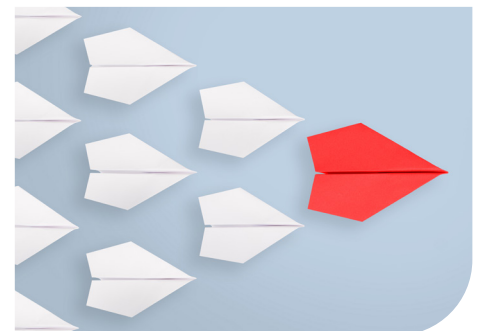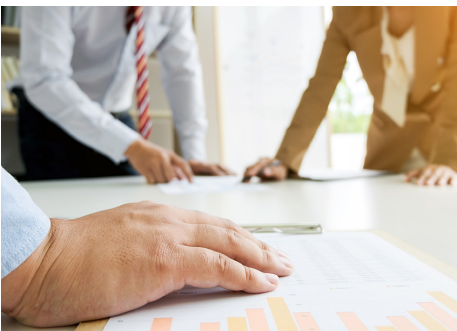# Estyn

Summary of findings from our national thematic reviews

2019/2020

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ⅄ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ⅄ primary schools
- ⅄ 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

Estyn also:

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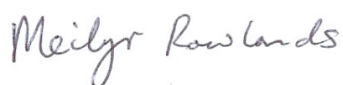
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Foreword

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 2019 and early 2020 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 impact of schools on pupils' health and wellbeing, provision for young carers in secondary schools and further education colleges, effective provision to support pupils who have had adverse childhood experiences and schools and colleges partnerships with employers.

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, includes surveys with case studies of effective practice in establishing school federations, supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and effective provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in maintained primary, secondary and all-age schools. We also published surveys relating to PRU management committees, PREVENT and secondary school provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

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 2020 promises to be equally relevant, with reviews underway focused on a wide range of areas such as secondary schools' preparation for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, the establishment of all-age schools, language acquisition in non-maintained settings and primary schools, youth and community training, Welsh history and culture, A-level social studies, LGBT provision and A-level Welsh.

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

Provision for secondary school-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Standards

1   Across Wales, only around half of Year 6 GRT pupils move on to secondary education in Year 7. The reasons for this include parental concerns that:

- their children will be bullied in secondary school
- their culture will be diluted by contact with the settled community
- there is little in the school curriculum to prepare their children for work or for keeping a home

2   Around half of local authorities make arrangements to improve transition rates for GRT pupils, for example by arranging additional transition visits for Year 6 GRT pupils and their parents. Overall, these arrangements have had little impact on improving the rates of transition for GRT pupils.

3   Since 2011, the numbers of GRT pupils in secondary schools have increased by almost 35% However, the data may not provide an accurate picture, as a minority of parents and pupils say that they do not identify themselves as being from these communities due to fear of persecution or bullying.

4   Only around half of schools' anti-bullying and equality policies take account of the particular needs of GRT pupils, for example in recognising how their culture and traditions may affect their attendance.

5   Many schools raise awareness of GRT culture and lifestyle through assemblies, through personal and social education (PSE) lessons, and through celebrating particular events such as the GRT history month. However overall, schools do not promote GRT culture well enough throughout the formal subject-based part of the school curriculum.

6   Attendance of GRT pupils at secondary school has improved over the past few years, although overall their attendance is too low and is well below the average for secondary school-aged pupils in Wales.

7   Around half of schools and local authorities believe that transport difficulties impact on the attendance of GRT pupils. A few sites are away from normal transport routes and near main roads or industrial areas, which means that walking to school is dangerous as there are often no footpaths. A minority of local authorities provide transport for pupils to help with attendance. Where the school or local authority offers transport, attendance and engagement of pupils are much higher.

8   A majority of local authorities and schools have pastoral support plans (PSPs) for GRT pupils. Most use PSPs appropriately to support attendance, including setting realistic targets. Pupils, parents, schools and outside agencies agree the strategies for improvement. Local authorities monitor these strategies suitably.

9   There have been some significant improvements in the examination performance of Gypsy and Gypsy Roma pupils at key stage 4 over the last few years, although overall it continues to be the lowest of all ethnic groups in Wales and is below the Wales average. The small number of Traveller pupils means that similar comparisons cannot be drawn.

10   Although most schools and local authorities collect and analyse data on the attendance and attainment of GRT pupils, they do not use this data to evaluate the effectiveness of their improvement strategies well. Most local authorities continue with the same types of support without evaluating which are the most effective. A few schools and local authorities use this data well to determine the effectiveness of their strategies and to make amendments.

11   Most local authorities provide useful school-based support for GRT pupils through a traveller education service. Staff from these services liaise well with the families of GRT pupils and help pupils to improve their attendance and attainment. Most local authorities deploy their specialist staff to schools based on the number of GRT pupils attending. A few local authorities lack clarity about how they allocate these staff to schools.

12   Only a very few local authorities work in partnership with other local authorities to deliver joined-up services for GRT pupils. Two local authorities collaborate and share information on families who travel between the two authorities, for example. This helps to ensure continuity of education for these pupils.

13   Many schools and local authorities have made good use of the Welsh Government guidance 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to support the education of GRT pupils. It has helped to provide readers with an understanding of the Gypsy Traveller culture and of issues specific to Gypsy Traveller pupils and their families. However, this document is over 10 years old and much of the information in it is out of date.

14   Around half of local authorities and schools work in partnership with a local college or a work-based learning provider to enhance learning opportunities for GRT pupils at key stage 4. A few GRT pupils undertake vocational courses in construction or hair and beauty. In addition, a very few GRT pupils undertake A level courses in the sixth form and a very few have undertaken degree courses at university. Most GRT pupils do not go on to study courses that prepare them for formal qualifications at post-16 level.

15   Where the literacy and numeracy skills of GRT pupils need strengthening, most schools offer support through their standard interventions such as catch-up programmes. When a GRT pupil is identified as potentially having an additional learning need, liaison between local authority staff and the school's additional learning needs co-ordinator and the traveller education service generally ensures that the pupil undertakes relevant assessments that lead to suitable support being provided.

16   A majority of local authorities do not believe that the merging of the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Education Grant into the EIG in 2014 was effective. This is

because they think there was an overall reduction of funding that had a negative impact on the services that they were able to provide. Whilst the overall level of funding provided by the Welsh Government via the EIG was maintained, within the EIG there was discretion for local authorities to allocate funding at a level they considered appropriate based on local need. In some cases, local authorities allocated additional funding for these groups of pupils through their core budgets.

