

News release

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Making better use of data will help raise standards in schools

Local authorities and schools in Wales are not all making the best use of data available to them in order to help identify and challenge poor performance and share good practice.

More effective use of information on performance in national curriculum subjects and data which helps all schools to compare their performance with other similar schools, could help raise standards significantly. It would also help highlight those schools most in need of improvement, enabling stronger support to be brought in through local authorities at an early stage.

A number of local authorities do use data such as Estyn inspection outcomes, exam and national curriculum results to help them analyse and compare systematically how well their schools are performing. However few local authorities give schools enough encouragement to compare their own performance with others and set challenging targets which encourage all learners to achieve their very best.

“The number of schools identified by Estyn inspectors as causing concern is almost double the number we identified in 2005-2006. Local authorities and schools need to have a shared understanding of where underperformance lies so that this can be challenged and supported at an early stage,” says Dr Bill Maxwell, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales.

Nearly all schools have improved the way that they collect, analyse, interpret and share data since 2003. But in secondary schools, there is too much variation at departmental level, in the way they use and interpret data. Estyn recommends that senior leaders in schools work closely with their heads of department to ensure that they make effective use of data.

Most local authorities do not share data on how well individual schools are doing with elected members. Consequently, elected members are limited in their ability to question and scrutinise how well the local authority supports school improvement. Estyn recommends that all local authorities move to regularly sharing analyses of this sort with elected members, other schools and relevant parties.

Estyn recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that existing nationally prepared data sets are made available to local authorities earlier in the autumn term so that they can be used in target setting and planning for that academic year. In addition, Estyn recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government strengthens its guidance on these issues, including the sharing of school performance data with elected members, all schools and relevant partners as appropriate.

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Notes to Editors:

- Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, provides a high quality inspection and advice service.
- Estyn's report, 'Local authorities and schools use of performance data', has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- The evidence base for this report includes:
 - Inspections of schools and local authority improvement services between September 2005 and June 2007;
 - Interviews with all officers responsible for school improvement
 - Data analysis in all local education authorities
 - Interviews with headteachers and other staff responsible for the analysis of performance data
- Estyn inspects nursery schools and settings maintained or funded by local authorities, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral units, independent schools, further education, adult community-based learning, youth support services, youth justice system, local education authorities (LEAs), teacher education and

training, work-based learning, Careers Wales companies and the education, guidance and training elements of the Jobcentre Plus programmes.

- Full copies of inspection reports are available on Estyn's web site at www.estyn.gov.uk

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