practice, RI schools are effective in supporting pupils to attend maintained schools initially often on a part-time basis for an appropriate but limited education programme. For example, two RI schools where pupils had a previous history of poor attendance have been successful in supporting pupils who now attend college courses full-time.
- 113 If pupils are to receive their full entitlement to education, the school and other providers must work closely together to ensure that everyone involved knows the extent of the curriculum provided. The quality of this collaborative planning is highly variable. The school where the pupil is on roll has overall responsibility for managing the education. However, a very small number of schools do not know what their pupils are learning elsewhere and whether they are making any progress.

- 114 Most schools have built a good range of educational and community links. A few schools are developing appropriate links with Careers Wales and suitable work-experience providers. About half the registered schools use local sports facilities and libraries.
- 115 A small number of schools work hard to integrate their pupils in the local community for example, by attending local events, arranging to use the swimming pool in a primary school or taking pupils to church if they wish to attend. This is a strong feature of a good children's home provision because it fosters engagement and a feeling of 'belonging'.

## Annex 1

Part 10 of the Education Act 2002 requires that all independent schools must be registered with the National Assembly for Wales before a school begins to operate. Regulations made under the Act set out a range of “Standards” that all independent schools must satisfy as a condition of registration. These regulations cover:

- the quality of education provided;
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils;
- the welfare, health and safety of pupils;
- the suitability of proprietors and staff;
- the premises and accommodation;
- the provision of information; and
- the way in which complaints are handled.

## **Annex 2**

### **The Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003**

#### **Standard 1: Quality of education provided**

##### **(excerpt)**

The quality of education provided by the school meets the standard if the requirements are met.

The school must draw up and implement effectively a written policy on the curriculum supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for:

- full-time supervised education for all pupils of compulsory school age, which gives pupils experience in the following areas: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

## Annex 3

### Personal education plans

There is a statutory requirement for every looked-after child to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is built on dialogue between the looked-after child, social worker, designated teacher, carers and parents. It should focus on the action that is required for the child to reach his/her full potential. The plan must cover:

- achievement record (academic or otherwise);
- developmental and educational needs;
- short-term targets; and
- long-term plans and aspirations.

The PEP should contribute to the stability of a looked-after child's life, minimising disruption and breakdown in school placement. It should also contribute to isolating special educational needs.

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CSSIW reports on children's homes are not public documents. CCSIW kindly granted permission for access to a sample of recent reports.