Estyn

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

2013-2014

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Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Contents

Contents

Contents

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Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
of Education and Training
in Wales

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Foreword

Foreword

This is my fifth and final annual report as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. I have been a HMI in Wales for over 30 years and there have been many changes in education and training over that period. Most notable were the creation of the National Assembly for Wales in 1998 and the devolution of powers to the Welsh Government for education and training, among other matters. There have been many other changes too. When I joined the inspectorate there was no 'National Curriculum' and GCSEs had yet to replace 'O' levels and CSEs. There were still some selective secondary schools in Wales and post-16 provision was very different, offering far fewer and less diverse options than it does now. Some new risks have emerged over the past 30 years alongside the exciting possibilities. The increased importance of digital communications and capacity has created a revolution in how teachers deliver the curriculum and how learners take ownership of their learning while also creating challenges to the e-safety of children and young people.

Some things have not changed. The need for children and young people to have the best possible education and training remains as strong now as it ever was. **Although Wales still lags behind other nations in its educational performance, there is, at the same time, a new momentum for improvement in the system and some indicators show an upward trend.** This must continue if young people in Wales are to develop as fully as they can and play an active part in shaping the future of Wales and the wider world.

How good are standards?

Performance against a number of important indicators in Wales is getting better. Attendance rates are improving. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is declining. The gap in performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils is narrowing a little. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) declined this year. Taken together, these improvements indicate that the initiatives introduced in schools and other providers, supported by Welsh Government, are having a positive impact.

However, significant challenges remain. This year was a mixed year for standards in education and training providers. **Whereas standards in the secondary school sector improved, those in the primary school sector declined. Good or excellent standards have continued to characterise sectors such as maintained special schools and non-maintained nursery settings but the trend of relatively weak performance has continued in pupil referral units (PRUs).**

Standards in the primary schools we inspected declined this year although they are better overall than those in secondary schools. The proportion of primary schools with good or excellent standards fell from seven in ten to just over six in ten. Nearly four in ten are only adequate, a slight increase on last year. In many cases, this was due to weaknesses in pupils' numeracy skills, which we have been looking at more closely this year, and pupils' lack of confidence in using these skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Standards of literacy have improved slightly this year, particularly in relation to pupils' writing skills. Overall, progress in improving pupils' writing is greater in the Foundation Phase than in key stage 2. However, standards in Welsh second language have not improved from last year. Also, around two in three primary schools required some level of follow-up due to shortcomings in standards and provision this year.

Figure 1: Number of maintained schools, January 2014 (a)

Primary schools 1,361
Secondary schools 217
Maintained special schools 42
Pupil referral units 35
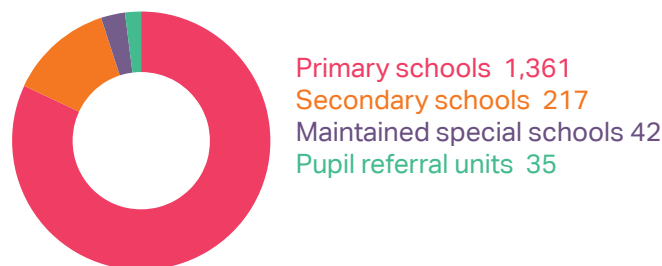
a) Each of the four all-age schools are counted as one primary school and one secondary school in this chart.

Figure 2: Number of maintained schools inspected in 2013-2014

Primary schools 229
Secondary schools 36
Maintained special schools 6
Pupil referral units 8

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Foreword
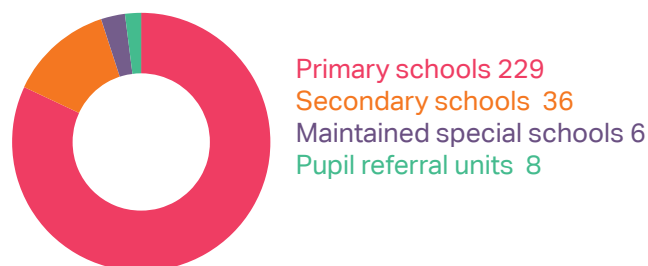
Standards in secondary schools improved this year compared with a relatively weak performance last year. The proportion of secondary schools with excellent or good standards rose to over half compared with well under a half last year. This year no secondary school required special measures after a core inspection when, by contrast, six schools required special measures last year.

The secondary sector saw some progress in the following aspects of provision:

- outcomes
- pupil wellbeing
- improvements in provision for skills, especially literacy
- teaching and learning
- leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning for improvement

There remains in nearly all secondary schools, even in the best, a general need to improve standards in mathematics and numeracy, in provision for more able and talented pupils and in pupils' performance at level 2 including English or Welsh and mathematics.

There are **improvements in governance** across both primary and secondary sectors. Governors are now more involved in school self-evaluation than they have been in the past and are more prepared to challenge performance.

As in previous years, **standards in maintained special schools and independent schools are particularly strong.** Of the six maintained special schools we inspected, five have excellent standards. All seven mainstream independent schools we inspected are at least good. However, **the weak provision in pupil referral units (PRUs) continues to cause concern and the sector is notably weaker than other sectors.** Of the eight inspected this year, only three are performing well.

Figure 3: Number of pupils in each type of school, January 2014 (a)

Primary schools 270,349
Secondary schools 189,041
Maintained special schools 4,338

(a) Pupils in all-age schools are included in this data for primary and secondary schools. There were also 622 enrolments in pupil referral units.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Foreword

How good are standards?

Since 2010 we have been identifying an increasing number of schools that need further monitoring after their initial 'core' inspection. The number of schools that go into 'follow-up' has risen in each of the last four years. However, that trend is not reflected in the number of schools causing concern. These are the schools with the most serious shortcomings. I report in Section 3 of this annual report on the impact of inspection follow-up activity. In most cases, the schools that we follow up make good progress in implementing our recommendations and improving outcomes for pupils. Around two-thirds of schools are removed from follow-up after a year. **The number of schools that remain in a follow-up category for two or three years is very small and these are mainly the schools that we identify as requiring special measures or significant improvement.** Even with these schools, in tracking the outcomes for pupils in a sample of them, we have found sustained improvement in performance after inspection.

This year we monitored the progress of local authorities in meeting recommendations from previous inspections of their education services. **We removed five authorities from follow-up categories.** These authorities have made progress on:

- improving rates of school attendance
- analysing school performance data
- making arrangements for safeguarding children and young people
- planning for school places
- financial planning
- promoting partnership working, with other authorities and between schools within authorities
- commissioning or offering support and leadership

It is concerning that four local authorities still require special measures, one remains in need of significant improvement and three continue to require Estyn monitoring. These local authorities are making slower progress in:

- raising the standards of pupils' work
- improving school self-evaluation and planning for improvement
- securing consistency and quality in school interventions

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Foreword

Standards in post-16 providers vary. There were
no core inspections in further education institutions
(FEIs) this year, but we undertook monitoring visits
to each institution and published an annual review
of performance for each provider. Broadly, most
learners do well in FEIs. However, learner success rates
are lower in key skills qualifications in numeracy by
comparison with those in literacy, and disadvantaged
students do not achieve as well as they could because
a disproportionate number are enrolled on lower-level
courses. It is good to see an increase in the number of
courses being offered in science and technology and in
the take-up of level 3 courses overall.

Outcomes in the three work-based learning providers
we inspected this year are marginally better than they
were last year. **Learner outcomes in the two adult and
community learning providers we inspected are some
of the best in the sector.** Learners in the justice system
do better in secure settings than when supervised by
youth offending teams. In these weaker settings, the
young people do not attend well and fail to complete
their education or training programmes.

**Figure 4: Number of post-16 providers and
independent specialist colleges, 2013-2014**

Further education 13
Work-based learning 22
Adult community learning 15
Independent specialist colleges 6

**Figure 5: Number of inspections / annual
monitoring visits for post-16 providers and
independent specialist colleges, 2013-2014 (a)**

Further education 13
Work-based learning 3
Adult community learning 2
Independent specialist colleges 2

(a) These were annual monitoring visits
in the further education sector and
inspections in all other sectors.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

How much progress has been made over five years?

Over the last five years, Estyn inspections have identified many strengths and shortcomings in the education system. There has been a great deal of effort by teachers, leaders and managers to address those shortcomings and to build on the strengths. In this foreword I want to reflect on some of the progress that has and is being made in key aspects of provision and to identify where more progress is required.

How well do schools and settings support the wellbeing of children and young people?

Parents do not send their children to school just to get good examination results. They also want their children to develop into well-rounded and confident young citizens who have a strong sense of right and wrong, who can get along with other people and who know how to live a healthy life.

The wellbeing of pupils is often good in settings, primary, special and secondary schools. Most pupils behave well, focus on their work and co-operate with teachers, support staff and other pupils. In a few schools, particularly in a few secondary schools where the quality of leadership and the ethos are poor, the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils has a detrimental effect on the progress of other pupils in the same classes. Generally, however, schools and settings provide sound support for children and young people, and those who face emotional, behavioural or social difficulties benefit from nurture groups, from personal and social education and counselling.

Teachers in the majority of primary schools use a range of approaches to engage pupils' interest in ethical and social issues. A few schools have established programmes to develop pupils' understanding of philosophical concepts and to explore how those concepts affect their thinking and the choices they make. Other schools use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to help pupils to explore moral and ethical issues and to develop classroom rules and school charters. In many schools, the school council has a positive effect on influencing decisions that have an impact on the life and work of the children.

In inspections, we regularly report on pupils' absence from school and bullying. As a result of concerted action by schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government, attendance rates have improved significantly. In section 1 of this year's annual report, I return to the issues of attendance and bullying and also discuss other aspects of wellbeing with particular reference to children who are at risk of underachievement.

How well do schools promote healthy eating and drinking?

Research by Public Health Wales indicates that a quarter of four and five-year-olds are overweight, one in ten is obese, and just over a third of all children under 16 years of age are overweight or obese. This increases to a half of people in the 16-44 age group.

