

# Section 4: Summaries of Estyn thematic reports

Annual Report 2011-2012



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Every year, the Minister for Education and Skills asks Estyn to offer advice on aspects of education and training. On the basis of evidence from inspections and survey work we present our findings and advice in reports. The reports are sent to the Minister and published on our website. The reports include recommendations for the Welsh Government as well as for providers and local authorities. In the full reports, there are also examples of good and excellent practice. This year, we have started to produce a series of reports that focus on standards and provision in curriculum subjects. These start with physical education in secondary schools and engineering in further education colleges and work-based learning providers.

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# Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools

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Schools in challenging circumstances that raise the achievement of disadvantaged learners not only do what all successful schools do to secure the achievement of learners, but they also create an outstandingly positive ethos that allows disadvantaged learners to achieve well. These schools employ strategies specifically to combat the factors that disadvantage learners.

## Effective schools in challenging circumstances:

- take a whole-school, strategic approach to tackling disadvantage – they have a structured, coherent and focused approach to raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners;
- use data to track the progress of disadvantaged learners – they gather information from a range of sources and use it to analyse the progress of groups of learners;
- focus on the development of disadvantaged learners' literacy and learning skills;
- develop the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners – they understand the relationship between wellbeing and standards and often restructure their pastoral care system to deal more directly with the specific needs of disadvantaged learners;
- improve the attendance, punctuality and behaviour of disadvantaged learners – they have suitable sanctions, but find that reward systems work particularly well;
- tailor the curriculum to the needs of disadvantaged learners – they have mentoring systems that guide learners through their programmes of study and help them to plan their own learning pathways;
- make great efforts to provide enriching experiences that more advantaged learners take for granted – they offer a varied menu of clubs, activities and cultural and educational trips;
- listen to disadvantaged learners and provide opportunities for them to play a full part in the school's life – they gather learners' views about teaching and learning, give learners a key role in school development, and involve learners directly to improve standards;
- engage the parents and carers of disadvantaged learners – they communicate and work face-to-face to help them and their children to overcome barriers to learning; and
- develop the expertise of staff to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners – they have a culture of sharing best practice, provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other, and have performance management targets that are related to raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners.

This good practice report looks in detail at these ten elements of effective schools and uses case studies to illustrate their impact on outcomes for learners from poorer families.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# The impact of family learning programmes on raising the literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults

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Family learning providers encourage parents and carers to join mostly short-term family learning programmes. Family learning teachers use a good range of strategies to teach parents how they can help and support their children in school. As a result, most children in these families gain greater confidence and self-esteem.

The programmes improve the skills of adults well. Most adult learners on longer courses have good opportunities to gain qualifications. However, very few providers track and record the progress of adult learners well enough.

Methods for tracking the impact of these programmes on the standards children achieve in school are generally weak. In particular, providers have no strategies for measuring the long-term impact of the programmes on children.

Schools and family learning co-ordinators identify children who are under-achieving in school effectively. However, too many providers use the family programmes' grant guidelines as targets rather than setting their own targets for recruitment based on a survey of the children and adults who would benefit most from the provision.

The majority of local authorities do not plan family learning programmes in a way that would enable staff to share resources with other programmes such as 'Flying start'. Neither do they plan for participants from 'Flying start' to progress to family programmes when the children start school.

To view the full report, please click on this [link](#).

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# Welsh Language Development in the Foundation Phase

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Many pupils make good progress in using Welsh as second language in the Foundation Phase. Achievement in Welsh language development is at least good in the majority of schools and in about half of non-maintained settings visited during this survey. Pupils' Welsh speaking, listening and reading skills are developing well in school, but their writing skills are less well developed.

The most effective schools and settings develop pupils' Welsh communication skills by improving confidence and attitudes to learning the language. They also use opportunities in the other six areas of learning of the Foundation Phase to introduce Welsh.

In schools and settings where progress is slow, there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the principles and practices of Welsh language development. Often practitioners do not devote enough time to delivering Welsh language development and do not adapt their classroom practice well enough to ensure that children have a range of appropriate opportunities to speak Welsh in all learning areas.

