

News release

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Schools responding well to the growing number of children of migrant workers

Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, has today published a report on how schools in Wales are supporting the increasing numbers of children of migrant workers, particularly from other European Union countries.

Estyn inspectors found that the number of children of migrant workers is at an all-time high, but that schools in Wales have succeeded in making sure that good relationships are forged with these learners and they integrate successfully into school life.

In 2008, 410 new children of migrant workers joined schools in Wales. This was in addition to the 1,505 of these learners that were already registered. However, the number of learners fluctuates considerably throughout the school year, which makes it difficult to gauge an accurate picture of the number of learners on roll at any one time.

Dr Bill Maxwell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales says, "Nearly all the schools that we sampled have good arrangements in place to provide learning experiences that meet the needs and interests of these children. Although, in general, there is not enough good quality specialist training available for mainstream teachers, support assistants and school co-ordinators responsible for teaching English as an Additional Language."

When schools have prior notice that children of migrant workers will be attending, many make good arrangements to meet children and parents along with specialist staff who can

speak their first language. However, in a few local authorities, these learners have arrived in such large numbers that schools and support services have experienced considerable difficulties and, occasionally, found it hard to cope. This is particularly true in Roman Catholic schools which are favoured by many families because of their religious preference.

Inspectors found that the majority of specialist support staff mainly teach these learners in a normal classroom setting. This approach helps the children engage fully in normal curriculum activities and learn English. When a child has difficulty understanding what is being said, specialist support staff or their peers are on hand to provide effective support and translation.

The findings show that the children of migrant workers are generally punctual and attend school regularly. They are also very well motivated, especially once they have had time to settle into school life. However, a significant number of these children take extended holidays to their home countries. In addition, inspectors also found that a few older learners in Years 10 and 11 often find it difficult to complete homework as many have part-time jobs and/or are looking after siblings.

Estyn recommends that schools should exploit the opportunities presented by children of migrant workers to help other learners to understand and appreciate cultural diversity. Currently, most schools celebrate and study the different cultures represented by these learners. Yet, in some cases, staff miss the many opportunities to teach diversity issues.

For further information, including best practice case studies of schools where induction and buddy systems have been set up to help these learners settle into school life, view the full report at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>

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Notes to Editors:

- Estyn's report 'Local authority support for the education of children of migrant workers' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at www.estyn.gov.uk
- Estyn is the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Estyn commissions independent inspectors (registered, team and lay inspectors) and Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training to carry out inspections across the full range of education and training providers.
- Estyn inspects nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs), primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, independent schools, further education, adult community-based learning, youth support services, local education authorities, teacher education and training, work-based learning, offender learning, careers companies, and the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.
- This report builds upon another recent report by Estyn on related themes: *The impact of schools' race equality policies – May 2009*
- This report presents Estyn's findings on the quality of provision for the children of migrant workers, particularly from the European Union (EU) Accession states, who attend maintained schools in Wales. The report also comments on the standards achieved by these children.
- In 2008-9, the Welsh Assembly Government gave local authorities £9.1m to support education specifically for the children of migrant workers. This will increase to £9.6m in 2009-2010.
- The objective of the funding is to:
 - support pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who are learning English as an additional language and who may be underachieving; and
 - improve standards of achievement for pupils from certain minority ethnic groups identified as being at risk of underachieving.