Estyn's learner and parent survey responses show that nearly all pupils in primary schools and their parents feel that their schools teach pupils well about how to keep healthy. In secondary schools, most parents feel that their schools teach pupils well about how to keep healthy, but only 80% of pupils agree that their school makes good provision in this respect.

Overall, most pupils in both primary and secondary phases develop an understanding of the importance of making healthy choices in terms of diet and physical activity. As a result, pupils often do make healthy choices in terms of what they eat and drink in school. This is because teachers focus on healthy eating in relevant lessons and because the food choices in the school canteen nudge them in the right direction.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Foreword

In some primary schools, pupils take part in running a school fruit and tuck shop during break times. Other useful initiatives to promote healthy eating include having 'fruit-eating' days like 'Fruity Friday' and cookery clubs where children make nutritious and tasty food. In some schools, children produce healthy eating plans, which are signed off by parents, or they design labels for the food in the school canteen, showing the relevant sugar and fat values. Most pupils respond enthusiastically to these initiatives.

A few secondary schools have created an attractive cafeteria-style environment to provide a stylish and popular place to have lunch. However, there is a trend for more pupils to leave secondary school sites at lunchtimes to access less healthy food options. There are also instances in secondary schools of pupils bringing less healthy food and drink into school – items such as crisps and fizzy drinks – and selling them to other pupils.

How well is the Foundation Phase supporting early development?

The Welsh Government introduced the Foundation Phase in September 2008. Many practitioners have worked consistently since then to adapt their teaching, planning and assessing practices and to create new learning environments, particularly in outdoor areas, to support children's early development in new ways.

We know that the quality of their learning experiences is very important for pupils' early development, particularly for the development of speech and language, and for children's understanding of basic number facts and concepts. Good early years providers offer a wide range of stimulating and interesting experiences for children. They enrich the language environment by talking to children in full sentences and in a structured way. Probing questions encourage learners to think and to provide answers in their own words. Where provision is good, children develop an interest in books and written language. They explore the outdoors and engage in rich social play with other children. They also learn to persevere with an activity and to concentrate on a problem.

Where these good features of early years provision are in place – as they are in many non-maintained settings, maintained nursery schools and primary schools – they can help children to make rapid progress. They can also be significant in mitigating the impact of social and economic disadvantage on early learning.

In many schools, these good features continue throughout the Foundation Phase and this has led to progress in standards, albeit sometimes from a low starting point. Overall, there have been more improvements in literacy, particularly in writing, than in numeracy. It is nevertheless a concern that a few schools have returned to using a more formal teaching style with both younger and older children in the 3-7 age range. In part, this reflects practitioners' perceptions of the age-related demands of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and national tests in reading and numeracy. Increasingly, a few schools resort to the inappropriate use of formal, published schemes, some aimed at teaching phonics in a way that is beyond the capacity of young children, whose ability to make fine distinctions between sounds or to produce the sounds themselves is limited. It is not so much that the published schemes themselves are at fault. Rather it is their inappropriate use at the wrong stage of child development that causes the difficulty. Taken together, these trends have led to a loss of focus and confidence among a few early years providers.

What progress is being made in literacy and numeracy?

A key concern in my annual report on education and training in 2009-2010 was that 'too many pupils and adults in Wales still have a weak grasp of the basics'. At that time, we reported that too many pupils were entering secondary schools with reading ages below their chronological ages and that pupils' writing skills were weak. It was clear too that few more able learners were reaching the higher levels of literacy and too many adults had low levels of basic literacy.

Inspection evidence indicated that cross-curricular planning for literacy and numeracy was weak. Few teachers planned in detail how to develop and reinforce these skills across the curriculum.

Over the last five years, the overall picture has been one of general improvement in provision for literacy and numeracy, although this is happening at a relatively modest pace.

How useful is the Literacy and Numeracy Framework?

In 2013, the Welsh Government introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), which schools have broadly welcomed. **Leaders and managers in schools say that the LNF has raised expectations for staff of what pupils can, and should, achieve as they move through school.** Many primary and nearly all secondary schools now have literacy and numeracy co-ordinators with a responsibility to lead the development of these areas and support other staff. This is a significant improvement on the position before the LNF was introduced.

Since the introduction of the LNF we have witnessed more appropriate plans for improving pupils' literacy across the curriculum. The picture is not as positive for numeracy where only about half of primary and secondary schools have developed robust plans for delivering numeracy across the curriculum. However, more attention is certainly being given to both literacy and numeracy in whole-school planning and in the professional development of teachers.

Since the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, the majority of **primary and secondary schools** have:

- audited their provision and mapped it against the LNF to identify gaps in provision
- adapted their schemes of work to align them with the LNF
- identified resources for staff and pupils to use in lessons that reflect the LNF

What progress is being made in literacy?

Over the years, there have been long-standing concerns about pupils' early reading, specifically their understanding of the relationships between sounds and letters. Over recent years, primary schools have improved the progressive and systematic development of pupils' phonic knowledge and skills. Also, there is now far greater awareness too of the features of different types of writing and their purposes in primary and secondary schools than five years ago.

More recently, concerns have emerged about how to achieve the most effective balance between the teaching of language skills and the study of literature in English and Welsh lessons. In many schools, teachers use literature well to develop pupils' love of reading and their appreciation of good writing. However, in some primary and secondary schools, the study of literature has displaced the teaching of language skills too much. In these schools, **opportunities are still too few to develop higher-order skills, such as the skills of synthesis, inference, deduction and prediction in reading non-fiction texts.** Teachers also do not do enough to encourage pupils to develop the skills of verbal reasoning and argument.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Foreword

What progress is being made in numeracy?

In a minority of schools, although the focus on numeracy has increased, too many staff do not see it as a main priority. In a few primary schools, the development of pupils' literacy skills continues to take priority. **Plans to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are usually weaker than those to develop literacy in most schools.** In about half of primary and secondary schools, pupils develop their numeracy skills to a good level and apply these skills reasonably well in the range of subjects where numeracy has particular relevance, in science or technology or geography for instance. However, in around half of schools, pupils struggle to use basic number techniques fluently or to create and interpret graphs and charts appropriately across the curriculum. Often this is because of weaknesses in the mathematical reasoning and numerical skills of teaching staff both in mathematics and in the other relevant subjects. Unless teachers in these other subjects are themselves fully numerate, they will not routinely pick up numerical errors in pupils' work or be fully aware of the opportunities to take pupils' learning in numeracy further.

Is there less take-up of mathematics and science qualifications in schools?

We have noted concern in several previous annual reports about the reductions in students' take-up of science, technology, engineering and mathematics at 16 and beyond. **Over the last few years, the take-up of biology, chemistry and physics as separate sciences at GCSE has improved slightly but the take-up of science and mathematics-related subjects at A level has been static over recent years.**

A new concern has emerged for pupils in the 14-16 age range. **The proportion of pupils taking level 2 applied science courses has risen greatly at the expense of GCSE dual-award courses in science.** Pupils studying applied science at level 2 tend not to make progress in scientific knowledge and understanding, literacy or numeracy at the same rate as those following GCSE courses, and their options for progression at the next level – level 3 – are more limited as a result.

Are schools improving the assessment of pupils' work?

Many annual reports over recent years have noted weaknesses in assessment in schools. **Many inspection reports continue to state that teacher assessments in schools are not always robust or reliable enough. When looking at pupils' books during inspections, inspectors often find a mismatch between the National Curriculum levels awarded by staff and the quality of the pupils' work.** Recommendations in inspection reports often draw attention to the need to improve the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment, and the need to explain clearly to pupils how to improve their work.

Back in 2007-2008, the annual report said that 'teacher assessments at key stage 1 and key stage 2 are not consistent enough across Wales'. This remains the case. Many schools take part in standardisation and moderation meetings as part of end-of-key-stage teacher assessments alongside staff from other schools, but these activities do not currently guarantee a national standard of assessment that is robust, reliable and accurate. Many schools are now using electronic tracking systems to check on the progress of pupils. These systems are often useful tools for teachers and leaders in schools, but they are only as accurate as the information that goes into them.

Where end-of-key-stage teacher assessment is not robust, this can mislead pupils and undermine the credibility of schools' self-evaluation. If schools do not have robust enough information on the performance of pupils, they cannot judge what is working well and what is not. Staff will not know whether specific changes they have made to teaching and learning have been effective or not. Where assessment is weak, it means that parents and governors receive skewed messages about the progress of learners. Weak end-of-key stage teacher assessment also has the potential to undermine accountability more generally, especially when that assessment forms a critical part of the basis for judging teacher performance and for judging which schools are doing well and which are not.

Building capacity: is the quality of teaching improving?

There has been a strong focus on improving the skills and capacity of staff to take on board several new initiatives recently, for instance to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to support the introduction of new qualifications.

The training of staff to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills has improved since the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In 2012-2013, the Welsh Government expected schools to focus on literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on attainment during their in-service training days. Since then, almost all schools have focused most of their staff development days on reviewing the planning and delivery of literacy, and to a lesser extent numeracy. Recently, there has also been an increase in training aimed at reducing the impact of poverty on attainment.

In-service training days are generally designed to reflect the priorities identified in schools' self-evaluation reports, improvement plans and performance management arrangements. More support staff are now involved in training alongside teachers than there were five years ago, but this involvement remains weak in at least half of primary and secondary schools. Over the last five years, literacy has received the most attention, but improving the numerical skills of staff has continued to be a challenge. It is evident from the lessons we observe and the pupils' books that we scrutinise that too many teachers lack the appropriate mathematical knowledge to exploit opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

The National Support Programme (NSP) has offered variable levels of support to staff in subjects across the curriculum to help them to evaluate pupils' skills in either literacy or numeracy but, **at this stage of the NSP, teachers are still not totally clear about the standards expected or how best to develop pupils' knowledge and skills.**

Local authorities – and, increasingly, consortia – have often made a good contribution to schools' in-service training over the past five years but none of them, or schools themselves, has devoted much time to evaluating the impact of in-service training. The best models for professional development in schools, as in other providers, involve practitioners in their design and delivery and are customised to specific needs. Some consortia build on the centres of excellence that already exist in schools.