Recommendations

Local authorities and schools should:

R1   Ensure that they evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies to improve the achievement, transition and attendance* of GRT pupils and make improvements when strategies are not bringing about the desired outcomes

R2   Ensure that anti-bullying and equality policies take account of the specific needs of GRT pupils*

R3   Ensure that schools promote GRT culture throughout the school curriculum*

R4   Ensure that GRT pupils have opportunities to express their views about their learning experiences

R5   Work collaboratively to deliver and enhance services for GRT pupils

R6   Explore ways of building the confidence of GRT pupils and parents to self-ascribe their ethnic identity accurately

The Welsh Government should:

R7   Update the 2008 guidance 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education'

* Recommendation in the 2005 and 2011 Estyn reports

Young carers: Provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales

Main findings

1   There is a lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges across Wales. Many providers do not know which of their pupils and learners have a caring role. A consequence of this is that the provision for young carers at secondary schools, colleges and PRUs varies widely.

2   Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers have robust systems to identify these learners. They track their wellbeing needs regularly and adapt their provision carefully to meet the individual needs of each young carer. However, only a minority of the schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed use an information management system to track and report on the progress young carers make compared with their peers.

3   Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that have a named lead member of staff for young carers generally provide a high level of care, support and guidance for this group of learners. In these providers, young carers are confident to raise concerns, assured that the lead member of staff will champion their rights and liaise sensitively with parents and other professionals.

4   Following the implementation of the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010, the Local Health Boards (LHBs) and local authorities within their regions have developed valuable strategic partnerships to share information, promote interagency co-operation and complete appropriate assessments of the needs of young carers. The requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act Wales 2014 (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) further strengthen partnership working through establishing Regional Partnership Boards. These regional boards include representation from young carers and ensure that services and resources are used in the most effective way to improve outcomes for people within their area, including young carers. This partnership working is starting to include education providers.

5   Young carers benefit considerably where local authorities have a clear strategic plan for carers and a named person to drive forward the strategy in educational settings. In these local authorities, providers share information effectively when pupils transfer between primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. They have a consistent approach to identifying young carers and signposting them to appropriate support.

6   There are a small range of awards schemes that provide secondary schools, colleges and PRUs with useful resources and toolkits to shape their provision to meet the needs of young carers. However, too many providers have not accessed them.

7   Specialist agencies provide high quality resources and support to raise awareness and meet the needs of young carers. But many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs do not engage well enough with these agencies and have not accessed this valuable support.

8   The Welsh Government sponsored training on adverse childhood experiences

(ACEs) is starting to have a positive impact on the work of schools. Generally, schools that provide well for young carers understand how the caring role might adversely affect a child's experiences and life chances.

9   The use of one-page profiles to record what is important to and for children is helping to give young carers a voice and enables schools, colleges and PRUs to target support to meet their individual needs.

10   There is a range of useful training courses available to raise staff awareness of the needs of young carers. However, too many staff in schools, colleges and PRUs have not received this training.

11   Only a very few schools visited have a clear understanding of the enhanced rights of carers under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Most schools are unaware of the requirement for young carers to have their needs assessed and the role of education in contributing to this assessment.

Recommendations

Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs should:

R1   Ensure that they have sound procedures to identify which of their pupils/learners have a caring role

R2   Have a named member of staff with lead responsibility for young carers who acts as a point of contact for young carers and champions their needs

R3   Raise staff awareness of young carers' needs

R4   Engage with specialist services to review and improve their provision to meet the needs of young carers

R5   Track and monitor the progress and outcomes for young carers as they currently do for other groups of vulnerable learners

R6   Evaluate their provision for young carers with reference to the checklist in Appendix 1 or available toolkits.

Local authorities should:

R7   Focus carer strategies on increasing the capacity of schools, colleges and PRUs to identify and meet the needs of young carers

The Welsh Government should:

R8   Produce reliable, nationally-collected data to help identify young carers

Healthy and happy: School impact on pupils' health and wellbeing

Main findings

1   Around two-thirds of primary schools and a third of secondary schools in Wales have an inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing. These schools aim to make sure that the everyday school experience of pupils is consistent with messages given about health and wellbeing in lessons, assemblies and in school policies. They develop pupils as healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society – one of the four purposes of the emerging new curriculum for Wales. They have:

- policies and practices that ensure pupils make good progress in their learning
- leaders who 'walk the talk' about supporting pupils' health and wellbeing
- a nurturing culture, where positive relationships enable pupils to thrive
- an inclusive community and ethos
- detailed knowledge about pupils' health and wellbeing that influences policies and actions and policy
- environment and facilities that promote good health and wellbeing, such as space to play, socialise and relax at break times
- a broad and balanced curriculum, that includes discrete, evidence-based learning experiences that promote health and wellbeing
- supportive pastoral care and targeted interventions for pupils that need additional support
- effective links with external agencies
- close partnerships with parents and carers
- continuing professional learning for all staff that enables them to support pupils' health and wellbeing

2   Most other schools have several strong aspects to their support for pupils' health and wellbeing, despite their approach not being fully whole-school. However, unless a school has all the key aspects listed above, in order to present a coherent message and a consistent experience for pupils, there is a risk that isolated good work is undermined and its impact limited. For example, lessons about bullying are of limited value unless pupils are satisfied with how the school deals with allegations of bullying; similarly, policies about restorative practice mean little to pupils unless staff apply those approaches when working with pupils.

3   Discrepancy between the messages given and the lived experience of pupils is a key reason why secondary schools are less successful than primary schools in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing. The changes that come with adolescence also make it more challenging for secondary schools to support pupils' health and wellbeing. This too may partly explain why secondary schools are generally less successful than primary schools at supporting pupils' health and wellbeing, though it should not be used as an excuse.

4   Leaders are responsible for promoting staff wellbeing, protecting staff from excessive

workload and ensuring that they are safe in work. Schools where pupil wellbeing is supported effectively tend also to provide strong support for staff wellbeing.

5   Involving pupils meaningfully in the evaluation and development of a school's work to support their health and wellbeing is a key factor for success. Pupils' sense of belonging and value is often rooted in the extent to which they feel that staff care about them, take time to get to know them, and listen to their views.

6   The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and in peer relationships between pupils is a critical factor in whether or not pupils thrive in school. Pupils report that simple actions like teachers smiling and greeting them by name, and engaging in positive conversation at the start of the school day, help them settle and feel cared for, whereas the few teachers who shout at pupils, embarrass them, or treat them unfairly, harm their sense of wellbeing.

7   In a few schools, leaders devolve responsibility for health and wellbeing too much to one member of staff, or a small team of staff. These schools lose the sense that health and wellbeing is everyone's business, and leave pupils with a perception that not everyone cares.

8   All schools provide learning experiences relating to health and wellbeing, including physical education (PE) and personal and social education (PSE). Primary schools tend to provide better quality experiences in PSE, whereas secondary schools tend to provide better quality experiences in PE. However, primary schools generally do not teach sex and relationships education well, and secondary schools do not give enough time to PE as pupils get older.

9   All primary and secondary schools use a range of strategies to support pupils who have specific needs relating to their health and wellbeing. The effectiveness of these strategies is heavily dependent on the quality of the relationship between the staff and pupils involved. In addition to their own work, all schools work with staff from various external agencies, such as counsellors, nurses, police officers, social workers and youth workers. This multi-agency work is most effective in supporting pupils' health and wellbeing when each party trusts each other and understands how best to work together in the pupils' best interests. Schools' work with parents similarly works well when schools have built trust and communicate effectively.

