

News release

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RAISE funding has improved pupils' progress and engagement, but more evidence needed of long term impact on standards of achievement

Funding from the Welsh Assembly Government initiative RAISE to help economically and socially disadvantaged pupils has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes, attendance and behaviour according to a report published today by Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales.

In many schools, pupils who have been involved in work funded by RAISE (Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education) have increased their confidence and self-esteem, often as a result of the extra attention and support they receive.

Speaking at the launch of the Welsh Assembly Government's RAISE website in Cardiff, Meilyr Rowlands, Managing HMI, said, "The impact of RAISE has been significant on the development of pupils' personal, learning and social skills. We now need to ensure that the legacy of the funding has a long term effect on improving standards and performance."

Inspectors judged the progress of pupils on RAISE-funded work to be at least good in about 80% of the schools visited, a clear improvement on the sample of schools visited last year.

Although there have been positive effects from the funding on disadvantaged pupils involved in RAISE-funded activities, there have been no major changes in the performance of free school meals pupils nationally yet. Inspectors say that evidence of longer term trends on standards may not be seen until 2009 or beyond.

About half the RAISE projects in primary schools have a single focus. Nearly all primary schools focus on literacy, while others target social and emotional skills or numeracy. The RAISE funded work in secondary schools and special schools has a greater variety and scope, mainly because they receive more funding. The most common approach in many secondary schools is to have distinct projects that tackle a combination of issues such as behaviour, attendance, literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills. Only a few schools in either the primary and secondary sectors take a more holistic or community-focused approach.

Estyn's report makes a number of recommendations for schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government, including implementing strategies to close the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils and using data more effectively to help improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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Notes to Editors:

The report

- Estyn's report 'The impact of RAISE 2008-2009 – Evaluation of the impact of RAISE funding on raising the levels of performance of disadvantaged pupils – A report on the third year of the programme' has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>
- The evidence is based on visits to a representative sample of schools and local authorities and an analysis of relevant data. Inspectors visited 25 primary schools, 13 secondary schools, three special schools and eight local authorities. During visits to schools, inspectors interviewed teachers and leaders, looked at the evidence provided, considered the work of pupils and spoke to them about their work.

About Estyn

- 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.