

Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:
25 April 2012

Meeting time:
09:00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

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Agenda
Private

PRIVATE MEETING The Committee resolved to meet in private at their meeting on 29 March 2012 for all the items in this meeting.

- 1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions**
- 2. School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 – Approach to scrutiny (09:15 – 09:40)**
- 3. Inquiry into school sun protection policy: Agreement of report (9:40 – 9:45)**
- 4. Papers to note**

Inquiry into adoption: Letter from the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services (Page 1)

Review of independent professional advocacy services for children: Letter from the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services (Page 2)

Review of independent professional advocacy services for children: Letter from the Chair to the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services (Pages 3 – 5)

Children's Budgeting: Letter from the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services (Pages 6 – 7)

Estyn Annual Report: Additional information from Estyn (Pages 8 – 22)



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

Ein cyf/Our ref : MB/GT/1308/12

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21st March 2011

Dear Chris,

Children and Young People Committee: Inquiry into Adoption

Thank you for your letter informing me of the timetable for completing the Committee's inquiry into adoption. I would like to reiterate my thanks for the readjustment the Committee has made.

I would also like to confirm that any recommendations made will be highly valued and considered as I am sure they will provide invaluable evidence to support our thinking. We are all working together and have a common interest in providing every child the security, stability and love through their childhood and beyond. By reducing delay, bureaucracy, promoting better collaboration between the sectors will hopefully go some way to achieving more 'forever families' for our children.

*Yours sincerely
Gwenda.*

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

Agenda Item 4b

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MB-GT-1375-12

Christine Chapman AM
Children and Young People
Committee Chair
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

26th March 2012

Dear Chris,

MISSING VOICES: CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW OF INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY SERVICES.

As you are aware the Children's Commissioner has undertaken a review of independent and professional advocacy services for looked after children and young people, care leavers and children in need. *Missing Voices*, the report on this review was published on the 22nd March 2012.

I know that the Children and Young People Committee have always taken a close interest in the provision of advocacy support to children and young people. Indeed, the previous Committee undertook a review of advocacy in September 2010.

I will be responding to the Children's Commissioner's report within three months. However, I would welcome the Committee's initial response to the review and the series of recommendations.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Yours sincerely,
Gwenda*

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

**Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc
Children and Young People Committee**

Gwenda Thomas AM
Deputy Minister for Children and Social
Services
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

4 April 2012

Dear Gwenda

Thank you for your letter of 26 March 2012 regarding *Missing Voices* - the report of the Children's Commissioner's review of independent professional advocacy services.

Given the extent of previous scrutiny into advocacy provision and the number of recommendations made by the Children and Young People during the Third Assembly, we are concerned at the wide range of issues raised by the Children's Commissioner in his report and these concerns are set out in the attached annex.

The Committee has reviewed the 29 recommendations outlined in the *Missing Voices* report, 11 of which are specifically to be taken forward by the Welsh Government. We note that in respect of current advocacy provision in Wales, the Commissioner states that 'this situation cannot be allowed to continue and must be addressed as a matter of urgency'.

In light of the scrutiny undertaken by the previous Children and Young People Committee into the provision of advocacy services, the current Committee looks forward to receiving a copy of your response to the Commissioner. The Committee will review and then consider its position on this important issue.

Yours sincerely



**Christine Chapman AM
Committee Chair**

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The Children and Young People Committee of the third Assembly published three reports into the provision of advocacy services for children and young people in Wales and made 30 recommendations in total in respect of advocacy provision for children and young people in Wales between 2008 and 2011. The first report, in 2008, was published following an inquiry into proposals made by the Welsh Government on a *New Service Model for Delivering Advocacy Services for Children and Young People*.¹ In May 2009, following scrutiny of progress made in implementing the Committee recommendations, a short report was published containing a further five recommendations to the Welsh Government.² In September 2010, a further report was published on the provision of advocacy services³.

Model of commissioning advocacy provision

Of central importance was the Committee's recommendation that a centrally funded advocacy unit be established. In its legacy report, the Committee stated it:

‘was disappointed that the Welsh Government did not agree to establish a centrally funded national advocacy unit opting instead to take forward a reconfiguration of local services so that specialist integrated advocacy services will in future be planned and commissioned by the local authority Children and Young People Partnerships.’