10   Pupils are critical of school toilets that are not accessible, clean or safe. Pupils in around half of the schools surveyed – mainly secondary schools – expressed concern about toilets. Concerns raised included general uncleanliness, closed facilities, locks on cubicle doors that are missing or do not work, a lack of sanitary disposal facilities, no hot water or handwash, and unsuitable arrangements for transgender pupils. In schools with separate toilet blocks for male and female pupils, pupils are also concerned about anti-social behaviour, which is very rarely a concern where pupils have access to single cubicle toilets attached to open washrooms that can be monitored easily. Pupils have strong views about toilets, but schools have not always taken enough account of their views.

11   Few teachers enter the profession with substantial background training in child or adolescent development, or how best to support children's health and wellbeing.

Only a minority of staff in schools think that the training or guidance they have received initially or in-service has helped them to support pupils with their wellbeing and mental health.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1   Develop a coherent whole-school approach that supports all pupils' health and wellbeing

R2   Strengthen relationships between staff and pupils and peer relationships between pupils

R3   Improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences in health and wellbeing, within a broad a balanced curriculum

R4   Take better account of pupils' views and academic research in developing their approaches to supporting pupils' health and wellbeing

R5   Ensure that the school's environment and services support pupils' health and wellbeing

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R6   Support schools to develop a whole-school approach to health and wellbeing

R7   Support effective working between schools and other agencies in the best interests of children and young people and their families

Initial teacher education providers should:

R8   Ensure that new teachers are trained to understand child and adolescent development and prepared to support pupils' health and wellbeing

The Welsh Government should:

R9   Ensure that pupils' health and wellbeing is valued in accountability approaches used in the education system

Federated schools: Common features of effective federation

Main findings

The experience of the learner in a federated school

1   Most federations use economies of scale to fund enhancements to the curriculum, such as residential visits and external visitors. In a few cases, federations use staff expertise to support the progress of specific groups of learners, such as those with additional learning needs (ALN). However, overall, senior leaders do not make sufficient use of staff expertise across the federation to enhance learning experiences for all pupils and to ensure the progress of particular groups of pupils, such as the more able or those who may underachieve because of deprivation.

2   In a minority of federated schools, teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively with their peers in other schools. This has a positive impact on pupils' social skills and sense of wellbeing. In nearly all cases, federation has a positive impact on the transition experience for many pupils as they move from key stage 2 to key stage 3. This is particularly strong in federations that consist of a secondary school and cluster primaries.

Why schools federate

3   In most cases, governing bodies and local authorities enter into federation to increase the likelihood of securing effective leadership and the long-term viability and sustainability of schools. This is particularly the case for small schools, those in rural or geographically isolated positions, and Welsh-medium schools where headteacher recruitment is particularly challenging. In these cases, federation can improve the attractiveness of headship through benefits such as offering a larger salary, a reduced teaching commitment, and a wider pool of staff.

4   Although an important factor, budget efficiencies are seldom the sole motivation for federation. They are usually secondary to issues related to headteacher recruitment and sustainability of provision.

5   In a few cases, local authorities use federation in an attempt to bring about improvement in underperforming schools. They do this by linking the underperforming school with nearby stronger schools. Where this is successful, local authorities and governing bodies have secured effective overall leadership for the federation. Federation in itself does not necessarily ensure an improvement in standards of teaching and learning.

6   The pre-existence of effective informal collaboration between schools is a strong driver in ensuring the success of formal federation. Where informal arrangements have not been in place leading up to formal federation, successful leaders ensure that there is clear communication, a shared vision and sensitivity to local contexts, from the outset.

7   The geographical proximity of schools is an important consideration when local authorities and governing bodies are considering federation. Closer proximity allows for more effective collaborative working at all levels, particularly with regard to providing opportunities for pupils to collaborate.

The process of establishing a federation

8   Where federation is most successful, governing bodies, senior leaders and local authorities have a clear vision of what they wish to achieve through the federation process. Their vision focuses sharply on outcomes for pupils. They are explicit from the outset about what federation does and does not entail and they communicate this clearly to staff, parents and pupils. In the best cases, they use existing federations to illustrate the potential benefits. They engage stakeholders in a transparent and meaningful consultation and co-construction process. Where these processes are effective, schools reap the benefits of federation early.

9   In the most successful cases, local authorities, governing bodies and senior leaders play a key role in ensuring that they place equal weight to the views of parents, staff and pupils from each of their school communities. They take care to ensure a balance between maintaining each school's individual identity and developing a sense of a larger, combined learning community.

10   In effective federations, governing bodies quickly establish leadership structures that support their vision for the federation. This includes ensuring effective arrangements for the leadership and management of each school in the headteacher's absence.

11   The quality of support local authorities provide governing bodies to assist them through the federation process is variable. In the best cases, local authorities ensure consistency of support across all schools in the federation, for example through the deployment of the same challenge adviser to each school.

Realising the benefits of federation

12   In successful federations, leaders improve provision and outcomes for pupils by sharing resources, systems and good practice across schools. However, in most cases, federated schools do not use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support collaboration, and in particular pupil collaboration, across school sites.

13   In most cases, where there is good governance and an effective executive headteacher in place, federation has a positive impact on leadership capacity at all levels. However, there are too few opportunities for headteachers to engage in professional learning that will prepare them to lead a federation or for senior leaders and staff of federated schools to network and share practice.

14   Federation frequently results in budget efficiencies for schools. Where capacity allows, increasing the role of administrative staff or employing a business manager to oversee budgets across the federation often results in further savings and efficiencies. However, in federations of smaller schools, managing two or three separate budgets and the pooling of resources can be a challenge for governing bodies and headteachers.

Recommendations

Federated schools should:

R1   Work with stakeholders from the outset to establish a clear vision for the federation that focuses on improving outcomes for pupils

R2   Develop leadership structures for the federation, including some non-teaching time for a senior leader on each site, to support effective day-to-day operation and good communication within and between schools

R3   Use self-evaluation processes to identify how the skills and expertise of staff may be deployed to improve learning experiences for pupils across the federation

R4   Develop the use of ICT to support collaboration by staff and pupils

Schools considering federation should also:

R5   Evaluate the potential impact of federation on pupil standards and wellbeing

R6   Identify the extent and effectiveness of any pre-existing collaboration

R7   Identify and evaluate the potential impact of any barriers to effective federation, such as geographical remoteness

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R8   Provide relevant professional learning opportunities for senior leaders of federated schools

R9   Review their funding arrangements so as to allow federated schools the flexibility to pool their resources more easily

R10 Share good practice of effective federation with schools as they consider embarking on the federation process

R11 Ensure consistency of support for all schools within a federation by, for example deploying the same challenge adviser to each school

The Welsh Government should:

R12 Explore arrangements to help federated schools pool their resources

Pupil registration practices

Main findings

1   During the last six years, the percentage of Year 10 pupils on roll at maintained secondary and all-age schools who do not progress to Year 11 has nearly doubled. During the same period, the percentages of pupils who do not progress between other school years have only risen slightly. In 2017-2018, the percentage of Year 10 pupils who repeated Year 10 is six times greater than the rate seen in 2013-2014. In many instances, pupils that repeat Year 10 do not then progress to Year 11 to finish their key stage 4 studies, but leave school after two years in Year 10. In 2018-2019, there was a reduction in the percentage of pupils repeating Year 10. This change may have been influenced by the introduction of more stringent validation checks when schools submit their PLASC data. However, this rate is still over three times higher than the rate in 2013-2014. This data suggests that a few schools may be enrolling pupils to repeat Year 10 or other school years as a way of moving pupils so that they are not included in the school's key stage 4 performance data.