In September 2012, the Welsh Government provided the opportunity for newly-qualified teachers to undertake a Masters in Educational Practice (MEP) course to run alongside their induction and early professional development programme. The areas of study within the MEP programme were carefully chosen to reflect priorities established by headteachers and identified by Estyn from inspection findings. The MEP programme is now to be adapted to make it available to teachers more generally as part of the 'New Deal' for practitioners.

Building capacity: is school-to-school support making a difference?

The Welsh Government established the Lead and Emerging Practitioner Schools project in November 2013. This enables high-performing primary and secondary schools to work with schools that require improvement. Early findings from the schools involved are encouraging.

The Schools Challenge Cymru programme was announced by the Welsh Government early in 2014. The 40 'Pathways to Success' schools receive additional resources and expertise to undertake a programme of improvement designed to be swift and sustainable. Each school is allocated an adviser with a proven track record of school improvement.

School-to-school support is a powerful tool for sharing effective practice and for building the capacity of leaders and managers to improve schools. Self-evaluation procedures and processes have often improved as a result. In the most effective cases, schools have focused sharply on the outcomes that stem from the findings of self-evaluation and on the impact of any changes introduced. Inevitably perhaps, some very good schools are approached too often to provide support and this can become burdensome for them.

The most benefits occur when the schools in partnership are not too far apart in the stages of their own improvement. Too great a difference between partner-schools can limit the extent to which collaboration will succeed. And schools work best together, not surprisingly, when commitment to the model of school-to-school support is strong. The quality of leadership and the ability to generate a strong commitment to improvement among staff at all levels remain key to success. In a minority of low-performing partner schools, denial at a senior level of the shortcomings in the school constrains both commitment and progress.

Building capacity: is the quality of leadership improving?

Where a school requires special measures or is in need of significant improvement, weak leadership is nearly always a cause for concern. This has also been the case in post-16 provision. Sometimes, when a school has been placed in a category causing concern there is a change of leadership, or, more often, there is intervention – from consortia or local authorities and from Estyn's follow-up activity – to support leaders to develop leadership skills. The relative success of this intervention suggests that it is not so much an issue of leadership capability, but a failure within the system to identify concerns about leadership in schools at an early enough stage to offer support and development for leaders to make sure that their schools do not fail.

Inspection findings have shown, time and again over the past five years, that there is a link between the quality of leadership and the quality of outcomes for learners. However, membership of the pool of leaders at top levels is still determined too much by individual and personal ambition and too little, at present, by any national system for ensuring that the aspiring and potential leaders and managers of the future develop the skills that the system requires.

In our inspections, we are seeing more examples of leadership roles being shared out across all levels in schools and other organisations than was the case five years ago. This is a positive feature because the characteristics of effective leadership are not exclusively the province of headteachers or principals. Everyone involved in delivering and facilitating education and training in Wales should have opportunities to exercise leadership. The distribution of leadership roles helps to improve leadership skills in more practitioners.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Foreword

Another driver for improvement has been the involvement of school and post-16 managers in Estyn inspections as peer inspectors. The number of peer inspectors increases each year and we currently have one or more peer inspectors in 80% of secondary schools as well as in an increasing number of primary and special schools and post-16 providers. Many peer inspectors tell us that direct participation in Estyn inspections is among the best training experiences they have received.

Yet another – and potentially very important – driver will be the National Leadership Development Board, which has been established to advise on a coherent leadership pathway for teachers and managers at key stages of their careers.

Over recent years, in particular, leaders have needed to develop new skills to respond to the increasing challenges they have faced. Leaders have required more forensic skills of self-evaluation and planning, together with broader abilities to do with forging an inclusive vision for the future and having the energy and conviction to realise that vision. Leaders have been expected to pay more consistent attention to the core business of teaching and learning. They have needed to build partnerships within schools and colleges, with other schools and post-16 providers and with agencies like the youth and children's services.

Increasingly, leaders recognise that there is now a greater requirement to work collaboratively and to develop new approaches to partnership working. The best leaders have been able to negotiate better provision for their learners by federating schools, by setting up all-age schools, by merging further education institutions or by expanding options in 14-19 networks. This has required better skills of co-operation and communication across networks of many kinds.

The ability of leaders to think beyond their own institution is a key feature of what continues to be required to improve education and training in Wales. Over the last five years, there have been encouraging signs that leaders and managers are beginning to take a broader view of their roles and responsibilities. However, despite the good progress in these areas of leadership, there is still too much isolationism in some providers, schools and local authorities. For example, while we know that Learning Pathways 14-19 has led to wider subject choices and more learning support at key stage 4, we also know that some schools continue to display a bias towards retaining pupils in their own sixth forms, and pupils are not always given accurate or impartial information when choosing their options at 14 or 16. While transitions for learners between settings and primary schools, primary and secondary schools, and secondary schools and post-16 providers have been a focus of many reviews, reports and policy initiatives, there are still obstacles to sharing information about children and young people and very few examples of systematic joint planning between providers across the transition points.

In order to mitigate further the effects of poverty on pupils' achievements, leaders will need to ensure that all relevant agencies are working together efficiently, including the youth, health and social services, so that everyone has a common understanding of need and a heartfelt commitment to remedy for the benefit of pupils from relatively poor backgrounds. Section 1 of this year's Annual Report has a focus on the challenges that schools and other providers face in overcoming the impact of poverty and disadvantage on pupils' progress.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Foreword

A final word

Many challenges continue to exist, particularly in raising standards in literacy and numeracy, and tackling the impact of relative poverty on pupils' achievements. However, **much good work is underway.** The curriculum and assessment arrangements in schools are under review as is the system for the initial and in-service training of teachers. Pathways to develop the capacity of leaders and potential leaders within the system are under consideration. Schools are working together more systematically to support each other to improve. There are plans to bring local authorities together and to strengthen regional education consortia to support improvement.

However, there remains an imbalance between investment in mechanisms that hold schools and other providers to account and investment in strategies to build capacity in the workforce, including leadership capacity. We need more emphasis on building capacity as we move into a future that offers a new vision for what will be delivered in the curriculum and what will consequently change the experience of both learning and teaching.

Overall, although rates of improvement may vary across sectors of education, inspection evidence shows that most schools and post-16 providers are good places for children and young people to be. In most schools and post-16 providers, children and young people make progress and they benefit from a respectful ethos. In all sectors, there are teachers who can prepare lessons that engage learners and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. There are a great many conscientious and committed teachers, leaders and managers in our schools and providers across Wales. Sometimes there is a misapplication of energy. Sometimes, unfortunately, there is complacency or weak leadership or, less often, incompetence.

Over the past 30 years of my life as an inspector there has always been a strong commitment to do the best for children and young people. But Wales continues to need to build the capacity and capability of its education workforce actually to achieve the very best for its children and young people. What we do have is a strong foundation upon which to build for the future.

About HMCI's Annual Report

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. We are independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales. The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education in Wales.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

About HMCI's Annual Report

Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities

- primary schools

- secondary schools

- special schools

- pupil referral units

- independent schools

- further education

- independent specialist colleges

- adult community learning

- local authority education services for children and young people

- teacher education and training

- Welsh for adults

- work-based learning

- learning in the Justice sector

Our inspection work is aimed at raising standards and quality in education and training across Wales.

In a number of sectors, we work with other regulators and inspectorates to inspect provision. We work in partnership with Ofsted to inspect work-based learning provision that operates both in Wales and England. Our inspectors liaise with CSSIW to inspect residential schools and local authority secure children's homes. We also take part in inspections, led by HMI Probation, of youth offending teams (YOTs) in Wales and we join HMI Prisons and Ofsted to inspect institutions for young offenders in England that have significant numbers of Welsh young people. In addition, we include inspectors from the Wales Audit Office when we inspect local authority education services.

We also provide advice on specific matters to the Welsh Government in response to an annual remit from the Minister for Education. Our advice provides evidence of the effect of the Welsh Government's strategies, policies and initiatives on the education and training of learners.

We make public good practice based on inspection evidence. We have a unique and independent view of standards and quality across all aspects of education and training in Wales, and this contributes to the policies for education and training introduced across Wales.

If you want to find out more about what we do and how we work, please follow this link: www.estyn.gov.uk

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

About HMCI's Annual Report

The inspection cycle covered in this report

When we inspect education and training in Wales, we use our Common Inspection Framework for education and training in Wales. This framework covers three key questions and ten quality indicators and they are organised as follows:

How good are outcomes?

1.1 Standards
1.2 Wellbeing

How good is provision?

2.1 Learning experiences
2.2 Teaching
2.3 Care, support and guidance
2.4 Learning environment

How good are leadership and management?

3.1 Leadership
3.2 Improving quality
3.3 Partnership working
3.4 Resource management

We also make two overall judgements about current performance and prospects for improvement.

We use the following four-point scale to show our inspection judgements.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

In inspections of local authority education services for children and young people, we report on provision under four headings:

2.1 Support for school improvement
2.2 Support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion
2.3 Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing
2.4 Access and school places

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

About HMCI's Annual Report

Follow-up

During an inspection, we consider whether the provider needs any follow-up activity.

This can range from identifying excellent practice to recommending special measures. The table below illustrates the different types of follow-up and to which sectors they apply.