Most settings have very few fluent Welsh-speaking staff. Where there are gaps in the practitioners' knowledge of Welsh, there are shortcomings in their spoken Welsh, which results in pupils speaking or pronouncing words incorrectly. Where teachers and

practitioners receive regular training and support, they are more confident in teaching Welsh. However, there are variations in how much training teachers receive in local authorities and training opportunities for practitioners in settings are often very limited.

Very few local authorities offer specific training for headteachers and senior leaders on how to evaluate the effectiveness of new teaching and assessment approaches in developing children's learning in Welsh language development. This is an important gap in the Foundation Phase training programme.

To view the full report, please click on this link.



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# The Skills Framework at key stage 3: An evaluation of the impact of the non-statutory Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales at key stage 3

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Only a few schools successfully plan the progressive development of pupils' communication, numeracy, thinking and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

The Skills Framework does not influence planning significantly in most secondary schools in Wales. This is partly because there is no statutory requirement for schools to use the Skills Framework. Its main impact has been to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of developing pupils' skills in thinking, communication, information and communication technology and numeracy.

Nearly all schools plan their curriculum by referring first to National Curriculum Subject Orders and then identifying opportunities for developing generic skills that arise according to the nature of the subject. Very few schools use the framework to help them organise and plan for progression from key stage 2 to key stage 3, or within key stage 3. To a large degree, this is because the framework does not describe progression in skills clearly enough as the descriptors of progress are too broad and have not been exemplified enough.

Schools use a variety of sources to help them plan for the development of skills in key stage 3. Many use Essential Skills Wales programmes of study to provide structure, progression and a focus for developing generic skills in key stage 3. Where pupils gain Essential Skills Wales qualifications, this improves their motivation.

In a minority of schools, teachers do not provide enough suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills. This is because teachers rely too much on worksheets that require only simple, short answers.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# Literacy in key stage 3

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In most secondary schools, standards in oracy are higher than those in reading and writing and in National Curriculum teacher assessments performance in English is lower than in the other core subjects. Girls perform significantly better than boys at the expected and higher levels in English and Welsh.

More and more secondary schools provide opportunities for pupils to gain Essential Skills Wales communication qualifications. However, gaining these qualifications does not necessarily mean that pupils are applying these skills consistently across other subject areas.

A minority of schools surveyed have carried out an audit of pupils' literacy skills to see the extent to which subjects identify and provide opportunities for pupils to develop these skills. Where schools have offered effective training to teachers on literacy strategies, subject schemes of work highlight the precise literacy skills to be taught clearly and consistently.

Many schools have well-defined procedures for assessing pupils' reading abilities and arrangements to support those with weaker skills. However, only a minority of schools record the progress of these pupils at the end of key stage 3 or monitor the progress of more able readers well enough.

All schools surveyed have appointed literacy co-ordinators to be responsible for co-ordinating whole-school approaches and working groups that focus on improving pupils' literacy skills. However, the impact of these approaches is not yet evident.

While improving literacy is a priority in many school development plans, only a minority of schools focus on literacy in their monitoring and evaluation activities.

To view the full report, please click on this link.



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# Supporting more able and talented pupils in secondary schools

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More able and talented pupils achieve less well in Wales than in England. Too few pupils achieve above the expected level for their age (level 5) in end-of-key stage 3 teacher assessments in the core subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science. At key stage 4, too few 16-year-old pupils achieve the higher A/A\* grades in the core subjects. Overall, the majority of more able and talented pupils are not challenged to achieve the highest standards.

In the few secondary schools with the best provision, effective transition links with partner primary schools and thorough analysis of data and assessment outcomes help to identify more able and talented pupils. These pupils are well supported through a range of additional provision and their progress tracked and monitored very carefully across all key stages. There are consistent, whole-school teaching and learning approaches that challenge more able and talented pupils.

Effective communication with parents is a key factor in the few schools where more able pupils are successfully challenged to reach high standards. However, a significant minority of schools do not routinely inform parents that their children have been identified as more able and talented.

More able and talented pupils gain most in secondary schools that offer a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and a flexible approach to a curriculum that promotes individualised or personalised approaches to learning. They benefit from

mentoring sessions to support them in making option and career choices and having access to specialist teachers and tutors.