2   Over the last six years, the percentage of pupils who are enrolled at a mainstream school in the January of Year 10 who then move to education other than at school (EOTAS) as main provider before the January of Year 11 has nearly doubled. Over the last six years, the total number of pupils (of all ages) who are following EOTAS provision has decreased slightly, but the percentage of these pupils who follow EOTAS provision while remaining 'dual-main registered' at a maintained school has more than halved. The percentage of pupils following EOTAS provision with 'dual-subsidiary registration' status at a maintained school has tripled in the same period. These latter pupils' outcomes are not included in the school's key stage 4 performance data. This data suggests that a few schools may be registering EOTAS pupils as dual-subsidiary so that their data is not included in the school's performance data. During the last six years, there has also been an increase in the number of pupils in Wales who are being educated at home.

3   Pupils who are eligible for free schools meals, and those that have a statement of special educational needs or access school action plus provision are far more likely not to progress from Year 10 to Year 11 than their peers. For the cohort of pupils who were in Year 10 in 2017-2018, those eligible for free school meals are over three times more likely as those not eligible to not progress directly to Year 11 at a mainstream school. Year 10 pupils who have special educational needs are over four times more likely than those without special educational needs not to progress directly to Year 11 at a mainstream school. Schools that have high levels of pupils who are eligible for free school meals or with special educational needs tend to have higher rates of pupils who do not progress from Year 10 to Year 11.

4   The unintended consequence of the current regulations around the dual registration of EOTAS pupils may be disincentivising schools from being inclusive. There is scope for some schools to exploit loopholes in these regulations in order to improve their key stage 4 performance data. There are also inconsistencies in how well local

authorities monitor and challenge off-rolling and other inappropriate registration practices. The frequency of the PLASC data collection and the lack of details regarding the destinations of pupils who leave schools between school years make it difficult to track pupil movement at a national level.

Recommendations

Schools and governing bodies should:

R1   ensure that pupils repeat Year 10 only under exceptional circumstances

R2   routinely review registration practices and pupil movements as part of the school's evaluation and improvement arrangements

R3   ensure that governors monitor pupil movements between Years 10 and 11

Local authorities should:

R4   monitor the registration practices of schools to provide assurance that schools are always acting in the best interests of individual pupils

R5   ensure that both local authorities and schools have clear criteria and protocols for allowing schools to register pupils as repeating Year 10

R6   monitor and investigate any instances where pupils are repeating Year 10 or progressing from Year 10 into a school year other than Year 10 or Year 11

The Welsh Government should:

R7   review the registration of EOTAS pupils and consider using destination data to measure the effectiveness of EOTAS provision

R8   work with local authorities to set up databases of compulsory age pupils in their area

R9   review arrangements for PLASC to ensure greater transparency of pupil movement

Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences

Main findings

1   Many leaders, teachers and support staff now have a better understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children and young people, partly as a result of training by the Wales ACE Support Hub, and some staff invest considerable time into researching wellbeing matters. This greater awareness of ACEs has helped many schools to adopt a whole-school approach, involving all their staff, to support vulnerable pupils.

2   The schools that best support pupils with ACEs and other vulnerable pupils know their pupils well, and provide a safe and nurturing environment where all pupils can feel happy. Staff in these schools work closely with families in a non-judgmental way. They establish a culture of trust where parents are comfortable in sharing information and staff can direct them to sources of possible support. Leaders in these schools support the wellbeing of their staff and provide them with training, because they recognise that working with pupils and families in difficult circumstances can be emotionally demanding.

3   The quality and impact of support for pupils with ACEs tend to be better in the primary schools visited than in secondary. In many primary schools, teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and share their worries. They offer practical help and moral support to vulnerable families and maintain a positive relationship with them. Although some secondary schools have strong processes to ensure that they gain accurate information from families, many have not established a close, trusting relationship with them.

4   In the best cases, schools focus on improving the wellbeing of all of their pupils. While there is targeted and specialist support and interventions for those that need it most, there is also well-considered universal provision for building pupils' resilience and strengthening their emotional intelligence. This is important as children and young people's ACEs may be well hidden.

5   Pupils who live in difficult circumstances often have reduced opportunities to socialise and may lack confidence when trying to make friends. A majority of primary schools run targeted friendship clubs for pupils. A few schools use their Pupil Development Grant (PDG) to fund targeted support such as nurture groups, where pupils learn how to socialise and learn coping strategies. These pupils often have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, but make good progress in this type of learning environment.

6   Many schools have trained some staff to deliver social and emotional intervention programmes for vulnerable pupils, including those with ACEs. In many cases, support assistants have received specific training to support pupils with ACEs and other vulnerable pupils. As a result, they understand the impact of trauma on children and young people and the importance of attachment in supporting their

psychological development and mental health. In many primary schools, all staff have benefited from training, but fewer have in secondary schools, which limits the opportunity to develop a whole-school approach.

7   In primary schools, there are usually strong arrangements to ensure that children with ACEs and other vulnerable pupils have calm, nurturing and supportive spaces to go to when they are feeling anxious or upset. While secondary schools may also provide similar spaces, they are mainly used by the youngest pupils or those with special educational needs.

8   Most pupils say that they have suitable adults in school whom they trust and feel safe enough to discuss problems with and believe that they will help them. In the schools visited, many secondary pupils say that, although they know of staff that they can approach, they feel that not all their teachers will know how to offer them support.

9   Arrangements to monitor the wellbeing and progress of vulnerable pupils and those who have ACEs are appropriate in most schools. Welsh Government guidance makes clear that it is the impact of ACEs on children and young people that is important, and not counting the number of ACEs. Schools often focus on improving the wellbeing of all pupils through providing different levels of response according to pupils' needs. In the best schools, teachers use a comprehensive range of tools and questionnaires to assess and track pupils' wellbeing and identify their strengths and areas of potential difficulty around self-esteem or social confidence.