	Maintained Schools	Pupil referral units (PRUs)	Local authorities	Non-maintained settings	Post-16	Initial teacher training
Excellent practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local authority monitoring	✓			✓		
Estyn monitoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focused improvement				✓		
Significant improvement	✓	✓	✓			
Special measures	✓	✓	✓			
Re-inspection					✓	✓

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

About HMCI's Annual Report

Category	Explanation
Excellent practice	If a provider gains any excellent judgements and is, therefore, identified as having sector-leading practice in one or more areas they will be invited to write a case study to share with other providers. The case study may be published on the Estyn website.
Local authority monitoring	Local authorities will work with the provider to address the recommendations highlighted in the report. Local authority officers will discuss progress with Estyn's local authority link inspector. About a year after the publication of the inspection report, the local authority will write a report for Estyn, explaining how the provider has progressed.
Estyn monitoring	Normally, this level of activity will be required when at least one of the overall judgements for a provider is adequate, but it is not causing concern to the extent of requiring significant improvement or special measures. If a monitoring visit is required, a small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the provider to judge progress around a year to 18 months after the publication of the report.
Focused improvement	If a non-maintained setting is identified as requiring focused improvement, Estyn will inform the Welsh Government of its concerns. The setting's management committee / proprietor must send their action plans to Estyn for approval. An Estyn inspector will visit the setting every term for up to three terms following the publication of the inspection report. If the setting does not make enough progress, Estyn will contact the local authority to suggest that funding is withdrawn from the setting as it is failing to provide an acceptable standard education.
In need of significant improvement	Estyn will inform the Welsh Government that the provider has been placed in a statutory category. The provider must send its action plan to Estyn for approval. A small team of Estyn inspectors will usually visit the provider to judge progress around a year to 18 months after the publication of the inspection report. If progress is insufficient, the team will consider whether the provider requires special measures.
Special measures	If a provider is identified as requiring special measures, Estyn will inform the Welsh Government that it has been placed in a statutory category. The provider must send its action plan to Estyn for approval. A small team of Estyn inspectors will usually visit the provider every term following the publication of the inspection report. Inspectors will focus on the progress the provider has made towards addressing the recommendations highlighted in the report. Estyn will continue to carry out monitoring visits until the Chief Inspector decides that the provider has improved enough to remove it from special measures.
Estyn monitoring: post-16	If a post-16 or initial teacher training provider is identified as needing Estyn team monitoring, a small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the provider to judge progress around a year later. If inspectors judge that insufficient progress has been made, this may result in a full re-inspection. Following Estyn monitoring, a letter will be published on the Estyn website, reporting on the findings of the monitoring visit.
Re-inspection	If a post-16 or initial teacher training provider is identified as needing a full re-inspection, the inspectorate will write a letter to the provider, copied to DfES, and, in the case of initial teacher training, to the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) identifying the areas that require improvement, and will carry out a full re-inspection of the provider within a year to 18 months. After the re-inspection, Estyn will publish a full report evaluating the progress made by the provider. If the team judges that insufficient progress has been made at the end of a re-inspection, this will be reported to DfES, and to HEFCW in the case of initial teacher training, as part of their contract management procedures.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

About HMCI's Annual Report

Explanation of words and phrases used to describe our evaluations

The words and phrases used in the left hand column below are those that we use to describe our evaluations. The phrases in the right hand column are the more precise explanations.

nearly all	with very few exceptions
most	90% or more
many	70% or more
a majority	over 60%
half or around a half	close to 50%
a minority	below 40%
few	below 20%
very few	less than 10%

Notes about the data used in this report

1. The data we show in charts or discuss within the text of report derives from Estyn's database of inspection grades. Data from other sources is referenced in the report, and is mainly derived from the Knowledge and Analytical Services department of the Welsh Government.

2. Figures in charts are rounded to the nearest whole percentage. Totals may therefore not be equal to 100%.

Section 1:
Learners at risk of underachieving

The focus in this section is on those groups of learners who are at risk of underachieving and on the ways in which schools and other providers support them to achieve. In the first part of the section, the narrative will follow the chronology of the education sectors, starting with the early years and ending with post-16 sectors. A comparison will be drawn between special schools, which offer exceptionally good provision to one group of learners with special needs, and pupil referral units, which offer provision of very mixed quality to a different group of learners at risk.

The second part of the section has a focus on the challenges associated with specific groups of learners at risk of underachievement, namely learners eligible for free school meals, those with special educational needs, looked-after children, learners with English as an additional language, and more able and talented learners. Finally, a commentary on wellbeing has a focus on the importance of strategies to support attendance, to foster good behaviour and to address bullying.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

The narrative in this section will not rehearse the full range of evidence associated with the underachievement of the groups identified above because this evidence is already well understood. Instead, this section will seek to identify the characteristics of those schools and other providers that succeed in overcoming the obstacles facing those children and young people who are at risk. Case studies will exemplify how and where schools and other providers succeed.

The section draws on evidence from HMI reports on individual providers as well as from the evidence base for thematic survey reports that Estyn has published. Much of the data used throughout this section is sourced from the Welsh Government. Other sources are referenced in footnotes in this section.

Learners at risk of underachieving in schools and settings

Successful schools have many positive features that protect disadvantaged learners from underachievement and help them to realise their potential. We have conducted a number of surveys over recent years of how well schools help learners eligible for free school meals to achieve well.[1]

Our findings show that being educated in a good school or provider makes a difference to learners at risk of underachieving. Learners who are at risk do well if they are taught well, if they enjoy relevant and interesting learning experiences and appropriate support, and if their school is led by people who reflect and act on what works. These learners also benefit if their school builds the capacity of parents and families to support learning and they benefit if their schools work in multi-agency partnerships where there is collective responsibility for helping learners to maximise what they can achieve, irrespective of the obstacles.

While it is true that many learners at risk do succeed in our schools, nevertheless, the performance of some groups of learners at risk still lags too far behind the performance of others. Learners who are eligible for free school meals continue to do significantly worse than other learners. They take fewer GCSEs in schools, and too many are locked into low-level courses in further education institutions and work-based learning providers. Other groups of learners also face significant challenges in their learning, for example those who have special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and those who are looked after by the local authority.

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[1] 'Working together to tackle the impact of poverty on educational achievement (Estyn, 2013)
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/296942.1/working-together-to-tackle-the-impact-of-poverty-on-educational-achievement-december-2013/?navmap=30,163,
'Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools' (Estyn, 2012)
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/259977.9/effective-practice-in-tackling-poverty-and-disadvantage-in-schools-november-2012/?navmap=30,163,

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Some groups of learners have multiple risk factors

In a minority of schools, staff have developed a 'matrix' of the risks and challenges faced by learners who fall into two or more risk categories and who therefore have to contend with multiple factors that increase their vulnerability.

Below is a diagram that illustrates the numbers and proportions of learners in the groups at risk, including those belonging to more than one group that is at risk of underachieving.

Figure 1.1:
Number of learners in schools in Wales, by FSM eligibility, SEN status and EAL status [2]

Pupils in none of the three groups: eligible for free school meals, with special educational needs, or with English as an additional language

**214,500
59.6%**

Special educational needs

Eligible for free school meals

36,400
10.1%

27,000
7.5%

59,100
16.4%

3,100
0.9%

1,500
0.4%

3,800
1.1%

English as an additional language

14,200
3.9%
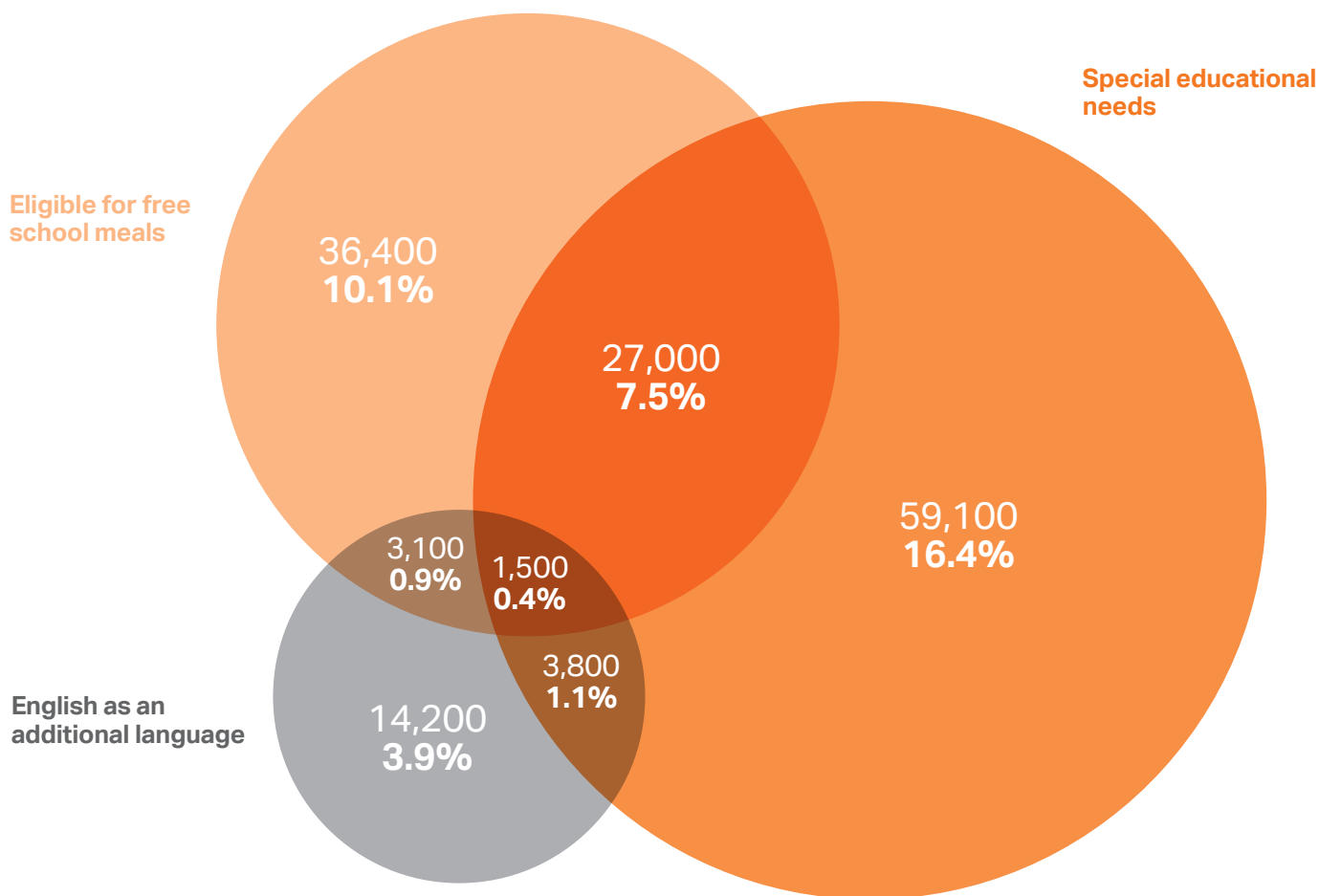
Includes learners aged 5-15 in primary, secondary, maintained special, and all-age schools

[2] Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), Welsh Government, 2014

Learners who are both eligible for free school meals and have special educational needs (SEN) are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. The chart below shows not only that learners from relatively poor backgrounds achieve less well than their peers at every key stage of education, but that they perform even more poorly if they also belong to a category of SEN. Learners in categories of special educational needs are identified on a sliding scale of needing either school action, school action plus or a statement of special educational needs, which attracts the greatest level of support.

