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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Quality and standards in education and training in Wales

A report on the quality of

**Wrexham
Local Education Authority**

October 2007

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

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

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

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performance improves when officers provide support, but the improvement is not sustained when the support is withdrawn. These schools are too dependent on officers and do not take enough responsibility for making improvements themselves. At the time of the inspection, one secondary school was judged to have serious weaknesses following its recent Estyn inspection.

- 104 Officers provide good support and appropriate challenge to the special school and, as a result, standards of achievement have improved. The targeted support for some subjects such as design and technology has had a positive impact on standards.

Curriculum support

- 105 The authority has suitable well-qualified personnel to provide support in most curriculum areas and particularly so in the core subjects of the national curriculum and religious education. The quality of curriculum support is good overall and some of it is very good. There is currently insufficient support to help schools raise pupils' standards in ICT.
- 106 There is an appropriate range of initiatives in schools to support the development of basic skills. These initiatives include the Language and Play initiative and the Catch Up reading programme. Both these initiatives are of a very good quality and improve standards and learners' confidence. All Wrexham schools have gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Ten teachers in the secondary sector are following a Diploma Course in Basic Skills, which develops specialist teachers of basic skills.
- 107 Officers have provided good guidance for schools to enable them to develop key skills across the curriculum at key stage 2. The guidance however is not fully developed in a way that secondary schools can apply it at key stage 3.
- 108 The Athrawon Bro team is well established. They know the schools in Wrexham well and have fostered good working relationships with headteachers and teachers. The Welsh Language Board monitors the strategy for raising standards in Welsh. This monitoring procedure provides the service with a structured method for evaluating its practice and its target setting. However, there are no formal procedures to monitor and evaluate attainment at the end of key stage 2 in Welsh second language and service is therefore unable to measure the added value at key stage 3.
- 109 There is an effective partnership with Bangor University, to provide Welsh language training for primary school teachers. This training, which teachers mostly undertake after school hours, equips them with good skills and the confidence to teach Welsh second language to pupils in primary schools.
- 110 There is a wide range of professional development courses available to schools. The authority makes appropriate use of the Cymdeithas Dros Addysg Gymraeg (CYDAG) courses to supplement its own Welsh-medium training. Officers follow up the impact of training in school visits. This practice is particularly effective in targeted schools.
- 111 Good initiatives to improve the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools include the 'Boost' project by the Youth Inclusion Service, the Pupil Attitudes to School and Self (PASS) programme, work on pupils' attitudes to learning by the

education psychologists and white board initiatives led the Welsh advisory service. Officers have supported all the consortia of schools in producing their transition plans but some secondary schools and departments still do not receive enough information about pupils when they transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.

- 112 Officers with responsibility for English have led the way in producing materials to help schools moderate teachers' assessments at key stage 2 and key stage 3. These materials have helped schools improve continuity in curriculum planning and assessment. Support for assessment is good at an individual subject level in secondary schools but there is no co-ordinated authority-led strategy to ensure consistency of approach across the core subjects or on a whole school basis.
- 113 The healthy schools initiative has been implemented in 71 of Wrexham's schools. This initiative is on course to be completed by 2009, which is a year ahead of the WAG target. This initiative has shown improvements in nutrition mainly in primary schools.
- 114 The authority provides very good support to extend the learning opportunities for pupils. This is particularly good in music, physical education and school sport, and the work of the Schools' Library Service.

Support for managers and leaders

- 115 The authority provides effective support for the national programmes for school leaders and aspiring leaders. They ensure that aspiring headteachers are given suitable experiences that prepare them for the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) courses. There is a good induction programme, school-based support and mentoring for new headteachers.
- 116 There is a good range of courses for middle managers in both primary and secondary schools. These courses are of good quality.
- 117 Governors are offered induction sessions and a variety of training events and useful information leaflets. The quality of support that is offered is good but very few governors attend generic courses. Officers have introduced whole governing body training to make training more attractive and relevant to governors' needs. Governors receive data that enable them to monitor and challenge their school's performance.

Promoting social inclusion and well-being Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Meeting statutory duties and the needs of specific groups of pupils and young people

- 118 Officers and elected members work well together as corporate parents to ensure that children looked after by the authority receive their full entitlement to education and achieve good standards.

Fixed term of five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Wrexham	125.3	106.1	96.3
Wales	56.3	69.7	70.7
Rank	22	21	19

Fixed term of six days or more (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Wrexham	16.2	21.5	16.2
Wales	8.2	9.9	9.0
Rank	22	22	21

129 Close working between the educational psychology service, the educational social work team, the youth work in education team and the behaviour support service enables the authority to offer a range of initiatives and options to help mainstream schools manage pupils' behaviour. An appropriate range of whole school and individual training is also provided to help staff in schools improve their behaviour management techniques. Good joint working within the Children and Young People Service and with other partners is helping professionals to intervene earlier with challenging pupils and this has the potential to reduce the need for future support and to reduce exclusions further.

130 The Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) programme is effectively helping teachers in mainstream secondary schools to identify and address barriers to learning that arise from aspects of pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs.

131 Good training for teachers and support staff, often provided with partners from external agencies, is helping professionals understand better the needs of vulnerable pupils. However, schools do not always recognise the potential link between poor behaviour and learning difficulties. As a result, some pupils' learning needs are not identified until their behavioural needs become a priority.

132 Despite a good record of initiatives and anti-bullying activities, the authority recognises the need for further joint strategic planning with other agencies and providers to develop improved advice and support to schools. A task and finish group is currently planning work to promote the implementation of effective anti-bullying policies.

Support for attendance at school

133 The Education Social Work Service provides very good support to help schools improve pupils' attendance. The service has very effective working relationships with the police, the local Youth Offending Team and other agencies to help reduce the causes of poor attendance of pupils at school. It has also developed an innovative initiative with local travel agencies to discourage parents from taking children on holiday during school term times.

134 Attendance in primary schools is above the Wales average. Between 2005 and 2006, attendance improved in secondary schools by almost one percentage point to exceed the Wales average. Wrexham was one of only two authorities in Wales to improve attendance in secondary schools in 2006.