10   The wellbeing of Welsh citizens, including children and young people, is high on the agenda of all local authorities and is one of the main priorities in their corporate strategic plans. Many local authorities make a clear commitment to the sharing of information through the 'Public Protection Notice' process or 'Operation Encompass', which means that schools should receive near immediate notice of police involvement with families with school-age children. All local authorities have signed the Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) that helps them to share personal information effectively and lawfully, and allows services to work together to support people. However, the use of information sharing protocols (ISPs) between local authorities and other services and outside agencies is inconsistent. School leaders say that they do not always find out about important developments in children's lives in a timely way. In some cases, this means that children can arrive at school following a significant, traumatic event that the school is unaware of and this prevents the school from preparing appropriately.

11   All local authority education services have arrangements to discuss children and young people through multi-agency planning meetings or 'team around the family' meetings. These are generally effective in identifying and supporting pupils with ACEs. Multi-agency meetings organised by schools or local authorities are a valuable means to plan support and interventions. When these meetings are regular and well attended, they can be purposeful and effective. However, in too many cases, case workers from other agencies do not attend these meetings regularly enough.

12   A few local authorities have developed their Families First service to create 'Early Help' services or 'Early Help Hubs'. These hubs include police, education and

voluntary agencies. They are intended to support families who may not qualify for statutory services. These are particularly useful in supporting children and young people who have experienced ACEs. In many local authorities and police force areas, health, education and police services are working strategically through the Early Action Together Programme. This programme, while at different stages across Wales, brings partners together to plan early intervention and is showing promising early signs.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1 Provide both whole-school and targeted support for vulnerable pupils, in partnership with other services, based on an understanding of the impact of ACEs on children

R2 Prioritise building trusting and positive relationships with families that encourage them to share important information with the school

R3 Ensure that there is suitable access to calm, nurturing and supportive spaces for all vulnerable pupils, including those with ACEs, and particularly for older secondary pupils

R4 Provide training and support all secondary school staff, not just those involved in pastoral work, to understand their role as a potential trusted adult for vulnerable pupils

R5 Establish mechanisms to share information about vulnerable pupils and families confidentially and sensitively with relevant staff

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R6 Share relevant information about vulnerable pupils and families promptly with schools

R7 Assist schools to develop ACE-informed strategies to support vulnerable pupils

The Welsh Government should:

R8 Promote the WASPI and encourage the timely sharing of information about vulnerable pupils and families with schools

Pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools - A good practice report

Main findings

Effective support for pupils with SEN

1   In most of the schools we visited, staff use a wide range of approaches to ensure that they identify pupils' needs at an early stage. A key element of this process is the close collaborative working between schools and settings that enables them to share information about pupils with SEN as they move from one phase of their education to the next. These arrangements help to ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' needs, interests and abilities before they join the school.

2   Where pupils receive support from external agencies, such as health and social services, staff consider this information carefully to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs. They take good account of the information in reports provided by specialists, such as education psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, when planning provision for these pupils.

3   In most of the schools, staff use this information carefully to plan interventions that are matched carefully to individual pupils' needs. Many schools use a wide range of interventions that reflect the complex needs of their pupils. Staff in these schools work with specialist staff from the local authority or health board to plan and administer the delivery of these interventions according to each child's requirements.

4   In many schools, staff set useful and appropriate targets for pupils in their individual education plans (IEPs). Staff consider the full range of available information about pupils' attainment to set challenging targets that relate well to pupils' needs and aspirations at different stages in their learning. They consult carefully with pupils, parents and carers to formulate targets that are as useful to the pupil as possible and discuss strategies to help families address these targets at home.

5   In schools where the provision for pupils with SEN is strong, there are robust arrangements to monitor and track the progress of all pupils in the school. In many schools, the monitoring of progress for pupils with SEN is based on a shared understanding of pupils' wellbeing and what is important to each child. In these schools, staff consider carefully the tracking of pupils' progress in learning in areas such as behaviour, attendance, and engagement in lessons and the progress pupils make towards the targets on their IEPs. This information, together with information about the progress pupils make towards their therapeutic goals, provides staff with a more complete view of the progress pupils make.

Engaging with others to support pupils with SEN

6   In nearly all schools visited, there are well-developed processes to engage with parents, carers and families. These include an extensive range of opportunities for staff to build productive relationships with parents and carers, gain their trust and enable them to inform the provision for their children.

7   Nearly all schools develop strong partnerships with other schools and education providers, locally and regionally. These partnerships ensure that transition arrangements for pupils with SEN are robust and enable schools to share good practice with staff in other schools and to learn from them.

8   In nearly all schools with specialist classes or resource bases, communication between the staff in the two settings is strong and supports pupils' movement within the school. In these schools, staff in the resource base work with staff in the rest of the school to share their specialised knowledge and promote strategies to support them around the school.

9   In nearly all schools, multi-agency working is an essential part of the school's day-to-day support for pupils with SEN. These schools work with a broad range of partners, including an extensive range of external agencies. They respond thoughtfully to the advice from these professionals to inform the planning of provision for pupils and the setting of targets on pupils' IEPs.

10   A key element of accessing the support of specialist services successfully is the skill of staff at the school in completing referral documentation promptly. Where schools are most successful in ensuring this support is in place, they advocate strongly for their pupils and families and provide robust challenge when the support provided does not meet pupils' needs

Effective leadership for SEN

11   In nearly all schools visited, senior leaders establish a highly inclusive vision and ethos that sets high aspirations for all pupils, whatever their abilities and needs. This vision is based on providing equality of opportunity for all pupils and permeates throughout the school. Leaders and governors communicate this vision strongly and ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities for pupils with SEN. As a result, these leaders promote the development of caring and supportive environments, where all pupils are encouraged to grow as individuals and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

12   In most schools, leaders provide well-planned specialist training for staff to support pupils with SEN. In these schools, the SENCo works closely with other senior leaders to develop the skills of staff, based on a thorough understanding of the needs of individual pupils. Professional learning opportunities link well to performance management processes and enable all staff to develop their understanding of SEN overall, as well as the specific expertise to support individual pupils.

13   In nearly all schools, leaders monitor and evaluate carefully the progress of pupils with SEN and adapt their provision accordingly. In these schools, effective self-evaluation starts with an understanding of each pupil's needs and a willingness to adjust the provision where necessary to ensure they make progress in line with their abilities. This approach informs staff training. In the most effective schools, leaders review the needs of pupils and the skill set of support and teaching staff regularly.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1   Improve the quality of targets in pupils' IEPs to promote pupils' progress in learning and independence

R2   Ensure self-evaluation arrangements give more attention to the progress pupils with SEN make in relation to their needs, abilities and individual starting points

Local authorities should:

R3   Support schools to access the external specialist services they need to promote the wellbeing and progress of pupils with SEN

R4   Promote partnership working between special schools and other maintained schools in the local authority

The Welsh Government should:

R5   Assist schools and local authorities during the implementation of new statutory arrangements to support pupils with ALN

Prevent – how well maintained schools implement their duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

Main findings

1   There is clear and comprehensive guidance in place for schools regarding their duties for Prevent under the UK Government's CONTEST strategy, and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act). The Welsh Government has provided guidance for schools in Wales, which includes ensuring that all school staff have been trained to understand their duties to support pupils, to refer onwards pupils who may be at risk of being drawn into radicalisation or extremism, and to use the curriculum to help pupils develop the skills necessary to become resilient and engaged citizens.

