
Summary of findings from our national thematic reviews

for 2017



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- ⤴ secondary schools
- ⤴ special schools
- ⤴ pupil referral units
- ⤴ all-age schools
- ⤴ independent schools
- ⤴ further education
- ⤴ independent specialist colleges
- ⤴ adult community learning
- ⤴ local authority education services for children and young people
- ⤴ teacher education and training
- ⤴ Welsh for adults
- ⤴ work-based learning
- ⤴ learning in the justice sector

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- ⤴ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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Foreword

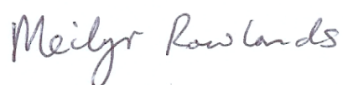
I hope that you will find this compendium, and the reports on which it is based, informative and relevant. Estyn's thematic reports published in 2017 cover a range of important aspects of education and training in Wales. They report on standards and provision across a range of education sectors and themes, including the effective management of school workforce attendance in primary schools, Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education, learner progress and destinations in independent living skills in colleges, as well as a national review of the work of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

Estyn's thematic reports address matters that are of central concern to policy-makers. The annual remit letter to HMCI from the Cabinet Secretary takes into account the key priorities of the Welsh Government and, this calendar year, includes curriculum-focused surveys with case studies of effective practice in active and experiential learning in the foundation phase, science and design technology at key stage 2, science at key stage 3 and key stage 4, and good practice in the humanities. We also published surveys relating to healthy relationships education, financial education, and the implementation of the careers and the world of work framework in secondary schools.

Our reports are intended to encourage wider thinking and to contribute to current debates in policy areas such as planning for the new Curriculum for Wales, as well as sharing case studies of effective practice across all sectors. The forthcoming programme of thematic reports during 2018 promises to be equally relevant with reviews underway focused on a wide range of areas such as preparing for the new curriculum, Welsh at key stage 2 and key stage 3, the implementation of the new GCSEs and Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, as well as national reviews of A levels in schools and colleges, and of higher apprenticeships.

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

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports>.



Meilyr Rowlands

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

Effective management of school workforce attendance in primary schools

Main findings

Management of teacher attendance

- 1 The majority of the headteachers surveyed are aware of the Welsh Government's 'Effective Management of School Workforce Attendance' guidance, but only a minority have read and acted on the document's recommendations.
- 2 Nearly all schools have robust systems in place to track and monitor staff absence due to illness, in line with their management of attendance policy. However, very few schools or local authorities hold data on how often class teachers are absent from their class for reasons other than illness, for example for training or other school-based duties.
- 3 Around half of headteachers have received training within the last three years on managing staff attendance. However, around half of these do not fully understand or apply all aspects of their local authority's absence management procedures.
- 4 Many headteachers report on staff attendance to their school's governing body regularly, but only a very few schools include information on staff attendance in their school development plans or set targets for its improvement.
- 5 When arranging planned cover for class teachers, the main factors considered by school leaders are the quality of teaching, the quality of behaviour management, and whether the cover personnel are known to the school. When arranging unplanned cover, the main factors considered by school leaders are how quickly a person can arrive at the school and the cost.
- 6 Nearly all schools have experienced difficulty in arranging suitable cover for absent class teachers. For a minority of schools, this happens about half of the time and for a few schools this happens about three-quarters of the time. In Welsh-medium primary schools, schools are often restricted in the choice and quality of supply teachers available.
- 7 For planned absences, most teachers leave work and planning documents for the supply teacher. Only in around half of schools is the work at the same level as pupils would normally receive. For unplanned absences, in the majority of schools supply teachers use the classroom teacher's planning documents to provide some context for their lesson planning. However, when this planning information is not available, supply teachers plan their own work for the pupils without guidance. Often this means that they focus on keeping children busy, rather than building on what pupils already know and can do.
- 8 In most schools, teachers provide some kind of feedback on the performance of supply teachers to school leaders and supply agencies. However, very few schools feed back to the supply teacher themselves. Only a very few schools undertake any

formal performance management of supply staff, unless they are employed at the school for a term or more.

Management of headteacher attendance

- 9 Although the Welsh Government 'Effective Management of School Workforce attendance' document provides schools with useful guidance on managing teacher absence, it does not provide schools, governing bodies or local authorities with guidance on managing headteacher absence. The majority of schools do not have a plan in place on how best to arrange to cover a headteacher's absence.
- 10 In nearly all schools, during a period of short-term headteacher absence, the deputy headteacher assumes the role of the headteacher. In nearly all schools, during a long-term absence of the headteacher, the local authority liaises with the chair of governors or full governing body to arrange suitable cover. This cover is also most often provided by the deputy headteacher. If the deputy headteacher is not the most appropriate person to lead the school when a headteacher is absent, local authorities use a variety of alternative cover solutions. In the best practice, local authorities keep a register of senior leaders from other local schools who could provide suitable leadership cover in these circumstances.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government should:

- R1 Promote the 'Effective Management of School Workforce attendance' document more widely
- R2 Provide schools and local authorities with guidance on monitoring, recording and evaluating the impact of staff absence due to activities other than illness, such as training, conferences and school-to-school support
- R3 Produce guidance on the effective management of headteacher absence
- R4 Ensure that the provision of supply cover in the Welsh-medium sector is addressed when reviewing the teacher workforce strategy

Local authorities should:

- R5 Ensure that training on managing workforce attendance is available for all headteachers and forms part of an induction package for all newly appointed headteachers
- R6 Provide schools with regular benchmarking data on staff attendance in line with Welsh Government guidance

Schools should:

- R7 Monitor the work of supply teachers regularly and ensure that all pupils continue to make appropriate progress when their usual classroom teacher is absent
- R8 Provide supply teachers with feedback on their performance
- R9 Ensure that supply teachers can always access teacher planning documents

Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education

Main findings

Continuity and progression in Welsh-medium and bilingual provision

- 1 From a low starting point, there has been a small increase in the number of Welsh-medium or bilingual learning activities in further education colleges over recent years. However, although the Welsh Government's target for 2015 has been achieved, many learners do not continue their learning through the medium of Welsh or bilingually when they transfer from school to college.
- 2 Overall, too few Welsh-speaking learners continue their studies through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in further education colleges. There is considerable variation between learning areas in the proportion of Welsh-speaking learners who follow their courses through Welsh or bilingually. This includes learning areas for which there is an increasing demand from employers for bilingual skills, such as hospitality and catering.
- 3 A few colleges have been successful in delivering courses bilingually. These colleges not only increase the opportunities to follow courses through the medium of Welsh and develop bilingual skills, but also ensure that learners who follow their courses mainly in English make progress in their Welsh language skills. However, the majority of colleges, where the number of learners who wish to learn through the medium of Welsh is low, have not given enough consideration to delivering courses bilingually in order to create a viable size for classes.
- 4 In the few cases where colleges deliver Welsh-medium or Welsh language units within English-medium courses, learners who learnt Welsh as a second language at school are given good opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills further and help meet an increasing demand from employers for these skills. In general, colleges do not do enough in this respect, nor in terms of refreshing and refining the Welsh language skills of learners from Welsh-medium schools who follow their courses through the medium of English.
- 5 Many colleges do not record information consistently and accurately about which learning activities are carried out bilingually or in Welsh. Generally, teachers and college data managers do not have a clear understanding about how their bilingual teaching approaches should be categorised. Colleges report a lack of clarity in the guidance they receive from the Welsh Government about how to categorise different bilingual teaching and learning activities. This raises doubts about the reliability of national data.

Standards of learners' Welsh language skills

- 6 In lessons, many learners who learn in Welsh or bilingually have good oral Welsh language or bilingual skills. They speak confidently and correctly, and show a good

grasp of vocabulary and subject terminology. However, around a third of learners say that they are only fairly confident orally at best, despite following courses in Welsh or having attended Welsh-medium schools. Most learners who choose to present their course work in Welsh write with increasing accuracy, using a range of vocabulary and subject terminology correctly. However, too many learners choose not to submit assignments in Welsh. Only around a third of learners feel that their Welsh has improved since their college courses began.

