

11 May 2010

Support for pupils improves numeracy skills

Many pupils who fall behind with their numeracy skills improve thanks to catch-up programmes offered by schools, according to a survey by Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Although pupils in primary schools have stronger numeracy skills than those in secondary schools, overall, many find it difficult to recall basic mathematics and have problems doing calculations.

The report, *'Improving numeracy in key stage 2 and key stage 3'*, evaluates the effectiveness of initiatives organised by schools to improve pupils' numeracy skills, as well as identifying best practice. As part of their survey, inspectors examined data from the past four years of school inspection reports, national curriculum teacher assessments, questionnaire responses from local authorities and made visits to primary and secondary schools.

Ann Keane, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, said, "Research shows that 53% of adults in Wales have numeracy skills below the level expected of an 11-year-old. This means they have difficulties with percentages, fractions and calculations. It is vital that schools continue to raise standards in numeracy by providing pupils with opportunities to develop their skills in a real life context in order to ensure they do not struggle once they get jobs and manage their own finances."

Inspectors found that standards of numeracy in primary schools are good because pupils have the opportunity to apply their skills outside mathematics lessons and across a range of subjects. However, many teachers in secondary schools do not

place enough emphasis on mental and written calculation to make sure that their numeracy skills continue to improve when they transfer from primary school.

The report includes case studies of the most successful catch-up programmes in by schools which were strongly led by senior managers and supported by the expertise and commitment of subject leaders. However, even though nearly all pupils make more progress than expected, schools and local authorities need to do more to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes.

Estyn outlines a number of recommendations in the report for schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government, including developing numeracy strategies and planning and monitoring numeracy intervention programmes.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

About the report

- Estyn's report 'Improving numeracy in key stage 2 and key stage 3' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>
- The report includes evidence from primary and secondary school inspection reports 2005-2009; national curriculum teacher assessments at key stage 2 and key stage 3; interviews and observation in 11 primary and 10 secondary schools and questionnaires completed by 21 local authorities.
- The report includes case studies from:
 - Llangennech Junior School, Carmarthenshire

- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Bryngwyn School, Carmarthenshire
- Ysgol Bryn Elian, Conwy
- Flintshire County Council
- Hawarden High School, Flintshire
- Newport City Council
- Pillgwenlly Primary School, Newport
- Milford Haven School, Pembrokeshire
- Pontarddulais Comprehensive School, Swansea

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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