However, in the majority of secondary schools, more able and talented pupils are not challenged enough and do not always receive appropriate support. The identification, tracking and monitoring processes are not rigorous or robust. Staff receive little training in how to work effectively with more able and talented pupils.

Few local authorities use data to monitor specifically the progress of more able and talented pupils or promote best practice in this work between schools.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# The implementation of the Careers and the World of Work framework

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Nearly all schools support pupils well to make subject choices in Year 9. 14-19 Learning Network consortia have improved the range of subject choices for pupils, but have increased the pressure for pupils to make option choices earlier. A minority of schools do not support Year 9 pupils early enough to be helpful. Provision and use of labour market information (LMI) to help pupils is limited and patchy. Overall, evaluation of how effectively pupils make planning decisions in Year 9 is not rigorous and Learning Network partnerships do not gather data systematically. In addition, school governors are not involved enough in the strategic planning of Careers and the World of Work.

Methods for delivering the Careers and the World of Work framework vary considerably across schools and there are large variations in the amount of lesson time that schools allocate to implementing this framework.

In most cases, the criteria schools use to judge how well they have supported pupils to make informed decisions are flawed and do not make the best use of available data. Neither do they take account of how well pupils' decisions enable them to succeed in sustaining their progression choices. The use of information and communication technology to support the tracking of pupils' achievement or to enable online assessment of knowledge is underdeveloped.

The extent to which schools involve others to deliver the Careers and the World of Work programme also varies too much. In over a quarter of schools, external partners deliver more than half of the key stage 4 programme. In nearly all schools, Careers Wales services make an important contribution to the programme. However, in a few schools recent reductions in Careers Wales services have put a strain on the schools' delivery of this framework.

Schools working towards the Careers Wales Mark are clearer about the services and support they need from partners. They work towards objectives that improve the quality of Careers and the World of Work programmes.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification provision at level 3 in secondary schools

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The Welsh Baccalaureate offers many benefits to students. Through studying the Welsh Baccalaureate core, the majority of students improve their essential skills and achieve an understanding of a range of topics, including enterprise, politics and current affairs, which they would not otherwise have studied.

However, the standards achieved on the Welsh Baccalaureate vary a good deal between students and between schools. Much of the variation in standards reflects differences in the way in which the provision is designed and delivered in different schools. It also reflects the wide ability range of students who take the level 3 core. The wide range of standards being achieved on the level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate core suggests that grading the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification would provide a fairer reflection of the range of student outcomes.

There is also variability in the quality of provision. In many schools, there is an imbalance between the time spent on completing the paperwork relating to essential skills qualifications and the time spent on improving students' actual skills and transferring these to support learning across the curriculum. However, in the majority of

schools, the quality of teaching in the core is generally good. In a minority of teaching sessions, students are not challenged enough because teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of the full ability range of students.

Although many schools have well-established general self-evaluation processes, these quality assurance procedures do not give appropriate emphasis to the Welsh Baccalaureate. This means that school leaders do not know enough about the quality of teaching in the Welsh Baccalaureate programme or know how much progress students are making during lessons.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# How well are the All-Wales Core Data Sets used to inform self-evaluation and planning for improvement?

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The use of the All-Wales Core Data Sets ('core data sets') has had a positive impact on self-evaluation and has enhanced co-operation between schools across Wales. Schools are increasingly liaising with higher-performing schools in their family to share best practice and discuss strategies to bring about improvement.

The majority of schools analyse the core data sets systematically to get a clearer picture of their performance. They identify the school's key strengths and areas where there is comparative underperformance. From this analysis, schools ask questions about why pupils do or do not make the expected progress and, where improvements need to be made, consider what can be done about it. In a minority of schools, this is not the case because leaders and practitioners do not analyse the data rigorously enough to identify what needs to be improved and do not challenge underperformance robustly.

The core data sets have helped many governing bodies to fulfil their role of holding school leaders to account. Where underperformance has been identified, schools use a range of strategies to bring about improvements and the impact of these strategies has generally been good. However,

a minority of governors are not fully aware of the information that the core data sets provide and make little contribution to their school's self-evaluation process.

In the few local authorities where the core data sets are used well, officers use the data rigorously to challenge the performance of schools and monitor progress towards improvement. However, across Wales there is too much variation in how systematically local authorities do this.