Within this context, we are concerned that the Children's Commissioner's research identifies a range of concerns arising from the model of commissioning and delivery of advocacy provision which was chosen by the Welsh Government. Specifically the Commissioner identifies that there is ‘inconsistent provision of advocacy across Wales’ and ‘a lack of clarity and consistency about the way in which independent advocacy services are commissioned in Wales’.

Role of the National Independent Advocacy Board and the Advocacy Development and Performance Unit

¹ The Welsh Government agreed with 9 of the 12 recommendations made in the report and agreed ‘in part’ or ‘in principle’ with the remaining three.

² Of the five recommendations made in the report (one of which was in two parts), four were accepted by the Welsh Government and two were accepted in part.

³ The report contained a further 13 recommendations relating to the provision of advocacy services. 10 were accepted by the Welsh Government and 3 were accepted in principle.

In 2010, the Committee's follow up report on advocacy included a recommendation that:

[...] the Welsh Government should provide greater clarity over the future functions, expectations and workplan of the National Independent Advocacy Board, and its Advocacy Development and Performance Unit.

In his report, the Commissioner states that 'the National Independent Advocacy Board (established by the Welsh Government in 2009) has not been able to achieve its objectives or to provide a national strategic lead on advocacy in Wales'. He goes on to say that the Welsh Government Advocacy and Development Unit has 'not fulfilled its intended remit' and has 'not provided a strategic lead on advocacy in Wales'. He also states that 'there is no strong strategic leadership by Welsh Government to make sure that eligible children and young people get equal access to independent professional advocacy in Wales'.

Progress in delivering universal, independent advocacy provision

The Committee is aware that progress has been made in respect of recommendations made by the previous Committee in respect of advocacy. We welcome the provision of a 24 hour, 7 day a week, free helpline ('Meic') which has been developed further to a previous Committee recommendation to establish a national phone and text advocacy line. However, the previous Committee noted that the helpline could only signpost children and young people to the advocacy services that currently exist and therefore 'could not currently guarantee parity of service across Wales'.

In the introduction to the 2010 report the Committee Chair at the time, Helen Mary Jones stated:

More than two years on from our original inquiry, I was disappointed to hear evidence during this review that suggested that a universal, independent advocacy service for children and young people is still not a reality in Wales.

The Committee is concerned that the Commissioners report raises further doubts as to whether sufficient progress is being made to provide advocacy support to vulnerable children in Wales.

Agenda Item 4d

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref SF/GT/1162/12

Christine Chapman AM
Children and Young People's
Committee Chair
Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

4 April 2012

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your letter received on the 6 October 2011 requesting an update on two issues raised during the Children's Commissioner for Wales's meeting with the Children and Young People's Committee on 5 October 2011, following the launch of his annual report. Firstly, I would like to apologise for the delay in responding to you. However I hope that my response will provide you with a clear steer on the Welsh Government's progress with these two particular issues.

Your first issue related to the Welsh Government's progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous Children and Young People Committee's report on child budgeting. Children's budgeting refers to a number of different strands of work that we are taking forward; however, the previous committee were particularly interested in Budget Statements. A Statistical Article was published in July 2010 setting out the breakdowns for 18-25, 26-64 and those aged 65 and over. We have committed to publish an analysis of budget spending by age grouping every three years to coincide with the publication of the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor. The link is <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/articles/expenditureanalysis/?lang=en>

As part of this commitment to the UNCRC, we have also developed toolkits on financial capability and participatory budgeting for children and young people's organisations and services to use. Both of these resources have been piloted across Wales with young people from a wide range of backgrounds with varying degrees of ability. We are currently holding discussion about launching and promoting the toolkits and making them available on a number of websites.

I would like to reaffirm the Welsh Government continued commitment to Children's Budgeting; however our first priority should be ensuring that we make the most effective use of our interventions to deliver our outcomes for children. Children and young people's budgeting may assist in this and as part of the Welsh Government's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Children and Young people's Budgeting has been identified as a priority within 'Getting it Right', our UNCRC Action Plan for Wales. It is a key component in taking forward our progress towards the full realisation of the UNCRC in Wales.

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)
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Your second issue related to the delay in the production of the Child Poverty Strategy Delivery Plan, ensuring that children and young people whose lives are affected by poverty have the same chances in life as their better off peers is one of the Welsh Governments highest priorities.

Our Programme for Government sets out the key actions we are taking to tackle poverty and worklessness, improve skills, and improve the health and educational outcomes of children, young people and families living in poverty. The Programme for Government also contained a commitment to develop a single Tackling Poverty Action Plan. This will bring together the contribution made by the Welsh Government as a whole to tackling poverty, while keeping a strong focus on child poverty.