- 7 Generally, learners who undertake Welsh-medium units within English-medium courses make good progress, considering their linguistic background. They use Welsh vocabulary and subject-specific phrases with increasing accuracy.

Teaching and assessment

- 8 Most of the teaching in lessons that are delivered in Welsh or bilingually is good. The standard of teaching in the Welsh-medium units within English-medium courses is also generally good. In these sessions, teachers succeed in making frequent use of the Welsh language as a medium of communication and teaching.
- 9 The majority of learners who follow their courses in Welsh or bilingually do not complete their final assessments in Welsh. This has the potential to have a detrimental effect on the status of Welsh-medium provision.

Leadership

- 10 In a minority of colleges, senior leaders have a strong vision regarding promoting the Welsh language and expanding Welsh-medium or bilingual provision. In these cases, strategic plans include challenging targets and detailed improvement strategies to increase and improve this provision.
- 11 However, in the majority of colleges, leaders have not developed their Welsh language plans to the same extent. In the colleges in which there are low proportions of learners that follow their subjects or occupational areas in Welsh or bilingually, leaders do not consider that increasing this proportion is a whole-college priority. Often, schools do not share information about pupils' linguistic skills as they transfer to college, which is an obstacle to ensuring continuity and progression with regard to learning in Welsh.
- 12 Despite a few successful initiatives, colleges have not done enough to ensure that learners recognise the advantages of continuing to be taught and assessed in Welsh after they transfer to college from secondary school.

Staffing and training

- 13 A minority of colleges conduct surveys of the linguistic skills of staff regularly and implement sound recruitment policies based on this information to ensure that there are enough staff who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh. However, a shortage of Welsh-speaking staff continues to be a significant obstacle to expanding Welsh-medium provision in the majority of colleges.

- 14 A few colleges offer a wide range of in-service training on issues regarding the Welsh language and bilingualism. However, where the number of learners who wish to follow their courses in Welsh is low, colleges do not do enough to develop the bilingual teaching skills of staff.

Support and guidance

- 15 Bilingual champions, the sabbatical scheme¹, and Sgiliaith² have ensured good support for teachers and learners. Due to the work of bilingual champions, the majority of further education colleges now prepare social programmes that provide a broad variety of opportunities for learners to use Welsh outside the classroom. However, the impact of bilingual champions is less positive where they do not contribute to strategic planning processes and to reviewing progress against targets.
- 16 There is still a shortage of Welsh-speaking staff and Welsh-medium resources in the post-16 sector. A shortage of Welsh textbooks and external verifiers, along with the arrangements of awarding bodies, continues to limit Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendations

Further education colleges should:

- R1 Work more effectively with secondary schools to identify Welsh-speaking learners before they transfer to college and ensure that learners have all the information about support that they need in order to allow them to choose to continue their learning in Welsh
- R2 Strengthen Welsh language strategic plans to increase the number of learners who learn in Welsh or bilingually, particularly in the occupational areas for which there is an increasing demand by employers for bilingual skills
- R3 Ensure that there are sufficient staff available in each college to provide courses in Welsh or bilingually and to support staff who wish to learn Welsh or improve their Welsh
- R4 Improve staff training on the methodology of teaching bilingually and ensure that there are sufficient resources and learning materials for Welsh-medium or bilingual courses
- R5 Ensure that information about learners' language ability, prior qualifications in Welsh and learning activities are correctly recorded on the Lifelong Learning Wales Record

¹The Sabbatical Scheme is a training programme for practitioners in order to increase the supply of practitioners who are able to teach and train through the medium of Welsh in a range of pre-16 and post-16 subjects. The Scheme offers periods of intensive study, away from the classroom, in order to develop Welsh language skills and gain confidence in bilingual and Welsh-medium teaching methodologies.

²Canolfan Sgiliaith was established at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor in 2001. The centre's aim is to promote Welsh-medium and bilingual post-16 education throughout Wales. Sgiliaith supports colleges and other providers across Wales to respond to the increasing demands for Welsh language skills.

The Welsh Government should:

- R6 Help colleges to improve the quality of Welsh language strategic plans, including the use of data to set challenging targets to increase the number of learners who follow their courses in Welsh or bilingually
- R7 Conduct regular reviews of the progress made by colleges against the targets in their strategic plans
- R8 Improve data collection fields, and their associated guidance, to ensure that colleges record accurate information about learners' linguistic abilities and the language of learning and assessment by activity
- R9 Develop a national strategy to raise learners' awareness of the advantages of choosing to continue to learn in Welsh when they transfer from school to college
- R10 Ensure that there are sufficient resources and learning materials for Welsh-medium or bilingual courses

Learner progress and destinations in independent living skills learning areas in further education colleges

Main findings

- 1 Most FE colleges collect a wide range of relevant information about the abilities, needs and prior achievement of learners before they join the college. This helps to ensure that most learners make a successful transition from school or other providers into the ILS learning area of the college. In a few cases, the quality of information provided by previous providers varies widely. In addition, a few colleges report difficulties in capturing the full range of needs when learners move from children's social services to adult social services because of the quality of information provided.
- 2 Most colleges do not use a wide enough range of data to measure learner progress, particularly for learners with more complex needs. This is because they do not have arrangements in place to assess or track learners' skills in important areas such as independence, wellbeing, employability or communication. In addition, very few colleges have enough in-house specialists to assess the full range of learners' more complex needs and rely on the information provided by previous education providers, local authorities and Careers Wales. As a result, teaching and support staff within colleges have limited opportunities to develop their expertise and understanding in these important areas.
- 3 All colleges have individual learning plans (ILPs) in place for learners. However, ILPs vary considerably in how well they set a clear direction for learners that extends beyond the completion of the course or programme of learning. Very few ILPs set coherent short-term, medium-term or long-term targets that take account of all learners' likely destinations when they leave the college.
- 4 Most colleges review learners' progress against the targets on their ILPs regularly, but few colleges track learners' progress against their targets over time. In addition, in many colleges the quality of target setting is too variable for ILPs to serve as an accurate record of learners' progress. Many targets do not relate sufficiently to the outcomes of initial assessments and are not specific enough to capture small steps of learning.
- 5 In many colleges, systems of tracking and monitoring the progress of learners on ILS courses are too reliant on the achievement of qualifications. For many learners with complex needs, this approach does not provide an accurate or relevant measure of progress.
- 6 In most colleges, staff plan the ILS curriculum carefully to support learners' progression within college. Most learners complete their courses successfully and many learners progress onto further courses at either the same or a higher level. In many colleges, programmes of learning do not take enough account of learners' destinations or make suitable provision for developing learners' independence, employability and life skills. As a result, in many cases, programmes of learning fail to prepare learners effectively for the challenges they will face in their future lives.

