

**News release**

**6 May 2009**

## **Schools causing concern are supported well by local authorities but more needs to be done**

Local Authorities have improved their support for schools that have been identified by Estyn as causing concern, but further improvement is needed, according to a report published today by Estyn.

Local Authority Education Services (LAES) need to be more vigorous in intervening and challenging schools when they under-perform before they are put into a category of concern by Estyn.

The Chief Inspector of Education and Training, Dr Bill Maxwell says that, “We now know that most LAES support schools very well when identified by Estyn as causing concern, but the real challenge for them is to use their full range of powers to improve these schools before they are inspected by Estyn”.

Although LAES use their own risk-based categories to determine how well a school is performing, inspectors found that schools are sometimes unclear about what category they are in and what support they will receive. Leadership and management are not always tackled rigorously enough by the LAES to help the school improve.

The report says that in the past LAES have not concentrated their efforts on schools causing concern but have helped all schools equally, even those performing well. LAES are now targeting resources at schools that need the most help but are still not always able to

secure enough improvement to prevent them going into a category after being inspected by Estyn.

Estyn reports that in some cases governors aren't made fully aware that there is underperformance in the school. Governors need more support from LAES on how they can take action when there is underperformance in schools and they need to be willing to take this action when appropriate.

Estyn recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide LAES and governing bodies with guidance and training so that they are clear about what their statutory powers of intervention are and how they should use them most effectively.

**-ENDS-**

For further information please contact the Communications, Media and Marketing Team on 02920 446464 or e-mail [communications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:communications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk)

### ***Notes to editors***

#### **About the report**

- Estyn's report 'Local authorities and schools causing concern' has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

The evidence base includes

- inspections of primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) identified as requiring special measures, serious weaknesses or significant improvement between September 2004 and July 2008;
- inspections of nine school improvement services in local authorities between September 2006 and July 2008;
- monitoring visits to primary, secondary and special schools identified as requiring special measures or significant improvement between September 2006 and July 2008;

- scrutiny of actions plans from schools and PRUs identified as requiring special measures or significant improvement between September 2007 and July 2008 and of statements of action from the local authorities responsible for these establishments;
- documentation from all local authorities in Wales including policies and draft partnership agreements;
- visits to seven local authorities and telephone interviews with senior officers in a further six local authorities;
- telephone interviews with representatives of Church in Wales and Roman Catholic dioceses in Wales; and
- interviews with headteachers and chairs of governing bodies in 12 schools, including schools currently in a category of concern, schools recently removed from one of these categories and schools identified by local authorities as underperforming.

### **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).

For further information please visit our website [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)