A written statement has recently been issued by all Ministers and Deputy Ministers in the Welsh Government on the tackling poverty agenda in the current context of challenging economic uncertainties and the added likelihood of a whole new group of people entering poverty as a result of the economic downturn and the UK Government's Welfare Reform agenda.

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2012/tacklingpoverty/?lang=en>

As you can see from the written statement we plan to issue a fuller outline of the plan to stakeholders in May.

I would be grateful if you could share this information with the Committee.

*Yours sincerely,
Gwenda.*

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

Christine Chapman AM
Committee Chair
Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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20 April 2012

Dear Christine

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss my Annual Report for 2010-2011 with the members of Children and Young People Committee. I look forward to receiving the report on your scrutiny of my Annual Report.

In the meantime, I am happy to respond to the further questions from the Committee that you sent me in your letter of 10 April 2012. I have found that we can answer quite a few of the questions by referring to findings from survey reports we published in 2010-2011 or in previous years. This makes me think that it might be worthwhile if the Committee considered whether it would be useful in future to have more sessions with you so we can present our findings from the survey reports we undertake and publish each year. I was aware of the constraints on our time during the 29 March 2012 session and this arrangement would provide Committee members with more time to scrutinise findings from our survey reports in greater depth.

1. Inspection framework

It was helpful to the Committee to hear about the features of the new inspection framework. Further to that discussion, the Committee is interested to know:

- a) *Has any consideration been given to assessing the outcomes from Ofsted's pilot of on the spot inspections?*
- b) *In the development of Estyn's revised inspection framework, was consideration given to the use of on the spot inspections?*

The question of spot inspections has arisen in our internal evaluations of inspection arrangements and in consultations with stakeholders, both prior to introducing the new inspection arrangements in September 2010 and

subsequently. For example, we commissioned an independent consultant (CRG Research and Cardiff School of Social Sciences) to carry out an initial public consultation. Their report ('Estyn 2010: Public Stakeholder Consultation About Future Inspection Methodology') is on our website and includes detailed findings on stakeholder views including those about notice periods. We are also in contact with colleagues from Ofsted and follow developments in this area carefully.

There are two related issues that need to be distinguished. The first has to do with the current period of notice of inspection (now 20 working days), and the second has to do with the necessity for Estyn to inspect every school within six years of their last inspection. It is arguable that it is more important that a school should not know in which year and term it is to be inspected than whether the actual notice period is short, long or non-existent.

Both the six-year cycle and notice period arrangements are determined by regulations. The Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 requires Estyn to inspect every school within six years of their last inspection and also requires governing bodies to give parents written notification three weeks in advance of the parent meeting prior to inspection. We originally proposed a notice period of 15 days, but were persuaded following public consultation that informing parents and completing parental and learner questionnaires required notice of 20 working days. (The regulation about notice of pre-inspection meetings to be sent by governors to parents do not apply to post-16 providers inspected under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 or to inspections of local authority inspections.)

Estyn has already reduced the notice period from one year during the first cycle, to one term during the second and third cycles, to the current 20-day notice period in this cycle. It would be consistent with this trend of reducing the notice period to consult on reducing the notice period further or having spot inspections for the next cycle. Also, freeing up the requirement to inspect each school within six years of their last inspection would mean that schools could not foresee the year and term of their next inspection. If, after consultation, a consensus emerges on these matters, Estyn would need to discuss with the Welsh Government the changes that would need to be made to the relevant regulations.

2. Welsh as a second language

The Committee was interested to hear your views on the need to embed the status of the Welsh language in English-medium schools, and has some concerns about the trends in terms of take up of the full and short Welsh GCSE courses.

a) Is Welsh as a second language taught in a standard way across Wales?

Estyn's annual reports in recent years have identified issues regarding teaching and standards in Welsh second language, especially in key stage 2 and in

secondary schools. There is limited evidence of innovative approaches in relation to provision and teaching, such as the use of real-life situations in the local community or within meaningful contexts in other subjects in the curriculum to use the second language. A few schools have worthwhile initiatives to extend second language pupils' contact with Welsh, for example by using Welsh as a medium in form tutor groups. However, opportunities for pupils to use Welsh orally beyond their Welsh lessons are limited, especially in secondary schools. Even in communities where there are Welsh speakers, schools do not provide pupils with planned opportunities to engage with them and to practise using Welsh. One of the main reasons for this is teachers' lack of confidence and knowledge to support the teaching of Welsh. More encouragement for teachers to take professional development opportunities to improve their confidence in using and teaching Welsh would help as would increasing the take-up of existing opportunities supported by Welsh Government.