- 7 In most colleges, learners have opportunities to take qualifications at a level that is generally well matched to their abilities. In many cases, qualifications do not address the broad range of learners' needs or reflect their destinations well enough. Overall, there is too much emphasis on qualifications as a measure of achievement or progress when this is not relevant to learners' needs, abilities or future destinations.
- 8 Nearly all colleges have a clear focus on developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. They use the results of initial assessments in literacy and numeracy to check that learners are placed on courses at the appropriate level. However, baseline assessments do not capture the strengths and areas for development for many less able learners well enough and only a very few colleges focus sufficiently on developing learners' communication skills.
- 9 Many colleges do not focus well enough on developing learners' life and independence skills. Although most programmes include units that develop skills in relevant areas, such as cooking or independent travel, learning activities generally do not provide learners with suitable opportunities to acquire practical skills or apply these in realistic contexts. Most colleges do not evaluate the progress learners make in developing these skills over time.
- 10 Most colleges have arrangements to ensure that learners on vocational programmes benefit from relevant work experience. Provision for work-related education for learners who are not on vocational courses is more limited, particularly for lower-ability learners. Around half of colleges lack a clear rationale for developing learners' work-related skills when this is not a requirement of the qualification.
- 11 Many learners who completed their ILS programmes of learning in 2015-2016 progressed onto appropriate courses within the ILS learning area at the same or a higher level. A few learners progressed onto higher-level courses within the mainstream provision of the FE college. A very few learners entered employment on completing their course, around the same proportion of learners who were not in employment, education or training when they left the college.
- 12 Most colleges provide regular advice and guidance to learners about their futures, but the data they collect on learners' destinations following the completion of their programmes of learning and how well they evaluate this data is too inconsistent.
- 13 Many colleges do not place enough emphasis on learners' likely destinations throughout their time at the college. As a result, the destinations of many learners are mainly determined by what is available locally, rather than as an outcome of co-ordinated planning.
- 14 Overall, the destinations of learners completing ILS courses vary too much across local authorities. This variation reflects differences in local provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as differences in the way in which colleges have configured partnerships locally to secure reliable progression routes for their learners. In particular, there is a lack of suitable employment opportunities in many local authorities, including supported employment, to allow learners to continue to develop and apply the skills they have learned in college.

Recommendations

FE colleges should:

- R1 Identify learners' wider skills and abilities during initial assessments and include a suitable focus on communication, independence, employability and wellbeing within these
- R2 Make sure that individual learning plans reflect the outcomes of initial assessments and that they include specific, measurable targets that link clearly to learners' long-term goals and likely destinations
- R3 Design independent living skills programmes of learning that:
- are sufficiently challenging
 - include opportunities to develop skills that are relevant to learners' needs and likely destinations when they leave the college
 - have an appropriate balance between completing qualifications and learning activities
- R4 Implement reliable systems to track the progress of all learners in relation to their individual starting points
- R5 Track learners' destinations when they leave the learning area or college accurately

Local authorities should:

- R6 Provide colleges with relevant information about learners' needs when they start college
- R7 Develop a broader range of partnerships with the post-16 and voluntary sectors to develop and improve progression routes in the local area

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 Review the collection of information on the outcomes of learners on independent living skills programmes to ensure that this provides an accurate picture of learners' destinations across Wales

Welsh for Adults – A review of the work of the National Centre for Learning Welsh

Main findings

- 1 The National Centre is developing its role well as a national voice for the Welsh for Adults sector. It is providing clear strategic direction for the sector and has made progress in improving and harmonising approaches to curriculum development, data collection, professional development and assessment across the sector.
- 2 The National Centre has effectively reorganised the sector, moving from six regional centres and their 20+ sub-contractors to 11 providers. Providers are responsible for Welsh for Adults' provision in their geographical areas and are accountable to the National Centre for improving provision and outcomes for Welsh adult learners.
- 3 The National Centre has clearly defined its strategic aims and objectives. It is addressing the key challenges facing the sector, including the lack of standard measures that evaluate progress made by adult Welsh learners, and the wide variation in approaches taken to the Welsh for Adults curriculum across Wales.
- 4 The National Centre has been generally successful in communicating its strategies and approaches to its new providers. Providers feel that the National Centre staff are approachable and inclusive and they know whom they can contact if they require advice. However, only a few providers are fully aware of the National Centre's governance arrangements. In a few instances, providers are reluctant to embrace fully the direction provided by the National Centre and are slow to take on board the changes it promotes.
- 5 The National Centre has established a network of committees and groups to discuss national approaches to important issues within the sector, for example opportunities for learners to use their Welsh language skills outside of formal lessons, marketing, curriculum and training. These committees are increasing consistency of approach within the sector.
- 6 The National Centre conducts formal monitoring meetings termly with each provider to discuss their performance and to identify any action needed. This process is at an early stage and at present a minority of providers are unsure of the consequences of not achieving their targets.
- 7 The National Centre is developing a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy to promote the benefits of learning Welsh and to encourage more adults to learn the language. The National Centre's evaluation of this strategy, and feedback from providers, indicates that the current marketing approach needs refining in order to reach more potential learners.
- 8 The National Centre has introduced rigorous systems to ensure that providers target a greater proportion of their funding on teaching and learning activities. Its contracts with providers stipulate that spending on activities other than teaching and learning is limited to no more than 15% of the total funding allocated. The average figure at present is 7%.

- 9 The National Centre is developing a new range of courses at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in order to achieve greater consistency in the provision for learners across Wales. The outcome levels of the new curriculum align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The National Centre consulted with providers about these changes and has responded appropriately to feedback.
- 10 The National Centre is developing a useful online assessment tool for learners. The tool will not be fully operational until the new curriculum is completed and it is unclear how the National Centre intends to use it to measure progress.
- 11 Providers currently use their own systems for listening to learners' views in order to improve their learning experiences. The National Centre is introducing a consistent approach across all providers.
- 12 The Welsh Government has allocated additional funding to the National Centre to develop courses to teach Welsh in the workplace. This re-enforces the National Centre's key role in Welsh language planning, although placing additional demands on the Centre.

Recommendations

The National Centre should:

- R1 Develop its procedures for holding the providers to account for their performance and their compliance with the national policies
- R2 Refine its marketing strategies in co-operation with providers to target more potential learners across the various communities of Wales

Providers should:

- R3 Fully implement policies and practices introduced by the National Centre
- R4 Improve their understanding of the governance arrangements and policies of the National Centre

A review of healthy relationships education

Main findings

- 1 The content and delivery of healthy relationships education vary too widely in schools across Wales. Overall, schools do not allocate enough time or importance to this aspect of personal and social education.
- 2 Schools that are most effective in delivering healthy relationships education create an ethos where pupils understand the importance of equality and respect the rights of others. In these schools, pupils build resilience and grow in self-esteem and confidence.
- 3 All of the schools surveyed as part of this report teach pupils about healthy digital relationships through e-safety education. As a result, pupils develop age appropriate awareness and understanding of important issues such as cyber-bullying, grooming and protecting personal information on-line.
- 4 Nearly all schools teach pupils about gender equality. All secondary and many primary schools teach pupils about domestic abuse. However, not all schools teach pupils about forms of violence against women such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour-based violence. Too many schools, particularly in areas where communities are not diverse, do not recognise issues of violence against women as high priority. They do not prepare pupils well enough to live in a diverse society.
- 5 Evidence from Estyn inspections shows that nearly all Year 6 pupils in primary schools receive sex and relationships education (SRE). Increasingly, primary schools are extending this provision into Year 5 to reflect the fact that some children reach puberty at a younger age. In many primary schools, SRE is delivered by trained and experienced health professionals. A minority of schools avoid teaching aspects of sex and relationships education, other than puberty. Many of these schools leave the teaching of personal hygiene and puberty solely to NHS health professionals in one-off sessions, which does not give pupils the opportunity to raise personal issues with teachers they know.
- 6 In secondary schools, there is a wide variation in planning and provision for healthy relationships education. In many secondary schools, form tutors teach this subject within personal and social education (PSE) sessions as part of the tutorial system. In most secondary schools, healthy relationships education features as part of the PSE curriculum at key stage 3. However, a few of the schools surveyed do not have discrete PSE lessons at key stage 4. These schools promote healthy relationships education during themed days, assemblies and as part of the Welsh Bacallaureate. Schools that deliver healthy relationships education in stand-alone assemblies, themed days or small blocks of lessons in discrete subjects do not give pupils enough opportunity to explore important social and emotional aspects of relationships.