To view the full report, please click on this [link](#).

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# A survey of the arrangements for pupils' wellbeing and behaviour management in pupil referral units

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Teaching and support staff in pupil referral units do a difficult job with pupils whose behaviour can be challenging. Generally, pupils feel valued and listened to by staff in the pupil referral units.

Most pupil referral units adopt behaviour management strategies, restrictive physical intervention and restraint methods that the British Institute for Learning Disabilities approve. However, where pupil referral units do not, this leaves pupils and staff vulnerable during an incident.

In the best practice, teachers help pupils to manage their own behaviour and use agreed behaviour management plans and individual pupil risk-assessments well. However, in most cases, plans and risk assessments do not address the management of an individual pupil's difficult behaviour well enough. Too many policies do not reflect clearly enough the day to day practice in the pupil referral unit, or provide enough helpful guidance for staff about the procedures they should follow.

All pupil referral units use some form of 'time out', as part of their behaviour management strategy. In most cases, pupil referral units do not use designated rooms for 'time out' that help pupils to regain control and manage their emotions in

an environment that is safe and comfortable. Too frequently, 'time out' follows on from restrictive physical intervention and restraint. In these cases, pupils interpret 'time out' as punishment rather than as an opportunity to regain composure and control.

Local authorities' line management and governance of pupil referral units are not robust enough. They do not do enough to hold teachers-in-charge to account for the day-to-day running of the pupil referral units. Reporting does not focus enough on the wellbeing of pupils or evaluate strategies for supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. This lack of evaluation and reporting makes it hard for elected members and senior education officers to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# How do surplus places affect the resources available for expenditure on improving outcomes for pupils?

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In local authorities that have a higher than necessary level of school places, financial resources are not being used in the most efficient or effective way to improve the quality of education for all learners. Between 2006 and 2011, the number of unfilled places increased by about a fifth. No local authority has achieved the Welsh Government's recommended level of no more than 10% surplus places across primary and secondary schools.

Currently, a wide range of strategies is being used across Wales to reduce surplus places. The priority of local authorities generally is to reorganise schools to improve standards. However, local authorities rarely track the impact on learner outcomes of the more efficient use of resources brought about by school reorganisation.

Various methods have been used over time to evaluate the cost of maintaining surplus places in schools in terms of misdirected financial resources. Those local authorities

that have calculated the cost of surplus places have found it useful in persuading school communities and decision-makers of the need to reduce their number. However, the lack of a national standardised method to calculate the cost of surplus places creates difficulties in maintaining informed discussion about the effectiveness of particular strategies or the impact on pupil outcomes.

To view the full report, please click on [this link](#).



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# The effectiveness of strategies for learner involvement in post-16 learning

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Many providers have made good progress in setting up formal structures to enable learners to influence the provider's work. These structures include learner forums and panels, and representation on governing bodies or councils. In addition, providers have used learner surveys and questionnaires to help learners contribute to the shape of their learning experience. As a result, learners have been able to influence how their learning is delivered and the environment in which they learn.

Providers generally have suitable arrangements to include learners' views, through their curriculum planning processes, in order to improve the quality of provision. However, providers do not record, monitor and evaluate the impact of learner involvement activities on either qualification outcomes or learners' personal and social outcomes.

The National Union of Students offers learners in further education institutions useful opportunities to contribute to decision-making at a national level. However, learners in other post-16 sectors have few opportunities to influence decision-making at a national level. For example, learners in work-based learning companies

do not have the same access to unions as learners in further education institutions.

There are a number of adult learners' forums across Wales which, if combined, would provide a useful national network for consulting with adult learners about the nature and scope of adult learning. Such a network might help to support the Welsh Government's agenda for helping learners to strengthen local democracy, and to share their views on what is important to them and their communities and their aspirations for the future.

To view the full report, please [click on this link](#).

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# The effectiveness of Traineeship and Steps to Employment programmes

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Providers are seeing far fewer clients than initially planned and most providers are not reaching their targets. Progression rates have improved slightly from the discontinued Skill Build programmes. The numbers of learners progressing into other training or employment are higher in the Traineeship programmes than in the Steps to employment programmes, where progression remains unsatisfactory. Many providers deliver training to clients in small groups. However, some clients have not been referred onto the right programmes.