- b) *You said in your evidence to the Committee that the teaching of Welsh has a second language does not produce bilingual children. What competence level is it reasonable to expect from Welsh as a second language?*

The National Curriculum Subject Orders identify the standards pupils should be achieving. However, it is not reasonable to expect pupils in schools with different linguistic contexts and backgrounds to be achieving the same level of competence, even within the English-medium sector. What can be expected is that pupils, whatever their starting point, make continuous progress in using Welsh independently and confidently in an increasing range of less-structured situations.

3. Attendance rates

Your report highlights that primary school attendance rates have changed very little over the last six years, and that secondary school attendance rates are only slightly improved, with boys' attendance at a higher level than that of girls. You also indicated that there is a link between high absence rates and low standards in schools.

- a) *Is there any evidence that standards are low because of poor attendance, or that attendance is low because of poor standards?*

The latest report from Welsh Government, 'Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics, 2011' (published March 2012) provides further evidence that low standards are strongly linked to poor attendance. As the overall absence rate increases, the percentage of pupils achieving the key performance indicator (CSI/L2EWM) decreased at each key stage.

It is not possible to say which (low standards or attendance) causes the other. It is most likely that both factors mutually reinforce each other, so that underachievement in school discourages attendance, and poor attendance in turn has a negative effect on standards. This vicious circle needs to be tackled

at both 'ends' – by improving standards (through a more engaging curriculum and better teaching) and attendance (through improving partnerships with parents, intervening when necessary, and creating an ethos where it is accepted as the norm for pupils to work hard and attend regularly) .

b) What evidence is there to explain why girls' attendance is worse than boys'?

Although low attendance is often associated with lower achievement, the issue of girls having lower attendance than boys in secondary school is more likely to relate to gender health patterns, particularly at adolescence.

c) How effective are local authorities in working with schools to reduce non-attendance, and what more could they do?

Estyn inspections of Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People since September 2010 suggest that significant differences exist across Wales in the effectiveness of local authorities' work to improve pupil attendance. Of the eleven reports published to date, six reports on areas for improvement both in outcomes and provision relating to attendance. Five reports include specific recommendations that attendance rates need to improve.

In half the authorities where areas for improvement relating to attendance were identified, the inspections found that relevant policies and strategies had recently been developed and implemented. However, in these authorities it was too early to judge whether, or to what extent, these were having a positive impact. In two authorities, strategies that had led to improvements in attendance at secondary level had not been successfully extended into the primary sector, where attendance rates remained low.

Where aspects of a local authority's work were reported as strengths, they included:

- working in partnership with health workers to advise and challenge schools on the interpretation of absence for medical reasons;
- using school-level data to analyse how provision can impact on the attendance, behaviour and attitudes of learners;
- introducing electronic registration into primary schools to improve the collation and analysis of attendance data;
- working closely with individual secondary schools to agree annual attendance targets and regularly reviewing progress towards these;
- restructuring and refocusing the education welfare officer service;
- working well with community partners to engage with problem families;
- developing appropriate policy and guidance documents for improving pupil attendance, which clearly set out the respective responsibilities for the local authority, its officers, schools and governors;
- using legal powers appropriately to prosecute parents if necessary in order to improve pupils' attendance; and

- basing 'inclusion' welfare officers in secondary schools.

These aspects, identified as strengths in those authorities who work effectively to improve attendance, would form a sound basis for other, less effective authorities to emulate.

4. Pupil and parent perspectives

The Committee was interested to hear about your questionnaires on parents and pupils' experiences of education, and, if there had not been time constraints, would have been interested to explore this area with you. In particular:

- a) *What was the response rate to the questionnaires, both among parents and among pupils?*

For learner questionnaires, we sample pupils responses depending on the number of pupils on roll at the school (calculated from the most up to date January PLASC data and only including key stage 2 pupils in primary schools). If there are 100 pupils or fewer, all pupils should take part in the survey. If there are more than 100 pupils, the survey should include at least 100, or 25% if the total number of pupils is 400 or more. The sample of pupils is selected at random. The average learner response rates were:

- 96% for primary schools (238 providers inspected in 2010-11, however 15 providers were infant/nursery schools so did not have any KS2 learners). The response rates for individual providers ranged from 11% to 174%.
- 99% for secondary schools (31 providers inspected in 2010-11). The response rates for individual providers ranged from 71% to 152%.

