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Children and classrooms have yet to feel the full impact of the National Training Programme for practitioners in the Foundation Phase, say inspectors

Today, Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, published its interim report '*Foundation Phase training and its impact on learning and teaching*'. The report, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, looks at how well the National Training Programme for practitioners in the Foundation Phase is being implemented and what impact it is having on classroom practice and on children's learning.

Inspectors found that anecdotal evidence suggests that children's learning skills are improving and the programme is having a positive impact on the learning environment, although it is not possible to attribute these improvements directly to the impact of the programme.

Overall, inspectors found that training had been well organised, but in some instances practitioners found it difficult to attend the training regularly because of the disruption caused at their school or setting and the need to arrange supply cover. The approach was also shown not to be cost effective. Inspectors also found a lack of specific training for headteachers and senior management that focused on how to evaluate the effectiveness of new teaching approaches in developing children's learning.

Findings also show that there is a lack of comparable data across all local authorities on the number of staff attending the training in each local authority. In addition, the data does not show whether the staff attending the training are under-fives practitioners or those working with older children.

Ann Keane, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales says,
“There are too many inconsistencies in the way in which local authorities collect data to provide a meaningful national picture of exactly who has been trained to show the true impact of this programme.”

“However, we do know from our research that most practitioners are very positive about the training they receive and steps are already being taken to address some of the issues we have identified in our report about the additional guidance and training offered by some local authorities and the formal monitoring of the quality of the Foundation Phase training.”

Estyn has made a number of recommendations in their report for schools and settings, and local authorities as well as the Welsh Assembly Government. Firstly, the inspectorate calls for schools and settings to share good practice with each other and to develop strong evaluation procedures to monitor the impact of training on teaching and children's learning.

Local authorities are encouraged to roll out the programme for practitioners working with older children to review how the training is delivered in order to make it more accessible and cost effective and to minimise disruption within schools and settings. Estyn also recommends that local authorities target training and support where it is most needed.

Finally, the inspectorate recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government provides more coherent data on how much training has been accessed by practitioners and reviews guidance for practitioners working with older children.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

About the report

- Estyn's report 'Foundation Phase training and its impact on learning and teaching' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>
- The evidence base includes an analysis of a survey of training practice in all local authorities; visits to 15 settings and schools across Wales; discussions with 20 headteachers, lead practitioners; interviews with three major training organisations; a survey of Foundation Phase Development officers and scrutiny of documentary evidence, including all Estyn inspection reports on settings and primary schools inspected in the 2008-2009 academic year.

About Estyn

Estyn is the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales. Our aim is to achieve excellence for all in learning in Wales. We do this by providing an independent, high-quality inspection and advice service.

Our vision is to be recognised through the expertise of our staff as an authoritative voice on learning in Wales.

We are independent from, but funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998).

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