The quality of the information that providers receive from Careers Wales and Job Centre plus, to help them match learners to appropriate programmes, is inconsistent. It relies too heavily on good personal relationships between provider and agency personnel. Many providers have improving or good links with Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus.

The majority of providers assess learners' barriers to learning effectively, but the quality and effectiveness of literacy and numeracy skills support vary widely. Many learners have complex and often multiple barriers to making progress. Providers often find out about these serious barriers, including mental health problems, offending behaviour or other personal problems, when they have built up a relationship with learners over time. This knowledge often

comes too late for the provider to address the issues and give learners effective support during the short period of the programme.

Providers engage well with partners and with representatives of the other providers in Wales, the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) and the DfES to discuss progress, issues and good practice. Providers generally maintain good links with the employers they work with. However, many employers do not have a full understanding of employability programmes.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/264946.5/initial-review-of-the-effectiveness-of-the-welsh-governments-traineeships-and-steps-to-employment-programmes-january-2013/?navmap=30,163>

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# Physical education in secondary schools

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In ‘Creating an Active Wales’ (Welsh Government 2009) the Welsh Government identified well-delivered and appropriately designed physical education programmes, complemented by a range of school-based activities, as critical factors in helping children and young people to live active lives and become active adults.

Since 2001, the percentage of key stage 3 pupils attaining the expected level (level 5) or above in National Curriculum teacher assessments has increased steadily in physical education. In 2011, 73% of those pupils in Wales who were entered for a GCSE in physical education gained grades A\*-C. This is two percentage points above the figure for the UK, and an improvement on 70% in 2010.

In many of the lessons observed for this survey, pupils made good progress in understanding key concepts, and in developing their subject-specific and wider skills, particularly their communication and thinking skills.

Teaching is good or better in about three-quarters of lessons observed. Where teaching is excellent, teachers have high expectations and plan learning activities that challenge and engage pupils and provide extensive opportunities for pupils to reflect on, evaluate and improve their work. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to make sure that pupils of all abilities make progress.

Generally, schools are putting more emphasis on creative and adventurous activities and health, fitness and wellbeing activities at key stage 3, and this has helped to engage girls more successfully. Most schools promote healthy lifestyles well. The ‘5x60’ initiative has been successful in complementing the more traditional, largely team-based extra-curricular programmes that most schools offered previously.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

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# A review of standards and the quality of provision for engineering in further education colleges and work-based learning providers

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The rate at which engineering learners attain their qualifications is close to the average for all learning areas in further education and above average in work-based learning. The rate of improvement over recent years is similar to the improvement in all learning areas. There are many examples of good and sometimes excellent practice in further education colleges and work-based learning providers.

Links between schools, colleges and work-based learning are generally improving, but not all providers are able to attract enough school leavers with the right skills into engineering careers. Too often an engineering career is seen by schools as an option for the less able pupils. Female learners remain under-represented on engineering programmes.

The quality of teaching and learning is generally of good and sometimes excellent quality in the sessions observed. Learners study in good accommodation and mostly have enough materials and equipment.

The majority of engineering learners progress well onto programmes at a higher level, and gain apprenticeships or employment of an engineering or technical nature.

However, the proportion of engineering learners who leave programmes and whose destinations are unknown is too high.

The curriculum offered by providers mainly reflects a balance between the aspirations of learners and the needs of local and regional industry. In the majority of providers, learners are able to progress onto specialist higher education programmes through franchise arrangements with the university sector. However, many of these franchise arrangements are overly bureaucratic and restrictive.

Providers have extended their full-time programmes and often include the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. The pathway to apprenticeship programme is successful in

preparing learners for apprenticeships. Providers have started to offer engineering programmes that embrace a number of the newer technologies, such as photonics, composite materials and energy. However, the extent of this involvement is too small overall.

Engineering learners generally express a strong degree of satisfaction with their programme of study, particularly the practical sessions. They express lower levels of satisfaction with formal theory classes that include more advanced levels of mathematics, literacy and science.

To view the full report, please click on this link.

<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/264891.9/a-review-of-standards-and-the-quality-of-provision-for-engineering-in-further-education-colleges-and-work-based-learning-providers-in-wales-january-2013/?navmap=30,163>