The work of schools

2   Schools have a key role in identifying and supporting pupils that are identified as being at risk of exploitation. In the majority of schools surveyed, leaders have a secure understanding of their role and responsibilities to safeguard pupils, including with regard to radicalisation and extremism. In a minority of schools, leaders do not perceive radicalisation and extremism as relevant to their school or surrounding area. This lack of attention to Prevent means that staff in these schools may miss an opportunity to identify and address early concerns about a pupil.

3   Schools play a key part in safeguarding young people from potentially radicalising influences. Their effective use of the Prevent referral pathways demonstrates how partners can work together to keep young people safe. Contacts from schools in Wales to the Wales Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Unit (WECTU) and to local authorities regarding Prevent are the second highest source for both informal advice requests and for referrals, and these are generally made in a timely manner. Referrals from schools include a wide range of issues such as concerns regarding radical Islam, the extreme right wing, and increasingly individuals attracted to extreme violence with unclear ideologies, known as the Columbine effect.

4   Racist language, bullying and inter-racial conflict between pupils can be important indicators of radical or extremist views. Local authorities are expected to collect data about bullying within schools, including racially motivated bullying, but the data available does not always reflect what is happening on the ground. This is because a minority of schools avoid designating incidents of bullying as racist.

5   In most cases, the referral of pupils to the Channel panel works well, with schools being consulted and involved in the development of the subsequent support and action plan. However, in a few cases, schools have not been included in the development of these plans or involved in any follow up support activity. Neither have they been kept abreast of the pupil's wellbeing or progress, even when the pupil remains full time at the school.

6   All schools are required to have in place an emergency plan that sets out how it will

respond to and manage unexpected events that represent a risk to its staff and pupils, to its buildings and site, and to its ability to conduct its day to day business. This includes how it will respond to any form of threat or emergency that requires its building and site to be secured. School 'lockdown' procedures are currently in development across Wales. In partnership with a few schools and local authorities, WECTU has developed a model guidance for assessing school premises, leading to the formation of a risk-based plan, responsive to each school's setting.

7   Under article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)[1], and The School Councils (Wales) Regulations 2005,[2] all schools are required to have in place mechanisms that allow young people to be consulted, and these opportunities are an important component to building a safe school. In a minority of schools, pupils say that these arrangements are not robust enough, and are often superficial and do not properly engage with their real concerns. On the other hand, in the majority of schools, pupils say that they have a number of opportunities to express their views and feelings at school. Where pupils are not listened to or taken seriously, their concerns about any risky behaviours or expressions of radical or extremist ideas that might arise at school are less likely to be brought to the attention of school leaders.

The key role of the curriculum

8   An important element of a school's duties under the Act[3] lies in the role of the school and its curriculum in the education of pupils in citizenship, as well as how pupils might safeguard themselves from those influences and pressures that might seek to exploit them. Most schools in the sample do not do enough to ensure that their curriculum does this, largely because teachers do not have easy access to appropriate support, training and guidance.

9   Welsh Government guidance[4] highlights the important role of a whole-school approach to enabling pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that serves to safeguard them from exploitative practices. The school's curriculum, policies, pastoral support and ethos can all contribute to establishing an environment that enables or challenges exploitative practices and the attitudes that condone them. In order to achieve this, teachers need to be confident that they are able to handle sensitive and contentious issues that might arise during the school day. Although schools have been well supported in understanding their duties under the Act, there has been less guidance about how to integrate this work into the curriculum.

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[1] Article 12 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations, 1989).

[2] The governing body of a school must establish a school council, the purpose of which is to enable pupils to discuss matters relating to their school, their education and any other matters of concern or interest and to make representations on these to the governing body and the head teacher (National Assembly for Wales, 2005).

[3] For further detail see sections 58, and 64 of the Revised Prevent Duty: Guidance for England and Wales (HM Government, 2015) and Section 4.1 of the Welsh Government (2016a) guidance for schools and other education providers Respect and resilience: Developing community cohesion.

[4] For further detail see section 4.1 of the Welsh Government (2016a) guidance for schools and other education providers Respect and resilience: Developing community cohesion; and p11 and 14 of Personal and Social Education Framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

10   Schools have not been provided with enough support or challenge to help them develop their curriculum in this area. Local authorities and consortia have not worked together well enough for the development of curriculum support for the inclusion of citizenship aspects that build resilience within pupils. For example, this aspect has not been included well enough in developmental work with pioneer (now quality improvement) schools to develop it within the health and wellbeing area of learning and experience. Support from most consortia has been generic. However, one regional consortium has taken a more proactive approach to supporting schools in its region to develop this aspect of their curriculum.

11   A few schools in the sample make good use of external resources when dealing directly with issues about radicalisation and extremism. However, many schools are not aware of the range of classroom resources available to them including those on Hwb. Teachers told us they frequently have to produce their own materials for this topic area.

12   By taking a whole-school approach to this area of learning, the key messages can be reinforced across the curriculum and across school years. Where learning experiences are supported by external agencies as part of a whole-school approach, they are more effective in changing attitudes and behaviour. Where schools' planning is less coherent, they lose opportunities to consolidate pupils' learning and develop their skills, attitudes and values.

13   The most effective schools have mapped their curriculum well with clear indicators to where opportunities to build pupil resilience have been included in many subject areas and covered successively during each school year. Where issues around extremism, radicalisation and terrorism are taken seriously, the curriculum is used creatively to help pupils explore their behaviours, beliefs, and ethical values. In particular, good PRUs and local authority maintained special schools are able to use this learning to better support the specific needs of their pupils, in particular those most at risk of being subject to inappropriate influences.

14   Many of those interviewed for the survey think that teaching about these issues is a specialist role. Many of these teachers also think issues of radicalisation and extremism are remote from their locality and their pupil population. They perceive the risk to their pupils as minimal and think it does not warrant a focus within the curriculum.

15   All maintained schools include in their curriculum opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions, and to learn about the impact of oppressive political regimes. These opportunities are usually through personal and social education and humanities subject areas. However, the coverage of such issues at subject level can avoid more difficult issues such as exploring what leads to oppressive political ideologies and inter-racial conflict. In a minority of schools, Islam is not included in the religious education curriculum, for a variety of reasons. Where schools are less effective in engaging in the more difficult or sensitive areas, this limits the opportunities for the development of critical thinking and open discussion.

16   Schools have a duty[5] to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, as well as the fundamental values of the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Welsh Government guidance specifically focuses on these as national values which underpin British democracy and society, and their contribution to community cohesion, and citizenship. Welsh Government guidance refers only to these 'values', and not to 'British values', and as a consequence there is little distraction about what British means in this context.