Figure 1.2:
Achievement in selected indicators, by FSM eligibility and SEN status, 2013

- SEN / FSM
- SEN / non-FSM
- non-SEN / FSM
- non-SEN / non-FSM

Foundation Phase indicator at age 7

| 42% | 55% | 89% | 95% |

Core subject indicator at age 11

| 42% | 58% | 93% | 98% |

Core subject indicator at age 14

| 24% | 46% | 75% | 92% |

Level 2 inclusive threshold at age 16

| 7% | 21% | 37% | 67% |
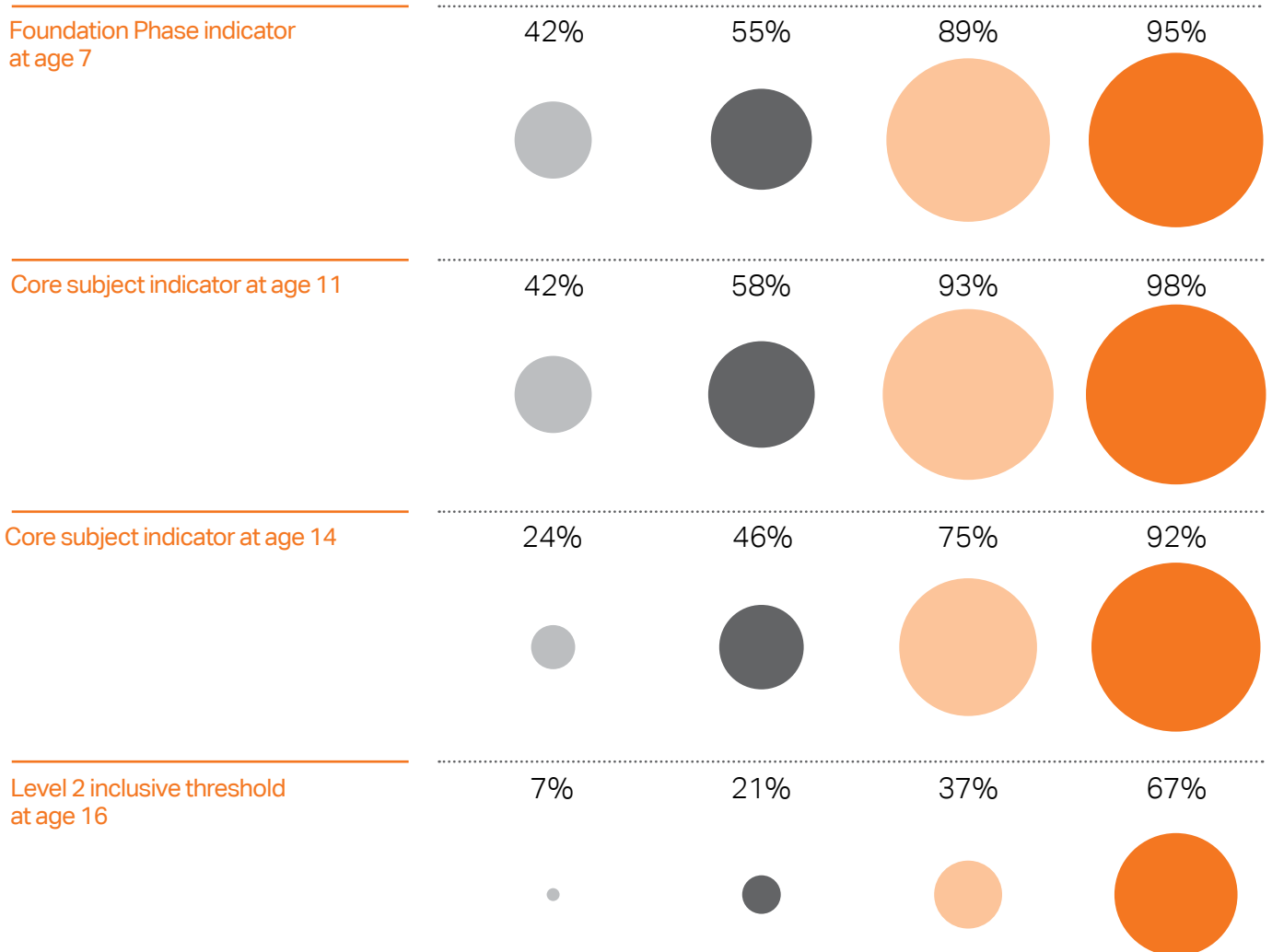
In the rest of this part of Section 1, we look more closely at what schools and other providers can do to mitigate the risks of underachievement.

What can early years settings do to support children who are at risk of underachieving?

Having supportive pre-school experiences is enormously beneficial for all children, but they are especially valuable for children at risk of underachieving. Early years practitioners are in a position to identify learners who may have difficulties as soon as they enter education. They can also liaise with services and agencies that provide specialist support. This means that they can support learners at an early stage and help to ameliorate the effects of disadvantage. Early interventions that are well targeted can make a big difference.

Early years providers can make up for some of the deficits faced by some learners. Non-school education settings and nursery and primary schools provide high levels of care, which may be lacking at home. Early years provision offers children opportunities to socialise with other children in a structured environment where there are boundaries for play. Children learn to co-operate and share. Early years settings can also help children to manage their emotions so that they are ready to learn.

Perhaps the biggest impact of early years education is on children's speech and language. A child from a more advantaged home often has a larger vocabulary at the age of three compared with most children from deprived backgrounds. Good early years providers begin to make up this shortfall. Speech problems can be identified and appropriate support provided. Children are encouraged to communicate and talk in full sentences. They are spoken to, and they respond.

Early years providers give children opportunities that they may not have at home to listen to stories and handle books. Children begin to understand that words have meaning and that they can find enjoyment in books. They learn a range of songs and rhymes, often involving numbers or the days of the week, and these activities also support them in developing early mathematical skills. Early years settings can provide a range of stimulating and interesting experiences and encourage children to find things out for themselves and develop thinking skills.

Staff identify individual children's needs

Staff at **St Winefride's Playgroup, Flintshire,** take the time to get to know their children individually in order to identify their needs. By observing the children, practitioners are able to identify the progress they have made and plan the next steps they need to take in their learning. This had led to an increase in the children's desire to learn and has boosted their self-esteem.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

What can parents and families do to support children who are at risk of underachieving?

When parents work with providers, standards improve.

In settings and schools that succeed in mitigating the impact of poverty, we find that there are often strong links with parents. Liaison with parents starts before children enter education, for example through home visits, the development of early assessment profiles, liaison with health visitors, and in playgroups.

Most early years providers recognise the value of building the capacity of parents to help their child to learn at home so that the home environment can consolidate and enhance the learning at the provider. The need to build the learning capacity of parents and families is often most acute in areas of social and economic deprivation, where many parents have had poor experiences of education in the past.

Good primary schools also develop links with parents through family outreach and support programmes, Flying Start, multi-agency working, and liaison with community-building initiatives, such as Communities First. They often have family liaison officers who help parents to develop strategies at home to help their children learn effectively. These schools establish arrangements for parents to come into school and join in the activities, for example in 'Bring a Parent' afternoons, where parents work alongside their children on curriculum challenges. A few schools set up after-school programmes for families and involve them in play and communication activities. A few set up meetings between parents and specialists such as speech and language therapists or paediatric consultants on the school site. Other schools offer school-based adult learning programmes in literacy, numeracy, ICT or parenting skills.

When the dialogue between parents, settings and schools is productive, parents' views of providers become more positive and they engage more actively with their child's education. Parents get a better understanding of what practitioners are trying to do and they learn how to support their children's learning at home. Staff, too, gain a better awareness of the needs of the children and their home circumstances. Parental attitudes towards the importance of attendance frequently change and, as a result, attendance rates improve.

Parents take an active role

Staff at **Ysgol y Foryd** involve parents in their children's learning. They have set up a parents' forum and they encourage parents to take an active role in school improvement, using 'parent reps' to engage all parents. The school runs 'family courses', where parent/child groups learn together and the family liaison officer works with parents to improve attendance and reduce potential barriers to learning. Staff say that the more active role taken by parents has helped to raise standards at the school despite a rise in deprivation levels. Nearly all the children who have attended courses with parents develop their self-esteem, they enjoy school more and are growing in confidence.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Families learn together

Miskin Primary School, Rhondda Cynon Taf, has adopted an 'open door' policy in order to involve parents in the learning of their children. Weekly family learning sessions bring children and parents together. Working with families has established a network of support for learners and parents. Parents now have more opportunities to work with their children in an informal and supportive manner and this has helped to build a closer community with the school at its heart.