- 7 Many schools make effective use of specialist agencies to deliver important aspects of healthy relationships education. Specialist agencies provide schools with a wide range of support including training for staff, age-appropriate lessons for pupils and signposting victims to sources of appropriate support. Where schools liaise effectively with specialist agencies, together they provide comprehensive coverage of healthy relationships education including age appropriate work on domestic abuse, violence against women and sexual violence.
- 8 In schools with the best practice, teachers supplement the input of health professionals and specialist agencies well to plan activities for pupils to explore important aspects of healthy relationships in lessons across the curriculum.
- 9 Most schools have arrangements in place to support pupils who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence. Many schools in the survey have formed valuable strategic partnerships with specialist agencies that provide appropriate support and advice for pupils. A few primary schools in the survey have used additional funding to extend counselling services beyond Year 6 to include pupils throughout the school. Statistics produced by the Welsh Government (2016c) on the provision of counselling services across Wales show that 11,567 children received counselling in 2014-2015. Nearly half of all referrals were made by school staff with the most common issue being around relationships within families.
- 10 Generally, arrangements for pupils to influence what they learn in healthy relationships education are underdeveloped in schools across Wales. In the very few schools where pupils are ambassadors of gender equality, pupils act as champions of healthy relationships, provide peer-to-peer support and make an important contribution to preventative work in school and the wider community.
- 11 Generally, schools in culturally diverse communities build strong relationships with parents and community leaders. This helps to improve parental engagement with the school, reduce cultural tensions and promote an ethos where diversity is respected.
- 12 There is support from all schools and agencies visited as part of the survey to include healthy relationships education as part of the health and wellbeing area of learning in the curriculum reform being planned following 'Successful Futures' (Donaldson, 2015).
- 13 Many specialist agencies believe that the aims of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 (VAWDASV Act: National Assembly for Wales, 2015) will not be fully realised without statutory guidance for schools, setting out a core curriculum for healthy relationships education that all children are entitled to receive.
- 14 Most school leaders are not aware of Welsh Government guidance and toolkits to support the delivery of healthy relationships education and implement a whole-school approach to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Generally, there are too many guidance documents for schools outlining aspects of personal social education, sex and relationships education and equality and diversity.

- 15 Only a very few governing bodies have acted upon the guidance set out in the Welsh Government practical guide for governors, 'Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (Welsh Government 2016b). Only a very few school staff have completed the level 1 online training from the National Training Framework. Generally, school leaders are not aware of the content and requirements of the National Training Framework for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Implement Welsh Government guidance to provide a whole-school approach to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (Welsh Government, 2015)
- R2 Ensure that key messages around healthy relationships are embedded in the curriculum and reinforced regularly
- R3 Build on the best practice identified in this report

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R4 Ensure that all staff who work in schools complete the training set out in the National Training Framework (Welsh Government, 2016a)

The Welsh Government should:

- R5 Publicise guidance further to ensure that schools and governing bodies are aware of the advice and guidance they contain
- R6 Ensure that those involved in curriculum design and development for the health and wellbeing area of learning and experiences are aware of the important role schools have in implementing the VAWDASV Act 2015 (National Assembly for Wales, 2015) and include healthy relationships education in their work
- R7 Provide access for staff who work in independent schools and colleges to the National Training Framework (Welsh Government, 2016a)

Managing money – Financial education in primary and secondary schools in Wales

Main findings

- 1 The introduction of the 'manage money' strand in the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF; Welsh Government, 2014) and revised programmes of study for mathematics (Welsh Government, 2015b) has helped most teachers to identify opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their financial skills in mathematics lessons and other subjects. However, in a minority of primary schools and the majority of secondary schools, planning does not usually enable pupils to develop their financial understanding and skills as they move through the school.
- 2 Most schools plan this aspect of the curriculum within their overall provision for numeracy. This means that schools no longer deliver financial education exclusively through personal and social education lessons. In best practice, schools develop pupils' financial skills progressively through numeracy activities and their understanding of financial responsibility through meaningful personal and social education contexts. A minority of primary schools and a majority of secondary schools do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop and apply their financial capabilities in challenging and relevant activities across a range of curriculum areas and contexts.
- 3 In the majority of schools, a senior or middle leader is responsible for developing, co-ordinating and evaluating numeracy. Although schools monitor and evaluate overall standards and provision in numeracy, very few focus specifically on financial education.
- 4 Senior leaders value financial education as important to the development of pupils' life skills, but only a few are aware of the Welsh Government's Financial Inclusion Strategy and guidance document, 'Financial education for 7-19 year olds in Wales' (2011).
- 5 A few schools, usually in areas with high levels of deprivation, develop financial education provision as a school improvement priority. Overall, many schools face challenges to achieve and sustain improvements in the delivery of financial education. This is often because of increasing demand for curriculum time and competing school improvement priorities.
- 6 A minority of schools continue to benefit from useful partnerships with banks, building societies, local businesses and credit unions. These partnerships often help pupils to develop their financial understanding and support them with fund-raising and enterprise projects. Despite the benefits of working with financial experts, many schools find it difficult to sustain these partnerships. The capacity of individual organisations to provide support for their local schools in developing pupils' financial education varies considerably across Wales. Not all schools are aware of the financial education programmes their local credit union, bank or building society can provide. Consequently, schools and local financial organisations miss valuable

opportunities to enhance the financial learning experiences and skills of pupils and their communities.

- 7 A few schools, particularly primary schools, provide very useful and innovative arrangements to involve parents and pupils in financial education activities. These provide a valuable service, particularly in communities where parents request support from schools to improve their own and their child's financial knowledge and understanding.
- 8 Specific training for teachers in financial education is not as widely available for schools as it was in 2010. Now, this aspect of the curriculum is more likely to feature within generic numeracy training provided by regional consortia or as part of schools' internal training arrangements. As a result, not all teachers have the knowledge and skills to help them deliver financial education confidently.
- 9 Many schools use a range of useful resources, including websites and digital learning platforms, to find suitable resources for financial education. Teachers' awareness and confidence to access financial education resources, including bilingual material, from HwB, vary considerably within and across schools.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Plan and deliver meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their financial skills across the curriculum
- R2 Monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching for financial education
- R3 Provide staff with appropriate training to improve provision for financial education

Local authorities / Consortia should:

- R4 Facilitate effective arrangements for schools to share best practice and resources for financial education
- R5 Review their training programmes for numeracy to ensure that they enable teachers to develop a sound knowledge and understanding of financial education

The Welsh Government should:

- R6 Review and promote its guidance material for the effective delivery of financial education, to include a database of useful resources and organisations for schools
- R7 Support the development of bilingual digital financial education resources
- R8 Ensure that financial education is included in the development of the new area of learning and experience for health and wellbeing as well as mathematics and numeracy

Science and design and technology at key stage 2

Main findings

Standards in science

- 1 By the end of key stage 2, many pupils have developed a sound understanding of basic science concepts and of the nature of science. A strong feature in many schools is pupils' understanding of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise for good health. Where standards are strongest, pupils develop a good understanding of concepts such as gravity and magnetism, and use scientific terms precisely.
- 2 Both boys and girls achieve similarly well and nearly all undertake scientific work equally enthusiastically. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of undertaking investigations carefully and of controlling variables. Many pupils explain their scientific enquiries, predictions and results using scientific terminology.
- 3 Many pupils develop their thinking skills well in science, for example when thinking about cause and effect. In one school, older pupils make predictions about which materials act best as filters before carrying out a range of investigations to test their ideas. They give coherent reasons for their predictions, based on the scientific knowledge that they have learned previously.
- 4 Most pupils make useful and accurate observations of their science work, and record these effectively. However, only a minority understand the need to repeat enquiries and record multiple readings to ensure the reliability of their work. A minority of pupils do not explain the reasons for their conclusions well and do not have a sound grasp of the relevant underlying scientific principles or concepts. When presenting results, too many pupils do not know which chart they should use for different types of data. A very few teachers do not understand which chart to use either.
- 5 Many pupils use and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well in science lessons. For example, they use their numeracy skills to measure accurately using standard units and use database software to allow them to record and analyse their findings.
- 6 The difference in achievement between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers in science at the end of key stage 2 remains too wide and the gap continues to grow at level 5.

