

News release

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Learners from ethnic minority backgrounds who need support with English language skills failing to keep pace

Teaching staff in Wales are not equipped with the skills to support 16-19 year old learners from ethnic minority backgrounds who need help with English language, says Estyn in a report published today.

The education and training inspectorate for Wales has found that there are not enough qualified staff who can support learners for whom English is an additional or second language. Consequently, a vast majority of these learners are failing to keep up with the pace of lessons or training sessions.

Dr Bill Maxwell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales says, *"The quality of provision for learners with English language acquisition needs varies between providers and sectors. In most cases teachers and learners feel the pre-16 support and support in higher education is structured and effective. However, support for 16 to 19-year-old learners is unstructured and lacks a national focus and evaluation to inform future improvement planning. A clear strategic lead is needed to bring together the various agencies and government departments working with these groups."*

Estyn goes on to report that most providers in all sectors have no formal policy or action plan in place for effectively addressing the needs of these learners. In many cases, inspectors also found that further education colleges, sixth form

colleges, sixth forms and work-based learning providers are not always aware of the number of these learners within their institutions at any given time.

Estyn inspectors are urging providers to improve their teaching skills to support learners with English language acquisition needs in addition to supporting learners as they move between different levels of study.

Initial assessment of the type of support these learners need varies between providers and in many institutions the assessment is informal, lacks structure and does not provide sufficient information to inform the planning of learning support. This has resulted in both teachers and learners being unable to build on previous learning experiences and for many learners they experience a 'dip' in their knowledge and confidence, and their ability to use and transfer English language skills.

Many schools have found that mentoring programmes, involving staff, peers and outside volunteers have been effective in supporting and motivating learners. However, nearly all providers struggle to provide sufficient mentors on the budget allocation they receive. Estyn recommends that Welsh Assembly Government should review the way funding is allocated to support these learners, as the current funding structure was found to have an adverse effect on learner retention, attainment and progression.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

- Estyn's report 'How effective is provision for learners aged 16 to 19 years with English language acquisition needs?' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at www.estyn.gov.uk
- The purpose of this remit is to seek to gauge the level of need in relation to English language acquisition for learners aged 16 to 19 years who are in education and training.
- The report focuses on learners from ethnic minority backgrounds for whom English is an additional or second language. It considers the needs of this particular group of learners and examines the way in which they are supported with their studies. It identifies and highlights issues to be addressed or gaps to be filled.
- Four sectors were selected for samples: further education colleges, sixth form colleges, sixth forms and work-based learning. Evidence is also taken from 14-19 networks, Careers Wales and local authority education services (LAES).
- 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.