The response rates for some individual schools are greater than 100% because the schools responded with more questionnaires than requested.

To calculate the parent response rates, we have assumed each parent has two children attending the same school (for information on average family size see http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171780_248431.pdf). Using school pupil numbers from the January 2011 PLASC, the average parent response rates were:

- 37% for primary schools (238 providers inspected in 2010-11).
- 23% for secondary schools (31 providers inspected in 2010-11).

- b) *Were there variations in the response rate among particular groups of parents or children, for example, those from areas of disadvantage?*

In both primary and secondary schools, we require a specific proportion of pupils to complete the questionnaire. There are variations in the response rates of parents in primary and secondary schools. In primary and secondary schools, the response rate of parents typically ranges from about 5% to 60%. There is no

pattern of responses among particular groups of parents. For example, there is no correlation between the response rates of parents with the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals attending the school.

- c) *What are the factors you believe led around 95 per cent of pupils to say that they believe they are doing well in school?*

Most schools are judged to have an inclusive ethos and arrangements for care and support are generally good. Most pupils are happy and enjoy going to school.

Generally pupils feel safe and have good relationships with teachers and other adults. They feel they have greater opportunities to impact on decision-making, often through involvement in the school council.

Changes to the curriculum 14 -19 now mean that there is a broader range of courses that appeal to different groups of pupils, some of whom may have been disaffected in the past. Very few pupils now leave school without a recognised qualification (even in the most deprived areas) and increasingly schools are using Essential Skills Wales qualifications to accredit learning at an early age in secondary schools to motivate and provide a sense of achievement.

5. Literacy and Numeracy Framework

Your remit report on the Skills Framework at Key Stage 2 found that very few schools were using the Skills Framework to plan their new curricula and identify opportunities to develop pupils' skills. In response to your recommendation that the Framework should be revised, the Welsh Government said that it would consider how best to work with schools to address the issues raised in your report and would introduce a new statutory National Literacy and Numeracy Framework for learners aged 5 to 14.

- a) *Are you satisfied that the new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework will provide teachers with the information and tools they need to plan their teaching programmes?*
- b) *Will this address the concerns you raised in your remit report?*

The National Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks have the potential to provide schools with a structure to plan the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It would be helpful if the frameworks were to be published alongside the exemplification of levels and substantial guidance for teachers. Without exemplification in work by pupils, it would be difficult for teachers to visualise what types of work would meet expectations for each year. This becomes particularly difficult at key stage 3 where eleven subject areas will be contributing to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Schools will also need guidance on curriculum planning to appropriately match the requirements of existing Subject Orders against the literacy and numeracy frameworks.

The development of the literacy framework (Welsh) needs careful consideration and development alongside the literacy framework (English). Because of the different linguistic starting points for pupils attending Welsh-medium education, end-of-year milestones may be different for children where Welsh is spoken at home compared to children where no Welsh is spoken at home. Parents will require clarity about outcomes in the context of a longer journey to achieve full bilingualism.

6. Numeracy skills

In your remit report on Numeracy for 14-19 year olds, you said that GCSE results and international comparisons show that numeracy performance in Wales is lower than in the other UK nations and below the OECD average. You also say that there is insufficient tracking of learners' progress, and limited information sharing between learning providers.

a) *Why are numeracy skills relatively poor in Wales?*

The Estyn report on 'Improving numeracy in key stages 2 and 3' found that:

- standards of numeracy have been identified as being stronger in key stage 2 than in key stage 3 in school inspections since September 2005;
- standards of achievement in the mathematics lessons observed during inspections are also better in key stage 2 than in key stage 3; and
- many of the shortcomings in pupils' standards in mathematics lessons in both key stages are related to the inadequate recall of basic number facts and a lack of effective strategies for mental or written calculations.

In both key stages, these shortcomings arise when teachers do not spend enough time developing pupils' basic number skills or providing enough practice and reinforcement to embed them. In addition, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to apply their numeracy skills.