Standards in design and technology

- 7 A majority of pupils in key stage 2 design and make simple products by combining their designing and making skills. They are creative in their design and technology work across a broad range of topics.
- 8 Many pupils illustrate their design ideas using simply-labelled sketches. However, too few include accurate measurements in their plans, where appropriate. Only a few pupils plan well enough the steps they will take to complete their project.

- 9 In a majority of schools, pupils understand many of the different components within the design and technology curriculum, such as food and materials. However, in too many schools, pupils' understanding of 'systems and control' is weak.

Provision

- 10 Most schools have comprehensive plans to ensure that pupils have access to a broad and balanced science curriculum. When schools purchase commercially-available schemes of work, a few do not adapt them to ensure that pupils learn about all the areas of science in the National Curriculum.
- 11 Many schools allocate a suitable amount of time to teach science. However, a few have not implemented the recommendation from Estyn's review of 'Science in key stages 2 and 3' (2013) that schools should make sure pupils are taught science for at least two hours a week.
- 12 Where a school's science curriculum policy is unclear and leaders allow individual teachers too much choice in deciding how often pupils carry out investigative work, pupils in different classes have inconsistent opportunities to develop their investigative skills.
- 13 In many schools, the quality of teaching is good in science. Many teachers plan activities that focus well on developing pupils' science skills, but a minority do not challenge more able pupils enough.
- 14 In many cases, teachers provide pupils with detailed oral feedback during science lessons that helps them understand what they need to do to improve. In only a minority of cases do teachers focus written feedback enough on developing pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding. In only a minority of schools do teachers provide pupils with effective opportunities in science to consider how they could improve or to assess their own or their peers' learning.
- 15 A majority of schools provide pupils with an interesting design and technology curriculum. However, at least half of these schools do not teach all areas of the curriculum consistently. In nearly all of these cases, teachers omit the area of 'systems and control'. In a minority of schools, teachers have a weak understanding of areas of the design and technology curriculum, particularly of 'systems and control'.
- 16 A minority of schools do not have detailed enough planning that makes sure that pupils develop their knowledge and skills in design and technology systematically.
- 17 A few of the schools visited for this survey are beginning to consider the Areas of Learning and Experience described in Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015). They are beginning to integrate subjects and adapt their planning to focus on delivering a more holistic curriculum where they teach concepts, skills and knowledge from a range of curriculum subjects in one lesson.

Leadership and management

- 18 Most school leaders undertake an appropriate range of self-evaluation activities to monitor standards and provision in science. However, a minority do not identify shortcomings in science robustly enough. When monitoring the quality of teaching in science, leaders too often focus on generic aspects of teaching, and actions to improve science particularly are rarely identified.
- 19 In a few schools, leaders do not have effective enough oversight of teacher assessment processes. Where this is the case, teachers' assessment of pupils in science is inaccurate and often over-generous.
- 20 Many school leaders recognise weaknesses in standards and provision for design and technology. However, only a few schools undertake robust monitoring of this subject. In only a very few schools do leaders develop suitable improvement plans to address these issues. As a result, the weaknesses often persist.
- 21 There are too few opportunities for teachers to develop their expertise in teaching science and design and technology. The availability of training in science by local consortia varies across Wales. Only a very few teachers receive training opportunities to help them deliver the design and technology curriculum. A few headteachers seek out expertise from other primary schools with recognised good practice to support their own schools in these curriculum areas.
- 22 Despite a notable difference in outcomes in science between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers, few leaders use the pupil deprivation grant to target improvements in this subject.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Make sure that science lessons challenge all pupils, particularly the more able, and reduce the achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers
- R2 Make sure that pupils have opportunities to learn about all areas of the design and technology curriculum, particularly 'systems and control'
- R3 Ensure that assessment helps pupils know what they need to do to improve
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation processes are robust and focus on pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills, and on the quality of teaching
- R5 Provide teachers with training in the areas of science and of design and technology where they lack knowledge and confidence

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R6 Provide more subject-specific support for teachers to improve teaching and assessment in science and design and technology and facilitate the sharing of good practice
- R7 Provide more support for schools to evaluate their curriculum and plan for the development of the science and technology area of learning and experience

Careers – The implementation of the careers and world of work framework in secondary schools

Main findings

- 1 Nearly all schools provide pupils with a range of useful information in Year 9 to help them make their key stage 4 subject choices. They use a range of strategies to support pupils and their parents in making decisions, including providing advice from careers advisers at open evenings. However, the majority of schools have not responded effectively to reductions in the support offered by Careers Wales. As a result, only a few schools ensure that all key stage 4 pupils have an interview to discuss their career options.
- 2 Most schools provide pupils with a range of general information about post-16 options. However, a minority of schools do not use sufficiently up-to-date information or resources to guide pupils' decisions. In general, 11-18 schools place too much emphasis on promoting their own sixth form rather than exploring fully the range of other options available to pupils across a range of providers.
- 3 Methods for delivering CWoW continue to vary greatly across schools. Many schools have changed their provision substantially during the last five years. While the time allocated to CWoW-related activities by schools has on average increased, in many cases this provision is now planned around the requirements of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification rather than the CWoW framework.
- 4 The amount of lesson time that schools allocate to CWoW continues to vary greatly. A minority of schools do not allocate any time to CWoW. In a minority of schools, staff delivering CWoW are not provided with training or up-to-date resources to carry out this role. A minority of schools feel that their CWoW provision is less effective than it was five years ago. These schools believe that reductions in the support available from Careers Wales, combined with the increasing demands of the key stage 4 curriculum, have left them unable to deliver CWoW as effectively as in the past. A very few schools have strengthened their CWoW provision over this period.
- 5 The proportion of pupils who participate in work experience placements in key stage 4 or in the sixth form has declined substantially over the last five years. In most cases, schools feel unable to meet the health and safety requirements of running a work experience programme now that Welsh Government no longer requires Careers Wales to maintain a national work experience database on behalf of schools. Nearly all schools who have reduced work experience provision feel that this has had a negative impact on pupils' progress and on their understanding of their career options. A very few schools have invested substantially in maintaining this aspect of their provision and manage the health and safety requirements themselves.
- 6 The proportion of schools that have appropriate systems in place to assess pupils' progress against the learning objectives in the CWoW framework has increased slightly since Estyn's previous report in 2012. However overall, the tracking of pupils' progress remains underdeveloped.