For more information about this, please click on the <u>case study</u>

In families and ethnic groups where education is valued highly, learners often do well. For example, within Chinese and Indian families in Wales, education often has a high status. The number of Chinese and Indian learners in schools in Wales is relatively small, but a far higher percentage of learners from these backgrounds attain at C grade or above in the core subjects at GCSE than other ethnic groups. At GCSE, about 78% of Chinese learners achieve the level 2 inclusive threshold compared with the Wales average of 52%.[3]

[3] The achievement of pupils by ethnicity is based on a three year average for 2011-2013.

What can primary schools do to support learners who are at risk of underachievement?

Leaders in primary schools that support learners at risk promote an ethos of care and respect for all learners, and an expectation that everyone in the school, including staff, will do their best. The best leaders foster a sense of pride in the school and involve all stakeholders in developing its vision and values. They understand that teamwork is important if the school is to develop in a way that is cohesive and consistent in helping all learners to achieve. Responsibilities are distributed to make sure that there is a relentless and consistent focus on the school's priorities, and on outcomes for learners. There are school systems to ensure that staff responsible for leading on priorities have structured opportunities to review their actions regularly, making sure that all learners benefit from whole-school strategies. There is a clarity about how school strategies, such as a focus on literacy, or developing more able learners, are reflected in learners' individual targets.

In the best primary schools, teachers work well in teams to plan together and to make the most of each other's strengths. They discuss the changing needs of learners, and analyse the strengths and weaknesses in their approaches. They review their teaching strategies and the content of the curriculum regularly and make changes to ensure that they meet the needs of all learners. There are school systems for teachers and support staff to collect and share information about individual learners to ensure that they are supported in the best possible way. Nurture groups are set up to respond to learners' needs so that they can develop their social and behavioural skills in order to make progress in their work. School leaders make sure that that there are opportunities for staff to develop their skills in supporting all learners.

Staff develop skills and leadership potential

Skills, aspirations and positive values are just as important for staff as they are for learners at **Herbert Thompson Primary School**, Cardiff. Staff are encouraged to develop their skills, and the school offers them training opportunities to enhance their leadership potential.

For more information about this, please click on the underlined case study

In the best schools, there is careful tracking of learners' progress from entry through to the time they leave. When learners begin to fall behind or struggle to develop their skills in one area of their learning, intervention programmes are put in place to address these deficits so that learners can catch up quickly with their peers. Good schools monitor learners' progress on intervention programmes regularly and check their progress against the specific targets that are agreed with each learner.

Staff provide early, targeted intervention

High Cross Primary School in Newport uses early intervention to address the growing diversity of needs presented by the children. The school has developed a range of responses and trained staff in order to provide specialist, targeted interventions tailored to the needs of the learners.

For more information about this, please click on the underlined case study

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

What can secondary schools do to support learners who are at risk of underachievement?

In the best secondary schools, leaders understand that learners need to feel confident and supported if they are to achieve their potential. Establishing a clear sense of direction and an ethos of high expectations and inclusivity are important in creating a positive learning environment. This is particularly important in schools where learners have low self-esteem and negative attitudes to learning.

Learners' respect for themselves and others develops best when what they learn in the classroom reflects values that permeate all aspects of school life. Good schools recognise that a positive ethos that is supported by everyone helps learners to feel valued and respected.

In effective schools, the leadership structures are designed to ensure that both support for learners' wellbeing and their academic achievement are interdependent. The wellbeing of learners is a concern just as much for academic subject teachers as it is for pastoral support staff.

The way that learners experience the curriculum in secondary schools is very different from that in primary schools. At transition from primary to secondary schools, learners find themselves leaving the familiarity of having the same class teacher and classmates for at least a year to face a world where the curriculum experience is organised into discrete subject lessons delivered by a stream of teachers. This transition is a rite of passage that more confident and able learners can usually take in their stride. However, unless the quality of information from the primary school on transition and the quality of support in the secondary school are strong, the needs of individual learners at risk may not be recognised and the learning experience may leave some learners disengaged.

Some secondary schools design a more coherent and integrated curriculum for 11-year-olds, whereby learners spend more time with fewer teachers, who can therefore get to know them better. Teachers engage learners in a curriculum whose delivery is appropriately differentiated and they use robust tracking systems.

Good schools routinely identify and address potential underperformance early, and this is especially important in areas of relatively high social deprivation. The best schools use specific intervention procedures that are customised to meet the distinctive needs of particular individuals and groups.

Effective schools have systems to ensure that the targets set for learners are realistic but ambitious. Staff monitor learners' progress towards their targets regularly, and they track learners' completion of homework, their effort and their behaviour carefully. Teachers identify learners' levels of support need based on their maturity, the evidence of support at home and their motivation. Teachers understand the aspects of courses with which learners are struggling, and they respond by offering tailored support in class, homework tasks and revision clubs. Where learners have other learning needs, teachers and support assistants have the expertise to identify these and to signpost learners towards the support that they require, or organise withdrawal arrangements for learners. The best schools communicate well with parents, involving them in decisions about how learners are supported, and working creatively to engage those parents and families that are hard to reach.

In these schools, learning coaches work diligently with targeted learners and support staff work with learners with special educational needs. Personal support is delivered systematically and staff work with other agencies to help learners overcome difficult home circumstances, or physical, mental health or social problems. This strong level of personal support helps learners at risk to improve their attendance, behaviour and academic performance.

Good schools take a strategic approach to co-ordinating learner support services that are both internal and external to the school. They train and update support staff in order to enhance the impact of external agency support.

In the best examples, schools analyse performance data on individual learners to measure the impact of their learning support strategies. They reflect critically on what works well and what does not, and they adjust their programmes accordingly.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs)

In the sectors that are designed specifically to support vulnerable learners – pupil referral units and maintained special schools – inspection outcomes vary greatly. Overall, learners in maintained special schools make more progress than those in pupil referral units, and the quality of provision and leadership and management is far better in special schools than in PRUs. The charts below show the distribution of judgements on the standards in maintained special schools and PRUs that have been inspected in the period since the start of the current inspection cycle (2010-2014).

- 🟢 Excellent
- 🔵 Good
- 🟡 Adequate
- 🔴 Unsatisfactory

Figure 1.3:
Standards in maintained special schools 2010-2014

| 25% | 71% | 4% | 0% |
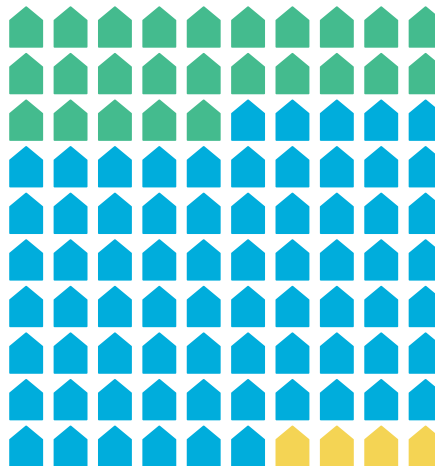
28
Maintained
special schools

Figure 1.4:
Standards in pupil referral units 2010-2014

| 12% | 42% | 27% | 19% |

26
PRUs

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving
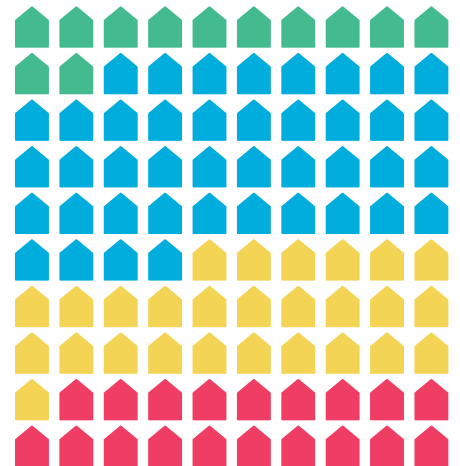
Learners who are at risk of underachieving are often supported well in maintained special schools

Learners who attend special schools have moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or impairments. About 4,350 learners attend maintained special schools and standards in many are good or better: outcomes have improved year on year.

The strong features of these schools exemplify effective practice that is relevant for all schools and providers. Good and excellent special schools have several common features. They have an ethos that focuses on achievement and learning. Good behaviour often stems from this ethos, which is different from focusing only on managing poor behaviour. There is expert teaching and effective tracking of learners' progress. Teachers are aware of learners' different needs and abilities and this helps them to plan programmes and to suggest pathways for progression. Leaders provide clear strategic direction and work in partnership with other schools and agencies to cater for their own school learners' needs. These schools are self-directing but share expertise easily with others for the benefit of learners. They adopt a multi-agency approach to overcome challenges, especially those associated with relatively poor backgrounds.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Pupil referral units

Six hundred and twenty-two learners were enrolled at registered in PRUs in Wales in 2012-2013. This represents around half of the learners whose main education is other than at school.

Local authorities maintain PRUs to provide an education outside a school setting for learners who might not otherwise receive an appropriate education. Learners usually attend PRUs because they have been or are at risk of exclusion from schools or because they are school refusers. Many are boys and most have additional learning needs. A few learners have very specific emotional, health or other needs that have a significant impact on their ability to engage with mainstream education. There are a small number of PRUs that cater for specific needs, such as mental health needs or the needs of girls who are pregnant or young mothers.

Since 2010, we have inspected 26 PRUs. A few are excellent, with sector-leading practice.[4] However, for the most part, inspection outcomes are generally worse for PRUs than for any other sector, with half having only adequate or unsatisfactory standards and provision.

While PRUs support some of the most vulnerable learners in Wales, too many learners remain in PRUs for too long, do not re-integrate into mainstream schooling, do not attend well enough, do not achieve appropriate qualifications or move on successfully to further education, employment or training.

This is usually because the quality of teaching varies too much. The curriculum is often limited and uninteresting, and it provides few opportunities for learners to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in ways that stimulate and engage them. Partnerships with other schools are also weak in many cases.

In all cases, these features link with shortcomings in leadership and management in the PRU, by the local authority through the PRU's management committee and officers. There is limited or no professional development for leaders or support for teachers-in-charge. The PRUs do not self-evaluate well and they do not capture or analyse data well. The management committee does not hold the PRU sufficiently to account. The PRUs tend not to share good practice, expertise or resources and they remain too isolated from each other and from mainstream schools.

