



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

News Release

Call for more joined-up thinking to improve education standards in Wales

Education leaders must learn to work together if they are to tackle the challenges ahead, says the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2005-6.

In her report published today, HM Chief Inspector Susan Lewis points to the need for better partnerships if many of the new initiatives in education and training in Wales are to be effective.

Susan Lewis says that providers in most sectors have improved a great deal since they were last inspected and leadership has also generally improved. Many leaders are now much better at identifying what they do well and what they need to do to improve as an individual institution or service.

"However, leaders do not always have the vision or the will to work with their partners to tackle challenges that are beyond what they can achieve on their own," says the Chief Inspector. "If leaders are to make further significant improvements in education standards, they will need to move more quickly to put into place new ways of joint working."

For the first time the Annual Report includes a summary of the grades awarded to individual education and training providers. This summary uses the new inspection database and is designed to make it simpler for people to find out where there is good practice and where improvements are needed.

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It also reveals noticeable differences between individual providers working in similar areas. The Chief Inspector says that a number of providers have achieved excellence across every area of their work: “On the other hand, there are sectors of education and training or areas of Wales where inspectors have seen very little excellence during the year.”

Other findings in the Chief Inspector’s report include:

- In primary schools, 77% of lessons inspected achieved the top two grades - compared with 46% in the same schools six years ago.
- On average about 20,000 pupils were absent each day from secondary schools in Wales, enough to fill about 20 average-sized schools
- This year there was a significant rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions from schools, from 16,530 in 2003-2004 to 20,242 in 2004-2005
- The grades awarded this year show improvement in the standards of lessons reported for the same secondary schools six years ago, with an increase of 17% in the amount of good or better work
- One in six secondary schools inspected did not keep to the law on the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship
- 70% of the youth support services inspected were judged as good compared to 59% last year
- Provision of education and training for young offenders is too limited
- This year, for the first time in this inspection cycle, there were no shortcomings in important areas in the colleges of further education inspected, and
- There was a significant improvement in the number of work-based learning providers achieving the top two grades, but it is still a cause for serious concern that nearly half of those inspected had unsatisfactory standards

Getting the basics right

Launching her report at YMCA Hub in Barry, the Chief Inspector said that some of the most difficult challenges related to making sure that all learners grasped the basics of language, number and science. “By the end of their time in compulsory education, only about 40% of 16-year-olds have gained good GCSE or equivalent qualifications in Welsh or English, mathematics and science,” she said. “During recent years, these results have improved only slowly.”

Underachievement is often accompanied by problems with attendance, bullying and anti-social behaviour. Many schools are working more closely with youth support services, other providers, parents and communities to try to overcome these problems.

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Lifelong learning

It is essential to encourage lifelong learning so that people gain skills and are retrained to meet the needs of a fast-changing economy, said the Chief Inspector. “This year we have seen much more work that is good and outstanding in colleges of further education than over the last five years,” she said. “Overall, colleges are doing much better than the Welsh Assembly Government’s targets for learner achievement and for the quality of teaching.”

The Chief Inspector said that standards in adult community-based learning were generally very high in Wales. However, there was a need for better planning to offer activities that would help people return to the workforce or increase their contribution to their communities. The range of classes available was not wide enough to stimulate the interest of new learners, she said.

Associated Community Training

The Chief Inspector was welcomed by Andrew Cooksley, Managing Director of Associated Community Training (ACT) Ltd, a private training provider that runs courses at YMCA Hub and several centres in south-east Wales. At a recent inspection ACT was awarded grade 1 across almost all aspects of their provision and overall standards were described as outstanding.

The Chief Inspector described ACT as a work-based training provider that was “bucking the trend” in many respects: “The company places a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of individual learners, many of whom were not previously motivated by education, nor did they succeed.” She said that ACT made good use of their links with employers and local organisations to make sure that learners succeeded with their training and had opportunities to progress to other learning or a job.

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