- 7 Although schools use a wide range of data to evaluate the effectiveness of their CWoW provision, self-evaluation and improvement planning systems for CWoW are insufficiently rigorous. This is because the data that they use, for example the proportion of pupils who remain at school for the sixth form, is not necessarily a valid measure of how well the school has supported pupils in making successful careers-related decisions. Only a very few schools make suitable use of data to evaluate how well pupils' decisions enable them to succeed in sustaining their progression choices.
- 8 Although the proportion of schools that have a nominated governor with responsibility for CWoW has increased slightly since 2012, the role of governors in supporting CWoW remains underdeveloped. Only a few schools make effective use of their governors' experience and expertise to enhance this aspect of their work.
- 9 The extent to which schools involve others in the delivery of CWoW continues to vary greatly. The proportion of CWoW that is delivered via external partnerships has declined over the last five years. However, in a few schools, pupils would have very little access to CWoW without external delivery.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Ensure that all pupils have regular discussions about their progress, aspirations and possible learning pathways, especially in Year 9 and Year 11
- R2 Provide pupils with accurate and up-to-date information about the full range of sixth form, further education and apprenticeship opportunities open to them
- R3 Evaluate their CWoW provision to ensure that it:
- a. is delivered by well-trained staff, equipped with up-to-date resources
 - b. provides pupils with relevant work-focused experiences
 - c. makes better use of information to monitor and track trends in pupils' achievement and progression so as to plan improvements in provision
 - d. is integrated into whole-school self-evaluation, improvement planning and accountability processes
- R4 Involve governors more in the strategic oversight of CWoW

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R5 Help schools to develop their use of information to evaluate the effectiveness of their CWoW provision

The Welsh Government should:

- R6 Facilitate stronger partnerships between schools, providers, employers and others to improve the delivery of impartial advice and guidance
- R7 Review the CWoW framework and update guidance in light of the principles of curriculum reform identified in Successful Futures

Science at key stage 3 and key stage 4

Main findings

Standards

- 1 Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science in many of the science lessons observed in key stage 4, but in only about half of the science lessons in key stage 3. The quality of teaching is better in key stage 4 lessons than in key stage 3. In key stage 3, teacher expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low.
- 2 In the lessons where good progress is made, pupils recall previous science work well. They are engaged and are enthusiastic about their work. They undertake practical and investigative work competently. They use scientific terms with understanding and can provide reasoned explanations in their written and oral responses. Many write about science topics in a variety of styles and for a range of audiences. They develop their numeracy skills appropriately.
- 3 In a minority of lessons, progress is too slow. In these lessons, many pupils are too reliant on the teacher. In a very few lessons, a few pupils disrupt the learning of others. This disruption is more common in key stage 3 and in lessons taught by teachers who are not science specialists.
- 4 In key stage 4, performance at level 2 in science has shown an upward trend from 2012 to 2015. Despite declining in 2016, science remains the highest attaining core subject in Wales. Girls consistently perform better than boys in science. Pupils eligible for free school meals still do not perform as well as other pupils. The proportion of pupils who achieve the highest grades in science GCSE has not improved over time.
- 5 In key stage 3, according to teacher assessment, there has been a year-on-year increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level (level 5 and above) in science since 2012. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in science has also improved, although more able pupils eligible for free school meals do not do as well in science as their peers. Performance of boys has been lower than that of girls at each level every year since 2012.
- 6 The GCSE and teacher assessment outcomes contrast with the findings in PISA tests in 2015. The average PISA scores for science in Wales have declined every three years since 2006. A key factor in this decline has been the deterioration in the performance of the highest achieving pupils. In PISA, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in science.

Provision

- 7 In the schools visited, the quality of teaching has many strengths in many lessons in key stage 4 and in around a half of lessons in key stage 3. Many teachers, particularly in key stage 4, have strong subject knowledge and develop pupils'

scientific knowledge and understanding well by planning a range of interesting activities. These teachers provide well-planned practical work, make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their teaching, and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy. Teachers' exposition is clear and concise. In a few lessons, teachers have exceptionally high expectations and help pupils to achieve them.

- 8 In a minority of lessons, particularly in key stage 3, expectations are low, and teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of all pupils and do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills.
- 9 Many teachers use assessment information from tests and examinations well to gain a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils. Only a minority of teachers provide pupils with useful subject-specific comments to improve their work. Pupils respond positively to such feedback.
- 10 In many lessons, teachers question pupils well, allowing appropriate time for response and encouraging more expansive answers. A few teachers offer useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and the work of others, but more often the purpose of this type of assessment is unclear as pupils do not use suitable criteria that help them improve their work.
- 11 In general, enough teaching time is allocated for teaching science currently, but time is being reduced for GCSE science in many schools to accommodate other curriculum areas such as the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4. Most schools have reduced the number of pupils entered for vocational science courses significantly since 2015. Very few schools have reviewed their science curriculum in response to the 'Successful futures' report (Donaldson, G. (2015)).
- 12 Most schools offer worthwhile extra-curricular science activities, but planning for extending more able pupils is underdeveloped in science. There is also a lack of opportunity for pupils to contribute to what and how they want to learn.

Leadership and management

- 13 In the schools visited, senior leaders generally have a broad vision for the school curriculum and what they want to achieve for their pupils. In science departments, leaders are less clear about the specific aims of the science curriculum. The recent changes to qualifications may have contributed to this lack of clarity, since science leaders are not familiar enough with the content or assessment requirements.
- 14 Lines of accountability for science departments are generally clear. However, because all qualifications are included in the level 2 measure for science, performance data is not specific enough to allow a department to compare itself effectively with similar schools. This has led to a lack of rigour in the performance management and evaluation of science departments in recent years, especially when leaders are not using a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching and leaders of science departments and are too dependent on using data.
- 15 Most science department self-evaluations are based on information gathered from suitable sources, such as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. However,

lesson observations tend to focus too much on whole-school priorities, and as a result they do not evaluate standards and progress in science knowledge and understanding well enough. When looking at pupils' work, most departments consider pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, but only a few focus clearly on the standard of science.

- 16 In most schools, the science department improvement plan is suitably linked to their self-evaluation report. The plan includes appropriate actions to address priorities and the success criteria are linked properly to the department's targets. In a majority of cases, the actions are not specific enough to improve the quality of teaching.
- 17 A minority of the schools visited have taken part in the latest round of PISA tests. Only a few schools have analysed their school's own report on the test outcomes in detail so as to identify any weaknesses and plan to address them. Similarly, of the schools that did not take part in the PISA tests in 2015, very few have considered the content of the report for Wales or how it would impact on their work.
- 18 Most science teachers benefit from sound internal support from their school leaders and colleagues. However, regional consortia subject officers target their support on science departments that need to improve significantly and there is not enough subject-specific support for science in schools that are not underperforming.
- 19 Most lessons are taught by specialist science teachers. Generally, there is a lack of applicants for science posts and recruiting to Welsh-medium science departments is a particular problem. When science staff are absent, many schools have to employ non-specialist supply teachers to cover their lessons, especially in key stage 3. The number of post-graduate science teachers being trained has fallen short of national targets over several years.
- 20 Most science departments are well equipped. They have a suitable number of laboratories and an appropriate number of technicians to support the teaching. Science support staff receive appropriate training on health and safety issues. There is very little training or support available for technicians.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Provide stimulating and challenging learning opportunities in science involving effective practical work to meet the needs of all pupils, including the more able
- R2 Evaluate their curriculum for science in preparation for the new area of learning and experience for science and technology
- R3 Ensure that departmental self-evaluation is robust and based on a range of evidence to evaluate subject-specific standards and the quality of teaching
- R4 Use feedback from the latest PISA report to inform planning for improvement
- R5 Ensure that assessment helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R6 Provide more subject-specific support for science teachers on improving teaching and assessment, and facilitate the sharing of good practice
- R7 Provide more support for schools to evaluate their curriculum, and plan for the development of the science and technology area of learning and experience, as well as the changes to qualifications in science

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 Campaign to attract more science graduates into the teaching profession in Wales

School-to-school support and collaboration – a summary and discussion paper

Main findings

- 1 Inspection findings and thematic reports on secondary and primary improvement journeys (Estyn, 2013; Estyn, 2016) suggest that **schools must have a strong culture of professional learning** for school-to-school support and collaboration to be successful.
- 2 The evaluation of the Lead and Emerging Practitioners Project came to similar conclusions (Welsh Government, 2013). It also identified that **school needs to know and accept when there is a need to change**.
- 3 The emerging findings from the evaluation of Schools Challenge Cymru suggest that the schools that were already on their improvement journey, recognised what needed to change and why, were able to make effective use of support from other schools (Welsh Government, 2014a). Schools with weak leadership, poor approaches to self-evaluation and a climate of blame and distrust require rigorous intervention and challenge to benefit from the opportunities provided by the funding, and **intervention is needed when a school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education**.
- 4 Regional consortia recognise that a differentiated approach to the support and challenge they offer schools is necessary. In each consortium, an increasing amount of support for schools is provided by other schools. However, **school-to-school work is not monitored or evaluated** carefully enough to ensure that the support is having the intended impact and not having a detrimental effect on the school providing the support.
- 5 Based on the above findings, it is possible to identify common success factors and barriers that need to be overcome before school-to-school collaboration can be effective. Schools do not benefit from working with others until most success factors are in place and barriers removed. The lists below build on those published initially in Estyn's first report (Estyn, 2015).