Overall, the provision in too many PRUs fails the vulnerable learners who attend them, whereas the provision in special schools serves learners with SEN well. On the following pages is a comparison between the findings from inspections of the two sectors.

[4] For examples of best practice case studies from PRUs, see
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/best-practice/Signposts%20to%20best%20practice%20/case-studies-pupil-referral-units/

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Comparing the performance of special schools with pupil referral units

Pupil referral units (PRUs)

Standards

- Attendance often poor
- Disaffection
- Low levels of confidence self-esteem

Provision

- Not enough focus on learners' literacy and numeracy
- Too few qualifications for learners

Teaching

- Lack of specialist expertise
- More emphasis on managing behaviour than on learning
- Low expectations
- Poor tracking of pupil achievement and work not differentiated
- Support staff not used well to support learning

Leadership

- Not enough strategic or management experience and qualifications
- Teacher-in-Charge with focus mainly on day-to-day running of the PRU
- Data not used well enough to inform planning
- Few links to local authority systems or other schools
- Often no clear entry/exit criteria for learners
- Limited or no scope to share leadership roles
- Teacher-in-Charge with no budgetary control

Maintained special schools

Standards

- Attendance often good
- Good/excellent progress and confidence

Provision

- A good focus on learners' literacy and numeracy
- A range of appropriate qualifications

Teaching

- Appropriately qualified staff
- Good teaching of literacy and numeracy
- High expectations
- Tracking of individuals' progress
- Excellent use of support staff to support learning

Leadership

- NPQH required for all new headteacher appointments
- Effective performance management and coaching for weaker teachers
- Data used well to plan and monitor progress
- Headteacher networks for sharing good practice.
- Whole-school practices consistent
- Leadership shared out among team members
- Strong strategic direction from the headteacher

Comparing the performance of special schools with pupil referral units

Pupil referral units (PRUs)	Maintained special schools
Self-evaluation • Inaccurate self-evaluation – weaknesses often unacknowledged • Not enough focus on how to improve	**Self-evaluation** • Good knowledge of school • Improvement planning well focused and resourced
Partnerships • Limited contact with parents • Limited partnerships with community/business/other schools	**Partnerships** • Strong partnerships with physical and mental health services • Advice to mainstream schools on supporting learners with special needs
Professional development • Limited training and networking to improve leaders' and teachers' skills (often linked to lack of financial control)	**Professional development** • Often well-targeted training for teachers, support staff and middle and senior leadership
Accommodation and resources • Accommodation not always fit for purpose • Few PRUs in receipt of the pupil deprivation grant	**Accommodation and resources** • Well-maintained learning environments of high quality • Appropriate resources and financial support
Local authority support • Weak strategic support • Staff not involved in local authority training or headteacher meetings	**Local authority support** • Included in meetings with other providers/agencies/clusters • Support from local authority variable

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

The role of local authorities in relation to children and young people at risk

Local authorities have a duty to support all learners to reach their potential. They have a statutory obligation to support learners with additional learning needs and are responsible for the education of looked-after children.

The additional learning needs services that are delivered by local authorities include meeting statutory obligations for learners with a range of additional learning needs and co-ordinating provision for these learners. During the recent cycle of local authority inspections, we found that the additional learning needs services are good or better in a majority of local authorities. In two local authorities, the services are excellent while in six authorities the services are only adequate. In another two, the support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion is unsatisfactory.

In authorities where support for additional learning needs is good or better, senior officers provide good strategic direction and are clear about the service area's strengths and areas for development. In Ceredigion, officers use data well to plan provision strategically and evaluate its impact very effectively. However the use of data to inform strategic planning of additional learning needs is underdeveloped in nearly all other authorities.

What can local authorities do to support children at risk of underachieving?

Successful local authorities:

— provide a **strong strategic lead** on tackling disadvantage – they have clearly articulated plans that focus on the issue, involve schools in decision-making processes, and develop the skills of school senior leaders in partnership work to engage the community

— take a **preventative approach** to tackling the impact of poverty – they start with a thorough needs-analysis to identify the impact of deprivation on local families, share intelligence with schools and partners, and provide a baseline from which to measure the impact of new initiatives

— plan a **single, comprehensive database** of information on learners and groups of learners – they enable staff to gain a fuller picture of the needs of individual learners that is used to underpin a common approach

— bring together service plans for education, youth and social services to develop a **comprehensive strategy for tackling underachievement** – they produce integrated plans to co-ordinate services and avoid duplication

— have **specific targets and performance indicators** related to closing the gap in outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged learners – they measure progress against these targets

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

In **Swansea**, 20% of learners are eligible for free school meals. The local authority has improved the co-ordination of multi-agency working to help vulnerable families and to improve the educational outcomes of learners at risk of underachievement. In addition, the authority has amalgamated several data sources so that it can identify vulnerable individuals, and organise and monitor support work.

The local authority has created a system containing a wide range of data that it uses to identify vulnerable children and young people. The 'Vulnerability Assessment Profiles' (VAP) contain data on individual learners. The database includes information about attendance, exclusions, special educational needs, literacy levels and school moves, as well as identifying whether a pupil is eligible for free school meals, has English as an additional language or is looked after by the local authority. The local authority has created a set of criteria of risk, which is used to award a 'risk score' for each pupil. This record has helped to give officers across a range of service areas a sound knowledge base to target support and intervention appropriately.

The local authority shares the profiles with schools so that they can improve the support they give to learners at risk of underachieving. Officers also use the database to identify the needs of those who are educated otherwise than at school.

Learners who are at risk of underachieving in further education and training

In further education institutions, learners from poorer areas are far more likely to be enrolled on lower level courses than other learners. There is a clear correlation between the level of deprivation in the area where learners live and the level of course or qualification that learners take up, as shown in the chart on the following page.

The chart shows the levels of courses that learners are entered for, from entry level through to level 3 or above. The levels of deprivation go from left to right on the chart, with 1 referring to the highest degree of deprivation and 10 the lowest (the figures derive from learners' postcodes and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation).[5]

The chart shows that learners from areas of relatively high deprivation have many more entries at entry level and level 1 than their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. Nearly a third of learners from the most deprived areas were entered onto level 1 courses. This proportion falls to just over a fifth for learners from the least deprived areas. Thirteen per cent of learners from the most deprived areas were entered onto entry level courses compared with 7% of learners from the least deprived areas.

Only a fifth of learners from the most deprived areas were entered onto courses at level 3 or above. This proportion rises to just over a third for learners from the least deprived areas.

[5] The deprivation decile in the chart comes from the rank order of postcode areas by their socio-economic characteristics, as determined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The decile shows the rank order broken down into tenths.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Figure 1.5: Percentage of learners entered onto each level of course in further education institutions, by the relative deprivation of the area where learners live (2012-2013)

Legend: Level 3 or above, Level 2, Level 1, Entry level

Y-axis: Percentage of learners entered onto each level of course

X-axis: Deprivation decile (1 is most deprived, 10 is least deprived)
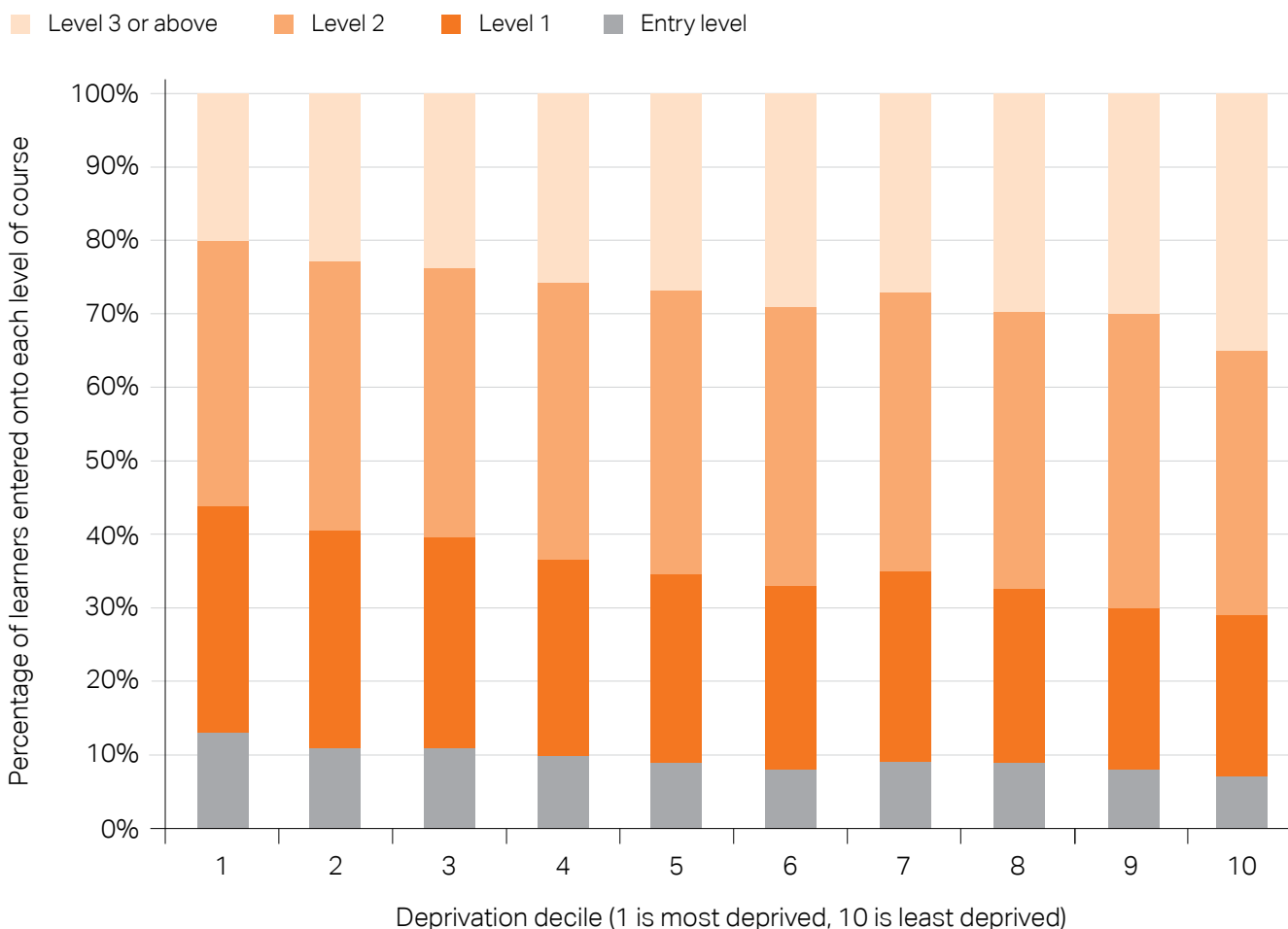
Further education institutions often respond to learners from poorer areas with a weak profile of GCSE grades by moving these learners onto entry level courses . As a result, their learners too often experience provision that does little to excite and engage them. Learners who enrol in further education institutions with D, E and F grades at GCSE in English and mathematics often find themselves in a vocational learning group but spend most of their time in a 'literacy and numeracy development class'. These learners have to strive to meet the level 1 course entry requirements. There is rarely an opportunity for them to follow their chosen vocational route at entry level and they find themselves detached from the learners studying vocational courses at level 1 or above.

