



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

News Release

Education about Substance Misuse

Schools play an important role in drugs and alcohol education

Tuesday 5 June 2007

Estyn reports today that the guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government may be helping to delay the age at which children in primary schools start smoking and experimenting with drugs and alcohol. However, in secondary schools, the Welsh Assembly Government Circular has had little impact on changing the attitudes and values of a significant minority who continue to smoke, or drink alcohol to excess or use illegal drugs such as cannabis.

Inspectors have found that pupils' knowledge and understanding of the physical effects and legal consequences of substance-misuse has improved since the guidance was introduced. However, the Circular does not provide enough guidance for schools or for those who train teachers on how to link together effectively all the agencies who need to work together to help to prevent some of the underlying causes of substance misuse in local communities..

Estyn reports that most secondary schools and the majority of primary schools have a policy for educating pupils about substance-misuse. Guidance from the Assembly has been useful to these schools in helping them to write or revise their policies. However, most schools do not evaluate the effectiveness of their substance-misuse education programme. This means there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of some of the issues

such as the physical, emotional and mental health consequences of taking illegal or legal substances and of the consequences relating to violent behaviour, unsafe sex, and damage to an unborn child due to substance-misuse.

HM Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales, Susan Lewis says, “Schools have an important role to play in helping to influence the attitudes and values of young people. Evidence shows that children and young people are not fully informed about all the personal risks they are taking by using a particular drug.”

In some secondary schools there is an anti-smoking programme called ASSIST (A Stop Smoking in Schools Trial) which encourages young people in schools to inform others of the same age about the dangers and consequences of smoking. Early evaluations by the Medical Research Council show that the programme is having some positive impact on young people who are at risk of becoming regular smokers.

The Welsh Assembly Government funds most of its substance-misuse education work in schools directly through its All Wales Police Liaison Core Programme. However, a lack of joined-up thinking nationally and locally with the 22 Substance Misuse Action Teams in each local authority in terms of planning, coordinating, resourcing, teaching, monitoring and evaluating means that substance-misuse education programmes in schools are less effective than they might be.

Estyn recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government provides better and more up-to-date guidance on how to develop a fully integrated, multi-agency approach to help prevent substance misuse by children, young people and vulnerable families.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, has published a report on ‘Education about Substance Misuse’. The report was requested by the Welsh Assembly Government.

- This report evaluates the implementation and impact in schools of the guidance about 'Substance Misuse: Children And Young People' in Welsh Assembly Government Circular 17/02
- Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. Estyn aims to raise standards and quality of education and training in Wales through inspection and advice, in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government.

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