Success factors:

- The school needs well-trained and effective leadership
- The school needs to know and accept when there is a need to change
- School-to-school support should arise from a clear identification of need, have a clear rationale and be based on a strategic objective
- The focus must be on the core business of teaching and learning and on improving outcomes for pupils
- Schools need a strong culture of professional learning
- The participants should experience the collaboration as mutually beneficial

- The participants should be at similar stages of their journey of improvement – it is less likely that the support will be successful if the difference in effectiveness between the schools involved is too great
- The relationships between schools needs to be equal, trusting, open and transparent
- Activities should be evaluated for impact on the core business
- intervention is needed when a school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education

Obstacles and barriers:

- Lack of commitment by the school leadership
- Lack of shared interests
- Lack of trust and openness
- A belief that others have nothing useful to offer
- A concern that time spent away from school by leaders and teachers will have a negative effect on one's own school and pupils
- Lack of capacity to release staff without detriment to pupils

Good practice in the humanities

Main findings

Standards

- 1 In the schools visited, most pupils have a positive attitude towards the humanities and are highly motivated. Pupils enjoy the variety of tasks, the study of current issues, and the opportunity to engage in learning beyond the classroom.
- 2 At key stage 2, most pupils are independent learners and show resilience when they find tasks difficult. They identify similarities and differences between places and use a range of interesting resources to draw conclusions about places or events.
- 3 At key stage 3, many pupils are confident in making links between and within humanities topics, for example linking tectonic activity and agriculture. In many lessons, nearly all pupils skim a range of text to extract relevant information. Most pupils share their ideas clearly and justify their opinions.
- 4 At key stage 4, most pupils demonstrate strong prior learning and can apply this knowledge to a new context. In history, pupils analyse sources perceptively and produce well-structured extended writing. In geography, they develop their understanding of the natural world and our relationship with it.

Provision

- 5 Across schools, curriculum planning models vary. Primary schools mainly adopt a thematic approach to curriculum planning, while in secondary schools there are a variety of approaches including the thematic approach and traditional teaching of the separate humanities subjects.
- 6 Planning for progression in humanities from the Foundation Phase to key stage 2 is well developed. However, planning for progression from key stage 2 to key stage 3 is weak. This is because curriculum transition arrangements most frequently focus on the core subjects. At all key stages, humanities teachers plan to ensure the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The planning for the development of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills is more variable, particularly at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- 7 Pupils value the enrichment experiences provided by the humanities, such as fieldwork and educational visits. In the best examples, teachers ensure that pupils have a secure knowledge of their local history and an appreciation of their locality. Pupils make a clear link between these activities and their learning. Most leaders make effective use of the pupil development grant (PDG) to ensure equal access to these opportunities.
- 8 In highly-effective lessons, teachers plan well to build on prior knowledge and maximise progress. These lessons include a skilful blend of subject knowledge and

the development of pupils' skills. Particularly at key stage 2, pupils are frequently involved in the planning for their learning, within and beyond the classroom. Pupils discuss with their teachers the topics they wish to study and teachers plan interesting lessons that match the interests and respond to the questions pupils raise. Using pupils' enquiries, teachers offer a broad range of enrichment experiences to pupils and parents and pupils choose to complete those activities that interest them. At key stage 4, the strong emphasis on examination technique and outcomes limits the range of learning experiences provided to pupils.

- 9 Many secondary schools have comprehensive and effective systems in place to track the progress of pupils across the humanities. However, at key stage 2, the tracking of pupil progress across the humanities is underdeveloped. At both key stage 2 and key stage 3, there is very little standardisation and moderation of pupils' humanities work.

Leadership and management

- 10 In a minority of the schools visited, leaders clearly articulate the guiding principles of their curriculum design. These principles may include links to real-life learning, first-hand experiences and opportunities for investigation and problem solving to create independent, resilient learners. However, the majority of leaders have not articulated, or in some cases considered, the 'core purposes' or 'guiding principles' that are at the heart of their curriculum planning.
- 11 In the most effective schools, senior leaders understand the importance of the humanities subjects in a broad and balanced curriculum. These senior leaders understand the strong role that the humanities can play in developing pupils' skills within a relevant context.
- 12 In most primary schools visited, the humanities have not had a high enough priority in whole-school planning. This is mainly due to the strong focus given to improving standards in literacy and numeracy. In the last year, most of the primary schools visited have begun to adapt their curriculum to respond to the recommendations from Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015). In the most recent development plans, the humanities are being reviewed and planned for as one of the six areas of learning.
- 13 In all primary schools visited, the quality of teaching is monitored closely. However, in only a minority of cases are the strengths and areas for development in humanities teaching well understood. In these schools, information from monitoring activities is used well to share good practice and provide support as necessary. The level of subject expertise in the humanities varies greatly between staff. However, all the schools make strong use of internal staff expertise to ensure that all pupils receive an effective learning experience in their humanities lessons.
- 14 In many of the secondary schools visited, self-evaluation and improvement planning in the humanities subjects is strong. In these schools, self-evaluation processes have identified clearly the impact of curriculum changes on the quality of provision and outcomes. However, in a minority of schools, the evaluation of changes to the curriculum is underdeveloped.

- 15 In nearly all the secondary schools visited, leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the teaching of humanities. In a few departments there is a lack of sharing of good practice and in a very few there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching. In a few of the secondary schools visited, non-subject specialists teach the humanities, especially at key stage 3. In the best practice, there are appropriate support systems in place to ensure that all staff teaching outside their specialist area receive appropriate support.
- 16 During initial teacher training, primary teachers receive limited guidance in the teaching of humanities. In secondary schools, opportunities for extending teachers' professional development in the humanities, other than courses related to examinations, are limited. There is a lack of subject-specific support from many local authorities and regional consortia.

Summary of the characteristics of good practice in the humanities

- Leaders understand and support the place of humanities in a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Teachers skilfully blend the development of subject knowledge and pupil skills. They develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills within a relevant context.
- Teachers use a wide variety of stimulating, relevant and current resources in their lessons.
- Teachers make effective use of the school locality.
- Pupils enjoy the wide variety of activities teachers provide and the opportunity to learn outside the classroom.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Ensure a balance between the development of pupils' skills and of their knowledge and understanding of subject content
- R2 Ensure that pupils' learning experiences in the humanities are wide-ranging, interesting, progressive and challenging, particularly at key stage 4
- R3 Monitor the progress that pupils make in the humanities more closely
- R4 Evaluate the curriculum for the humanities to prepare for the development and implementation of the new area of learning and experience
- R5 Establish local networks of good practice to share resources and expertise, including making greater use of the schools' locality

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R6 Provide better professional learning opportunities for teachers of the humanities
- R7 Provide more support for schools to evaluate their curriculum and to plan for the development of the humanities area of learning and experience

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 Ensure that initial teacher education courses provide new teachers including primary teachers with the necessary skills to teach the humanities successfully and to respond to the new Curriculum for Wales

Active and experiential learning: effective foundation phase practice in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

Main findings

Around a quarter of schools deliver the foundation phase well. In the other schools, pupils have limited opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills independently, and are overly reliant on adult direction. Many of these schools, particularly in Year 1 and Year 2, focus too much on making sure that pupils attain well within a narrow range of literacy and numeracy indicators, and this impacts negatively on pupils' broader development.