The work of local authorities

17   All local authorities surveyed have ensured access to training for schools about their duties under the Act. This training is included in the generic safeguarding training alongside other aspects where children may be at risk of exploitation, such as child sexual exploitation, organised criminal activity such as county lines, and radical and extremist ideologies. Schools have also had access to the Home Office Workshop to Raise the Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) course, which is available through WECTU. This training is usually provided for senior leaders only and it is their role to disseminate the information to other members of staff. Whether this dissemination takes place in schools, and the quality of that training, is not monitored well by local authorities.

18   All local authorities have senior officers in post who understand their responsibilities under the Act, and have mechanisms in place to provide support and guidance to their schools. They integrate their procedures for managing concerns about radicalisation and extremism into their partnership-based arrangements for managing concerns about safeguarding. They also have in place effective support systems for schools seeking advice and guidance about risks and potential referrals. These requests for advice and guidance are generally not analysed or considered well enough by a minority of the local authorities so as to provide important intelligence about the issues faced by schools.

19   Local authorities provide a useful range of model policies which cover the broad range of responsibilities for schools under the Act. Nearly all schools in the sample use these model policies well. Only a minority of schools include explicit reference to the risks arising from online radical and extremist materials in their policies which cover ICT.

20   All local authorities undertake some form of monitoring of how well their schools undertake their safeguarding responsibilities. However, only a minority of local authorities undertake more in depth monitoring of their schools using either the Home Office's (2018) Prevent Duty Toolkit for Local Authorities and Partner Agencies, or the Welsh Government's (2016b) Respect and resilience - Developing community cohesion: self-assessment tool 2016.

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[5] For further detail see sections 58, and 59 of the Revised Prevent Duty: Guidance for England and Wales (HM Government, 2015); and section 4.4 of the Welsh Government (2016a) guidance for schools and other education providers Respect and resilience: Developing community cohesion; and pages 13 and 19 of the Welsh Assembly Government's (2008) Personal and Social Education Framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1   Include risks to pupils from radical and extremist ideologies in the school's policies, in particular policies that cover ICT and online safety

R2   Record and report all incidents of racist language and racial bullying properly, and offer suitable support and challenge to victims and perpetrators

R3   Acknowledge that radicalisation and extremism are real risks to pupils in all schools, and ensure that staff training, policies and the curriculum suitably address these risks

R4   Ensure that all pupils have a voice and can share with the school any concerns they have about behaviours or expressions of radical or extremist ideas

Local authorities should:

R5   Monitor school safeguarding activity relating to duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 using criteria in the Home Office and Welsh Government self-assessment toolkits

R6   Work with partners to ensure that schools are included in post-referral action plans in order to best support pupils subject to Channel support

R7   Work with regional consortia to support schools in developing their curriculum to support pupils in building resilience when confronted with radicalised and extremist influences

R8   Work with partners to ensure that requests for advice prior to referrals are captured in order to provide intelligence about the issues faced by schools

R9   Improve the tracking of the take up of training by school leaders, governors and teachers, and ensure that the cascading of training is effective

The Welsh Government should:

R10 Work with local authorities and regional consortia to support schools to build pupils' resilience when confronted with radicalised and extremist influences

Partnerships with employers in secondary and special schools

Main findings

1   Where schools engage well and work closely with employers, learners have a better understanding of the world of work and the skills and attributes they need for the future. The effectiveness of this partnership work usually depends on the vision and drive of the headteacher, senior managers and school staff.

2   Schools engage with employers in a variety of ways. Many schools offer learners a suitable range of work-related experiences, including experiences that are part of the curriculum, themed days when the usual timetable is suspended, extra-curricular activities, visits to places of work, or through visiting speakers.

3   Only a minority of schools now offer work experience[6] for learners. This is because many schools have been slow to respond to the change in Careers Wales responsibilities. Where schools have maintained a member of staff responsible for careers, they often still provide learners with opportunities to participate in work experience. For example, one school visited in North Wales has a broad network of about 130 employers and nearly all Year 10 and Year 12 learners undertake work placements during the summer term. A few schools collaborate to fund the costs of ensuring that work placements are safe and secure for learners, and that employers are vetted. However, generally, learners are expected to arrange their own work placements, with some support from the school for learners who struggle to achieve this.

4   A few schools have developed mutually beneficial links with local businesses. One school has strong links with a steel-making site. Learners can visit the site to see how the plant operates and learn about the value of apprenticeships. In another school, learners interested in engineering work with a local toy manufacturer gain useful real-life experiences, using computer-aided design and developing prototypes for new toys.

5   Many of the schools visited engage with the Education Business Exchange initiative and invite employers (for example the armed forces, the police force and the construction industry) to visit the school to talk to learners about their careers. These visits often include completing mock application forms and taking part in interview role play. One school has a strong partnership with two construction companies that visit the school to focus on the skills required for the industry, including communication, leadership and team working.

6   Many schools offer a wide variety of enterprise activities through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. For example, some schools use the Dragons' Den concept from television to encourage learners' entrepreneurial skills. Learners are taught to develop business plans, and to work out costs, sales, profit and loss to enable them to promote a product to potential investors from local businesses. A few

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[6] Work placements offered by employers for learners

schools provide work-related experiences within the community, mainly through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. For example, one school has particularly strong links with the health and social care sector, and learners visit care homes to gain social skills through talking to residents. Another school has links with community projects that provide work-related experiences in gardening.

7   Nearly all schools visited hold an annual careers fair for their learners, to which they invite local and national employers, colleges, universities and other providers. Learners attend the fair to talk to employers and discuss their career options, but many schools do not measure the impact of these careers fairs well enough.

8   Where employers engage well with schools, they can use initiatives to promote apprenticeship programmes within their organisation. They raise learners' awareness about the skills and attributes required to be successful in the job market. One employer commented on the benefit to their own staff development, by giving staff the opportunity to work with young people in preparing them for the world of work.

9   In a very few local authorities, staff have a strong understanding of the economic labour market in the area. One local authority has a dedicated education, employment and training team that work directly with schools to promote and facilitate work-related education and partnerships with employers. This helps teachers to promote an understanding of the world of work through the curriculum.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1   Consider carefully the cross-cutting theme of careers and work-related experiences, and how learners can develop as enterprising, creative contributors, when they design their new curriculum

R2   Consider how they can enhance learners' understanding of the work place by providing a wider range of real experiences in partnership with employers

R3   Evaluate the impact of partnerships with employers and of work-related experiences on learners' understanding of the world of work

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R4   Ensure that local curriculum planning takes good account of careers and work-related experiences and involves employers

The Welsh Government should work with Careers Wales and other partners to:

R5   Evaluate the impact of the Education Business Exchange, Business Class, and Big Ideas Wales programmes

R6   Produce guidance to support school staff in making links with employers

Pupil Referral Unit management committees

Main findings

1   A PRU management committee works best in partnership with its local authority and when they share a common vision for the PRU. This shared understanding usually leads to strong working relationships and to clear expectations for learner outcomes.