Many teachers in key stage 3 do not build on the methods pupils have learned in primary schools because they do not place enough emphasis on teaching effective strategies for mental and written calculation. In a minority of secondary schools, pupils learn 'tricks' which cannot be developed into a standard method of calculation as their understanding improves. In these schools, teachers do not do enough to develop pupils' understanding of the number line or teach pupils to use calculators effectively enough.

b) *What are the implications of poor progress tracking and a lack of information sharing?*

School tracking systems should ensure that all teachers are aware of pupils' numerical skills so that prior learning is reinforced and unnecessary repetition avoided. If teachers are not fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' numerical skills pupils may not be given the opportunity to extend and use the full range of those skills. Teachers of subjects across the curriculum often have too-low expectations of pupils' numeracy skills and set tasks which are too easy, even where more demanding work would be appropriate in that subject.

Information about pupils' numeracy skills and the progress pupils are making on intervention programmes should be available to all teachers. The Estyn remit on Numeracy 14-19 found that the progress of learners in numeracy is not usually tracked during key stage 4, including the progress of pupils who have previously received support in key stage 3. As a result, schools are not aware of when pupils are having difficulties in numeracy and are therefore not providing timely support for pupils that may be struggling.

The Estyn report on 'Improving numeracy in key stages 2 and 3' found that:

- planning for transition between secondary schools and their partner primary schools has improved over recent years;
- many primary schools send specific information on pupils' prior attainment in mathematics, but only a very few transfer the same quality of information on numeracy; and
- many teachers in key stage 3 do not place enough emphasis on teaching effective strategies for mental and written calculation to make sure that pupils' numeracy skills continue to improve.

The majority of clusters of secondary schools and their partner primary schools organise joint activities designed to improve progression in mathematics from key stage 2 to key stage 3. However, in general, these activities do not focus enough on numeracy. Many secondary schools do not evaluate rigorously enough the impact of transition initiatives in raising standards of numeracy in Year 7.

Although schools assess pupils' numeracy skills, they do not share this information well enough with others when their learners attend courses at other education providers. For example, where groups of key stage 4 learners attend a college or other provider for part of a week, liaison between school and college numeracy staff is not good enough. This means that other providers do not have a clear understanding of a learner's strengths and weaknesses in numeracy because they do not have enough information to support the learners' individual numerical needs.

c) *What are the implications of learners' gaining qualifications at too low a level?*

Too often, not enough account is taken of the prior attainment and numerical ability of a pupil and they are not challenged to reach higher levels of attainment in numeracy. They should be given the opportunity to use, develop and extend the numerical skills they have acquired in their mathematics lessons in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils who are working towards a level 2 qualification in mathematics should be working at the same, or a higher level in Application of Number. The numbers following the level 3 AON qualifications are small and many pupils who have secured a level 2 qualification in GCSE mathematics often then complete the level 2 option in AON as this is the minimum requirement for the Welsh Baccalaureate (Advanced Level). The lack of pace and challenge in completing such a task is often demotivating.

d) *What knowledge do you have of best practice in teaching numeracy, both at the primary level, and, both theory and applied, in maths and science in secondary school?*

The Estyn report on 'Improving numeracy in key stages 2 and 3' came to the conclusions listed below.

Where standards of numeracy are good in primary schools, pupils can apply their numeracy skills well in a range of subjects across the curriculum and in real life contexts.

However, only a few secondary schools have well-co-ordinated strategies to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum. Many schools do not make enough use of opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills during the study of other subjects. In a minority of lessons, teachers of subjects across the curriculum have too-low expectations of pupils' numeracy skills and they allow pupils to use calculators for basic calculations that the pupils should do mentally.

Many secondary schools have appointed a co-ordinator who has begun to identify the numeracy demands of other subjects. A few schools have adapted their schemes of work to make sure pupils are prepared for the numeracy demands of different subject areas. However, in general, schools have not yet developed this initiative sufficiently to have enough impact on improving the standards of pupils' numeracy skills.

7. Disadvantaged learners

Your remit report on Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage in Schools focused in the effectiveness of partnership approaches and community-focused schooling.

a) *How are schools engaging parents in tackling the underachievement of disadvantaged learners?*

Most schools identify engaging parents as the biggest challenge in tackling the under-achievement of disadvantaged learners. Many schools, especially primary schools, have a good awareness of the range of problems facing the families of their learners, and a few schools work with parents strategically to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners. However, a significant minority of schools do not employ a broad enough range of strategies to engage parents.