Standards in literacy and numeracy

- 1 In a majority of schools, most pupils develop effective speaking and listening skills. In these schools, teachers and support staff engage with pupils regularly to extend their learning during child-initiated activities. They provide exciting contexts for learning and this stimulates a rich response in children's spoken language.
- 2 Teachers in around half of schools recognise the importance of 'talking to learn'. In these schools, most pupils demonstrate an increased understanding of language, have active imaginations, and are able to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds. In a minority of schools, where activities are adult-directed for most of the time, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore language by talking to adults and other pupils about topics that interest them. They do not develop an extended vocabulary or become confident in speaking to others.
- 3 In a minority of schools, pupils are immersed in a learning environment that gives them numerous opportunities to read a variety of texts and to practise and improve their reading skills throughout the day. However, pupils' progress in developing their reading skills can be adversely affected by having to adhere rigidly to a set number of texts from a reading scheme.
- 4 In around a quarter of schools where pupils have meaningful opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, most pupils develop confidence in transferring their understanding of the different forms of writing to other areas of learning successfully. In around a quarter of schools, pupils do not apply their writing skills across areas of learning well enough. There is an over reliance on formal teaching and the use of worksheets or writing frames, to scaffold pupils' writing. Teachers do not provide stimulating opportunities for writing during continuous and enhanced provision, limiting pupils' ability to write at length imaginatively and independently.
- 5 Most pupils achieve well in mathematics when they have lots of interesting opportunities to use their skills through enhanced activities, both indoors and outdoors. For example, when learning about going on holiday, pupils use their knowledge of addition and multiplication to work out the cost of the holiday for one person and then for a family of four.

- 6 In around a quarter of schools, pupils transfer their mathematical skills to independent activities well. For example, pupils weigh porridge oats for 'The Three Bears' in grams and accurately measure their footprints in centimetres. When looking at a range of information, many pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully to record their findings and transfer them to a simple bar chart. However, in general, a majority of pupils do not interpret and extract information from data handling activities well enough.

Pupil voice and independence

- 7 The amount of child choice varies considerably from class to class and from school to school. In the most successful schools, the interests of pupils and their views are an important consideration in the school's vision for improvement. Pupils' opinions and feedback are a central feature in curriculum planning and developing learning experiences. As a result, in many of these schools, pupils work together well and demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning. Where the delivery of the foundation phase becomes overly adult-directed and too formal in Year 1 and Year 2, pupils' levels of perseverance, and a willingness to take calculated risks in their learning, reduces. These pupils become less confident in applying their literacy and numeracy skills independently across areas of learning. Overall, inspections identify more adult-directed learning than child-initiated learning in Year 2.

Provision for literacy and numeracy

- 8 Classrooms in nursery and reception are generally set up well to promote pupils' learning through doing, experiencing and finding things out for themselves. However, in Year 1 and Year 2, many classrooms have a more formal layout and the delivery of literacy and numeracy is often too structured and adult-directed. In these classrooms, pupils tend to sit at a desk for a large proportion of their day and are not
- 9 Teachers in around half of all schools do not plan their work effectively to ensure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills systematically enough across all areas of learning.
- 10 In a majority of schools, the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is not well organised. Teachers do not understand what good quality continuous, enhanced and focused provision looks like.
- 11 In a few schools, appropriate foundation phase practice is limited to afternoons only or one or two afternoons a week, which conflicts with the pedagogy of the foundation phase. In these schools, teachers do not always consider how they can make links between the areas of foundation phase learning well enough. Many of these schools have literacy and numeracy sessions in the morning only, and do not make the most of developing pupils' skills throughout the day.
- 12 In a few schools, teachers integrate the teaching of phonics, reading and specific writing skills in innovative ways during continuous and enhanced provision. They expand upon them, often in innovative ways, during continuous and enhanced activities. This, allows pupils to practise and embed them, with a good balance between experiential learning and formal aspects of teaching. However, by Year 2

these skills are often taught in isolation. As a result, pupils' literacy skills become too narrow and teachers do not always encourage these pupils to write at length, independently, across areas of learning.

Teaching and assessment

- 13 In a quarter of schools where teaching is effective, teachers consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. They teach a particular skill through a focused task, and plan exciting and relevant opportunities to practise, consolidate and develop this skill and to extend pupils' learning during continuous and enhanced provision. Staff facilitate, demonstrate and collaborate in learning. They motivate their pupils and use questioning to stimulate further, open-ended learning.
- 14 In many schools, teaching assistants, rather than teachers, do most of the work outdoors, but a minority do not always have a clear understanding of foundation phase practice or the learning objective. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in developing important skills in literacy and numeracy and are not actively engaged in purposeful learning for considerable periods of time.
- 15 In many schools, processes for assessing literacy and numeracy are too complicated and time consuming. They focus on collecting a large amount of information rather than analysing pupil progress over time, or identifying specific areas for development. In too many cases, assessment is used as a process to follow and is not diagnostic enough to inform future planning or 'next steps' for pupils.
- 16 In addition, many schools feel pressurised to prepare pupils formally for national reading and numeracy tests, contributing to wide variations in foundation phase practice. This is frequently at the expense of the development of pupils' creative and physical skills.

Leadership

- 17 In most schools with effective foundation phase practice, foundation phase leaders play a key strategic role within the senior leadership team. They focus well on improving provision and raising pupil outcomes. They act as skilled role models to model effective foundation phase principles and practice in teaching and learning to colleagues. They support staff in analysing data robustly.
- 18 Where foundation phase leads are new to the role, they do not always have the knowledge and understanding of effective practice to deliver literacy and numeracy well enough. Often, they do not receive training in the delivery of effective Foundation phase practices. This in turn limits their ability to support colleagues in modelling good practice when delivering and planning for literacy and numeracy activities across areas of learning.
- 19 Leaders of schools with consistently good standards evaluate the progress and success of initiatives regularly. They consider the learning taking place and its impact on pupils' outcomes and their attitudes to learning. They are not afraid to make changes if things are not working, and this empowers them to be innovative and try new ideas.

- 20 Where leadership is adequate or unsatisfactory, leaders have a narrow view of the purpose of learning, they are overly prescriptive in applying the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, and they do not understand the principles of foundation phase well enough. As a result, they fail to identify and address weaknesses in the delivery of literacy and numeracy in line with good foundation phase practice.
- 21 In many cases, challenge advisers do not have enough knowledge or experience of the foundation phase and its pedagogy. Because of this, they do not always understand what constitutes good standards of literacy and numeracy. This means that the support and challenge they offer schools sometimes contradict and undermine effective foundation phase practice.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- R1 Provide professional learning opportunities for all foundation phase staff to make sure that they have the skills, understanding and confidence to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Ensure that foundation phase learning in Year 1 and Year 2 classes is suitably balanced between experiential learning and formal teaching
- R3 Plan regular opportunities for all pupils in the foundation phase to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in enhanced and continuous provision areas, both indoors and outdoors
- R4 Involve pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 in decisions about what and how they learn

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R5 Provide training for headteachers to help them to identify, develop and share effective foundation phase practice
- R6 Make sure that challenge advisers identify, develop and share effective foundation phase practice and apply this knowledge when supporting schools
- R7 Provide training for schools to help them to identify, develop and share effective practice in teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy skills in the foundation phase, across the areas of learning

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 Make sure that schools understand the pedagogy of active and experiential learning when developing a new curriculum for Wales