2   Around half of management committees understand their roles and responsibilities well. Management committees are effective when the roles and responsibilities of committee members for improving their PRU are clear. In the best cases, members make good use of the 'Handbook for Management Committees of Pupil Referral Units' (Welsh Government, 2018b). A minority of management committees are unaware of the Handbook or do not use it well enough. The lack of awareness of this useful publication contributes to inconsistent practice across PRU management committees.

3   Where management committees have a detailed understanding of their PRU, members are able to challenge and support the leadership of the PRU well. Successful management committees have a membership that reflect the needs of their PRU, as well as meeting regulatory requirements. The breadth and experience of members strengthen the committee's understanding of the needs of their pupils. A minority of management committees are actively encouraging pupils to participate in their work, and this helps staff to support pupils and their wellbeing better.

4   Many PRUs find it difficult to recruit a broad range of members to their management committees. This impacts on the breadth of knowledge and experience available to the committee and makes delegating specific responsibilities difficult. Securing parental representation in particular is one of the more challenging recruitment issues.

5   Regulations set out a joint responsibility for the local authority and the management committee to develop a relevant curriculum for the pupils. Successful PRUs and management committees work well with the local authority on this aspect. Where the local authority is working strategically with the PRU management committee, this supports the PRU to be more responsive to the needs of its learners. The most effective practice is based on a collaborative working relationship.

6   The training and development of management committee members are the responsibility of the local authority. In the most effective management committees, the local authority and regional consortium work closely with committee members to provide relevant, consistent and worthwhile training opportunities, but this practice occurs only in a few PRUs. Appropriate training and support are needed for the changes proposed in the Draft Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (Welsh Government, 2018b) to be implemented successfully.

Recommendations

Management committees should:

R8   Use the Handbook for Management Committees of Pupil Referral Units to improve their work

R9   Work closely in partnership with their local authority, regional consortium and other stakeholders to develop a common vision for their PRU

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R10 Provide an annual programme of training and development opportunities for PRU management committee members

R11 Ensure that local authorities and regional consortia officers understand the role and function of their PRUs fully so as to improve their joint working with management committees

The Welsh Government should:

R12 Raise awareness among all management committees of the Handbook for Management Committees of Pupil Referral Units

Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils – case studies of good practice

Main findings

1   In most schools, leaders understand the importance of supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers to learning. In the most effective schools, staff do not just focus on the challenges that pupils face, but identify individual pupils' interests and talents, and build on these positives.

2   Most schools across Wales focus strongly on trying to reduce the impact of poverty. The availability of extra funding contributes to this emphasis. Despite the funding, eFSM pupils continue to perform less well than other pupils. The proportion of primary and secondary schools that make effective use of the PDG remains at around two-thirds. Although most schools use grant funding to provide a similar range of support strategies, their impact varies. In the schools that best use their PDG, leaders use the grant strategically to ensure that all pupils make good progress towards their targets and improve their wellbeing – this work is a priority for them.

3   Schools that best support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils place the wellbeing of every child at the heart of their work. In these schools, there is a strong focus on providing a safe and nurturing environment where pupils and staff feel secure.

4   Leaders in successful schools place great importance on recruiting staff who share their school's vision for nurturing pupils and building positive relationships with families and the community. Where this strategy is in place, schools develop a whole-school approach to supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

5   In schools that support their vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils successfully, staff track the wellbeing of individual pupils carefully. This helps them to quickly identify individuals or groups of pupils that need additional support, and to help them address barriers to their engagement in school.

6   Research suggests that classroom teaching has the greatest influence on pupils' learning of all education factors and that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit even more than their peers from high-quality teaching.

7   Inspection evidence shows that, in the most effective schools, teachers have high expectations of the achievement of all pupils, including those most disadvantaged and vulnerable. They do not see poverty and disadvantage as a reason for pupils not to succeed and they strive to find approaches and teaching strategies that help remove barriers to pupils' learning.

8   In many successful schools, staff have designed a curriculum that meets pupils' interests and engages vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils effectively in their learning.

9   Many schools support disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to develop their talents

and to widen their experiences by providing financial assistance, for example for music lessons, sporting activities and residential visits.

10   The attendance of eFSM pupils is a concern at all phases of learning. There is a gap in overall attendance between eFSM pupils and other pupils. In primary schools this gap is widening. In both primary and secondary schools, there has been no reduction in the rate of exclusions of eFSM pupils over time. These pupils are still much more likely to be permanently excluded or to receive fixed-term exclusions than other pupils.

11   Evidence suggests that absence, for whatever reason, among eFSM pupils has a substantially more negative impact on their attainment than on other pupils. These pupils often find it harder to catch up on their learning and then can potentially fall behind their peers.

12   Leaders in effective schools realise that they cannot work in isolation to support vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. The most successful schools know their community well and work closely with other agencies and services that will benefit their pupils and their families.

Recommendation

Schools should:

R1   Consider the best practice outlined in the case studies

Leadership development – case studies of professional learning for school leadership

Main findings

1   The developing policy agenda relating to 'Our National Mission' (Welsh Government, 2017a) offers a coherent structure for planning leadership development and for encouraging collaboration between the different tiers of the Welsh education system. The infrastructure to support leadership development has improved, for example through the creation of National Academy for Educational Leadership, better joint working between regional consortia, refinements made to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the creation of professional standards. Higher education institutions are contributing more to programmes that support and develop school leaders. Work to develop professional enquiry and research practices is strengthening though at the early stages of development.

2   The involvement of schools in the process of co-constructing national policy regarding leadership development is a strength of the current arrangements. This partnership enables school leaders to have a better understanding of national policy, and to work towards meeting national strategies in their schools. Schools with highly effective leaders often provide valuable support to other schools. A very few experienced headteachers engage in programmes to further improve their skills and those of others, but provision for this aspect of work is underdeveloped.

3   Nearly all schools have access to or can provide professional learning for their staff and leaders. However, the quality and equity of access to professional learning opportunities are inconsistent. Support and practical guidance for school leaders on how to plan and implement improvement priorities varies too much. This is one reason why the quality of leadership is variable in schools in Wales, particularly in secondary schools. In particular, the professional learning offer for school leaders has not focused well enough on supporting them to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. There is a strong suite of materials available for supporting school leaders to coach and mentor staff but these are not shared effectively enough and, as a result, a minority of leaders do not access these useful resources.

4   Most providers of professional learning have arrangements to evaluate professional learning programmes or events. In the last few years, these evaluations have focused more precisely on finding out which aspects of the learning have been most beneficial to participants. Despite these improvements, many providers fail to evaluate the longer-term impact of professional learning on leadership.

Recommendations

To improve the provision and quality of leadership development, regional consortia and other providers of professional learning should work together to consider:

R1   How to increase the focus on developing leaders' ability to bring about improvement in the quality of teaching and learning

R2   How best to evaluate the impact of leadership development programmes over time