Schools that successfully tackle poverty and disadvantage take the initiative in engaging parents and carers, including using a variety of methods to communicate with them. However, they have found that the best way to involve their parents is to communicate and work with them face-to-face to help them and their children overcome barriers to learning. These schools do more than simply have an 'open-door' policy.

b) How are schools working with communities to lessen the gap in performance in the academic attainment of those eligible and ineligible for free school meals?

Nearly all schools see themselves as community-focused, but they do not have a common understanding of what it means to be community-focused. A few schools in disadvantaged areas have identified challenges in their local community and have strengthened community links accordingly, for example, to raise attendance rates, improve behaviour, raise the level of parental support and reduce the incidence of vandalism in the locality. However, too few schools are able to identify how community-based work has made a positive impact on learners' achievement.

Leaders and managers in schools that raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils successfully have a good understanding of the relationship between wellbeing and standards. They know that disadvantaged learners are more likely to feel anxious about school and that learners need to feel safe and confident before they are able to learn effectively. They know that they need to work with the community and with other services to tackle the effects of cultural disadvantage and poverty of aspiration.

They also know that disadvantaged learners are less likely than their peers to benefit from a wide range of cultural, sporting and other learning experiences outside school, rarely travel beyond the area in which they live and often do not explore the range of opportunities for learning within their local community. A common feature of most of the successful schools is the extensive out-of-school-hours provision they offer to broaden the experiences of their disadvantaged learners. This provision gives disadvantaged learners opportunities that they would not usually have and contributes significantly to developing their social and learning skills. Effective schools also contribute to opportunities for learning within the community by offering enrichment experiences for parents and their children. They work hard to be an integral part of their local community. They take learners out into the community for learning experiences and also invite local residents, business people and religious

leaders into school.

- c) *What impact could working with parents and communities have on supporting disadvantaged pupils?*

Our report on parental involvement in primary schools ('Good practice in parental involvement', Estyn, 2009) showed that closer links between home and school have a significant impact on learners' wellbeing.

Our reports on 'Tackling poverty and disadvantage' (issued in 2010, 2011 and 2012) found that schools that successfully tackle poverty and disadvantage work closely with parents and the local community. These schools employ strategies that promote life-long learning in the community. They help parents and carers to support their children's learning and foster inter-generational learning. These effective schools evaluate the impact that such strategies have on the outcomes and wellbeing of learners.

8. Gypsy and Traveller pupils

During the meeting, we briefly discussed the particular issues relating to Gypsy and Traveller pupils in schools. In your annual report you say that most schools are not doing enough to adapt their approaches to meet the particular needs of these children or to address the barriers that they face.

You also say that there are inaccuracies in the national data, which is impacting the distribution of funding. At the meeting you said that while some local authorities were working to adapt their approach, and there were some examples of good practice, the impact to date has been minimal.

- a) *What impact does the failure to address the particular needs of Gypsy and Traveller pupils have?*

Gypsy and Traveller pupils have the lowest attainment by far of any group of learners at all key stages, as shown most recently in SB 27/2012 'Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics, 2011', Tables 5-7. In the period from 2007 to 2009, no Gypsy Traveller pupils, whose results were collected by the Welsh Government, achieved the core subject indicator at the end of key stage 4.

Overall, few secondary schools have policies or practices that specifically address the needs of Gypsy and Traveller pupils or encourage a positive attitude towards school, even in schools with large numbers of these pupils. Few secondary schools actively promote Gypsy and Traveller culture as part of the curriculum. Most say they do not do this as they think it would increase prejudice within the local community. Few schools provide homework for pupils when they are travelling, to support continuity in their education. Only a few schools have suitable mechanisms in place to gauge the views of Gypsy and Traveller pupils and this group of pupils is rarely represented on school councils. The lack of

attention to the issues outlined above means that in many cases, both parental and pupil attitudes towards secondary education in the Gypsy and Traveller community remain unchanged. Education beyond primary level is not valued. Hence, the lack of achievement by this group of pupils continues.

b) How are local authorities and schools working with Gypsy and Traveller families to address low attendance rates?

The most successful strategies in improving attendance are:

- the establishment of good working relationships by secondary schools with Gypsy and Traveller parents, often over a long period of time;
- having a designated member of school staff act as the point of contact for any issues that Gypsy and Traveller parents may wish to raise; and
- joint working between services such as the traveller education service or other school staff, education welfare officers, behaviour support staff, youth services and sports development officers, to take account of individual pupils' needs.

In a few local authorities, traveller education staff work closely with education welfare officers to improve the attendance of Gypsy and Traveller pupils. They make joint visits to Gypsy and Traveller sites to establish the whereabouts of pupils.

When all these strategies are in place, they often have a positive impact upon Gypsy and Traveller pupils' overall levels of attendance.

Despite this support, the overall attendance rates of secondary school age Gypsy and Traveller pupils is still too low. Many Gypsy and Traveller pupils have levels of attendance that fall below the Welsh Government's minimum target for this pupil group of 50% attendance (that is 200 half-day sessions) a year.

c) What impact do inequalities of funding, as a result of inaccurate national data about Gypsy and Traveller communities, have on Gypsy and Traveller pupils?

The Welsh Assembly Government distributes a grant for the 'Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children' to local authorities according to a funding formula based on the numbers of this group of pupils. These numbers are supplied by the designated Gypsy and Traveller co-ordinator in each local authority. The current system impacts negatively because it takes no account of the greater needs of secondary age pupils.

9. More able pupils

Your remit report on More Able and Talented Pupils said that in general primary schools are not doing enough to identify more able and talented pupils adequately, or to offer enough challenge to stretch these pupils.

a) *What more can schools and local authorities do to support more able and talented pupils?*

In our remit report we outline specific recommendations for schools and local authorities in order to improve support for more able and talented pupils.

Schools should:

- provide more challenging and individualised learning experiences to help more able and talented pupils to achieve the highest standards; improve the use of data and assessment to identify, track and monitor the progress of more able and talented pupils;
- build on existing transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools to provide more appropriate challenge for more able and talented pupils;
- improve parents' understanding of how they can better support the education of their child;
- use professional learning communities to share best practice in the education of more able and talented pupils; and
- provide training for school leaders, teachers and support staff on how to address the needs of more able and talented pupils.

Local authorities should:

- train school improvement officers on how to identify, support, track, monitor and evaluate the progress of more able and talented pupils; and
- use data more effectively to evaluate trends over time in the achievement of more able pupils.

10. Use of data

Your annual report identified weaknesses in the use of data and pupil tracking in schools, governors and local authorities.

- a) *Are issues relating to data sharing a concern in all areas and tiers of education in Wales?*
- b) *Is there variation in the types of data that are being used across the country and across local authorities?*

The introduction of the All Wales Core Data Sets has provided a consistent set of analyses for all primary and secondary schools across Wales. However, there remains too much variation in how effectively these are used by schools and local authorities. Later this term we will publish a report on the use of the data in school self-evaluation, which will expand on this response to a) and b) above.

11. Sharing best practice

The Committee was interested in your evidence that some of the most effective drivers for performance improvement are robust self-evaluation and peer review. These processes can, of course, be supported by the sharing of best practice between providers.

- a) *On its website, Ofsted lists the education providers which have achieved outstanding status. Has any consideration been given to using Estyn's website in a similar way to share best practice?*

We do use our website to share best practice already. Estyn recognises its unique, independent position to showcase some of the excellent practice we see in action across all sectors we inspect, from early years provision, to colleges and work-based learning providers. In the 'Best practice' section of our website we regularly publish written case studies explaining what individual education and training providers do to excel in a specific area. Also, as part of Estyn's Annual Report 2009-2010, we produced a series of best practice films which can also be found on our website.

- b) *Are there any specific examples of sector leading practice in the Foundation Phase you could share with the Committee?*

- Ysgol Abercaseg (Gwynedd) is one such example. Here, class books and individual books show excellent progress through Foundation Phase. Most able produce extended work of a high quality. Early reading skills develop well by 7 years old, most pupils have good reading skills and reading with excellent comprehension and expression.
- Comins Coch (Ceredigion) is another. Nearly all pupils read accurately and at an appropriate level for their age and ability. Writing of nearly all pupils is of a high standard. Effective training and clear understanding of Foundation Phase results in high standards of teaching and learning.
- Ysfol Morfa Nefyn (Gwynedd) is on our website for excellent practice in developing pupils' language skills in the Foundation Phase. The case study highlights that language skills are taught systematically and in interesting ways.

- c) *Are there any specific examples of sector leading dedicated nursery schools you could share with the Committee?*

- Camau Bach Cedwyn stands out as a high-quality non-maintained provider for standards and Llewellyn day nursery in Denbighshire for provision.

Thank you again for the opportunity to answer your questions. If you have any further queries, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Ann Keane

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Wales