A few further education institutions offer a carousel of short taster courses for these learners, usually in the construction trades. This enables the learners to achieve practical skills while also improving their literacy and numeracy skills. However, there is little or no opportunity for learners in Hair and Beauty, Care or Hospitality and

Catering to gain some basic occupational skills. As a result, many learners become dispirited and drop out even though employers still require learners who can fulfil basic tasks for the industry. Many of these learners are from relatively poor backgrounds.

In work-based learning too, some vulnerable learners leave their training programmes at an early stage before the provider has officially registered them with an awarding body. Retention rates for these learners are poor. They often do not benefit from effective advice and guidance from the provider before starting their training and they often leave without gaining significant new skills or knowledge. In a minority of cases, learners do not receive appropriate personal and learning support that would encourage and motivate them to continue with their training. This often compounds previous bad experiences in learning and confirms learners in a belief that they cannot learn, achieve, enter the workforce, or play a meaningful role in society.

What can post-16 providers do to support learners at risk of underachieving?

In many further education institutions, the arrangements for learning support are clear. As institutions have become larger and more complex, it has been a challenge to ensure that learner support is of consistently high quality on all sites. This support works best where there is a clear structure of accountability and a senior manager who has overarching responsibility for inclusion and learner support.

In the best examples, further education institutions identify learners who may have personal, social or emotional barriers to achievement when they apply to join a course. As a result of early screening, learners are identified for support. However, the take-up by learners of drop-in support for literacy and numeracy is still too patchy, even where the quality of support is good.

The good further education institutions monitor learners who are at risk of underachieving. They work with outside agencies to engage extra support. They provide help with childcare and transport, where appropriate, and direct learners to specific grants or bursaries. Many institutions offer a strong front-line service for learners who experience crisis or personal, social or emotional problems. However, not enough institutions evaluate the take-up and quality of this support.

For most learners who have struggled in secondary education, it is the more adult atmosphere and ethos of further education institutions and work-based learning providers that attract them and often allow them a fresh start. Many find 'hands on' practical work in vocational areas particularly stimulating. Increasingly, institutions use social media to encourage learners to write about their learning. For example, learners in motor vehicle studies at Coleg Cambria use their smart phones to write 'blogs' about their practical work. Tutors help these learners with their literacy skills by providing feedback electronically and learners are ready to accept and act on this feedback. Learners in these circumstances find that their skills in using IT are valued and develop further.

More further education institutions now offer entry level and level 1 courses in vocational areas. While these are not at a high enough level for entry to skilled employment, they enable learners to move on to higher level courses that provide a route into skilled or semi-skilled employment. Learners also develop useful employability skills in practical sessions relating to problem-solving and working in teams. A few institutions also have innovative ways of improving learners' numerical skills by using a range of electronic learning opportunities that build learners' confidence.

In work-based learning, learners do best when they have regular contact with assessors face-to-face or through electronic means every two or three weeks. However, this regular contact occurs in only a minority of cases. Assessors who respond flexibly to learners' circumstances and who tailor teaching sessions to the learners' needs often have the greatest impact on learners' progress and personal development, especially on level 2 and level 3 courses. The most effective assessors have often undertaken regular refresher training and attended sector-specific workshops and information updates.

The Welsh Government's 'Youth engagement and progression framework' is a plan to reduce the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). This sets out arrangements for schools, further education institutions, local authorities and Careers Wales to work together to establish systems for identifying early any learners at risk of dropping out, creating 'lead workers' to work will local stakeholders, and setting up traineeships and a Youth Guarantee for education, training or employment.

Groups of learners who are at risk of underachieving

Percentage of learners with statements

4.3% ⬆
Swansea

4.2%
Carmarthenshire

1.5% ⬇
Bridgend

1.7%
Rhondda Cynnon Taf

1.7%
Torfaen
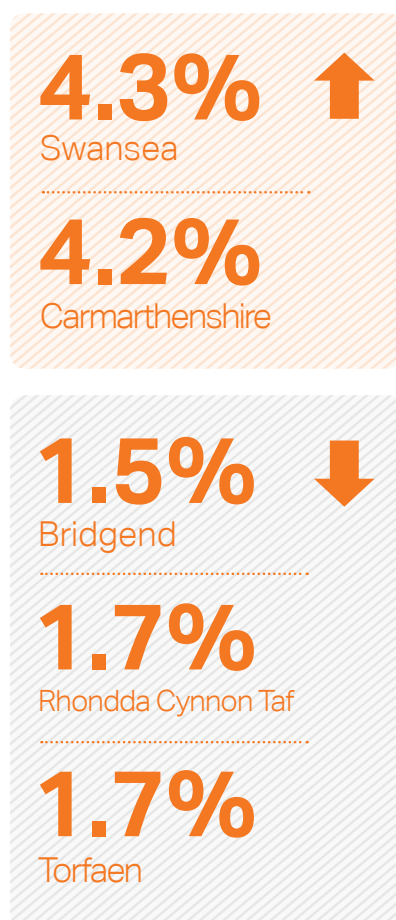
Learners with special or additional learning needs who are at risk of underachieving

Currently, the three stages of support for learners with special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools are:

— Statements of special educational needs
— School action plus
— School action

Just under a quarter of pupil cohorts in mainstream schools receive support under one of these categories, depending on the severity of needs, but the percentage with statements – indicating the greatest level of needs in the continuum – is relatively low at 2.7% across all maintained schools, including special schools.

The number of statements being issued is falling and there are different thresholds across Wales for statementing so that more learners have provision made without recourse to statement. As a result, in some local authorities, learners with significant SEN do not have a statement, although it does not follow that these learners will receive inadequate support.

Swansea and Carmarthenshire currently have the highest percentage of learners with statements (4.3% and 4.2%) while Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen have the lowest (1.5%, 1.7% and 1.7%). There is not necessarily a correlation between the percentage of statements and the quality of the support service.

Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the proportion of learners with SEN who achieve the core subject indicator at the ages of 11 and 14, and who achieve the level 2 inclusive threshold at the age of 16. In 2013, just over half of 11-year-old learners with SEN achieved the core subject indicator. However, in 2013 only a sixth of 16-year-old learners with SEN achieved the level 2 inclusive threshold.

Transition between schools and post-16 providers is often a difficult time for SEN learners. In a few examples, transition plans help students to transfer easily from school to further education. However, the statement of special needs and the individual education plan rarely transfer from the school to the further education institution. The Welsh Government's proposals to make local authorities responsible for co-ordinating and managing learners' individual education plans (IEPs) up to the age of 25 should help to ensure a smoother transition for learners.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

How can schools support learners with special educational needs?

In primary schools, most learners with SEN make good progress against their personal targets. Many learners on school action benefit from intensive 10-week intervention programmes, usually focused on improving reading or number skills that help them to catch up with their peer group. A majority of schools provide these learners with top-up sessions over the year to make sure that they maintain the gains they have made during the catch-up programme. However, in a minority of schools, the programmes do not run smoothly. In these schools, learners are withdrawn daily from their teacher-led English and mathematics sessions to be taught by learning support assistants. In these instances, the catch-up programmes become the daily teaching session rather than a supplementary programme, and learners do not catch up with peers.

There are some strengths in most secondary school provision for learners with SEN. Some schools are particularly effective in developing strong links with other agencies, such as charities, volunteer groups and local authority services. Support for learners with SEN is well organised in these schools so that learners make progress in line with expectations. In a few schools, learners with SEN have access to an imaginatively modified curriculum in Year 9 and at key stage 4 to engage them in learning and help them to gain qualifications.

Where provision is particularly effective, schools use information shared by partner primary schools to organise early intervention. This means that the right intervention at the start of Year 7 builds on the support at key stage 2.

In the majority of schools, teachers adapt their lessons and activities well to meet the needs of SEN learners, with support from teaching assistants and specialist teachers.

Where there are shortcomings, this is often because teachers do not use information about learners with SEN well enough. This means that their planning is not precise enough to meet the needs of learners. In these circumstances, there are also other shortcomings in how learner progress is reviewed, and in how parents are made aware of strengths and areas for improvement.

Systems to assess learners' baseline knowledge and understanding accurately are essential if learners' IEP targets are going to reflect their individual needs. Targets in IEPs should be specific to the needs of the learner and broken down into bite-size chunks, and they should include clear success criteria. Regular review is important as an IEP should be viewed as an organic working document.

Most schools track learners on intervention programmes and many track the progress of and provision for SEN learners more generally. Good schools use these systems to ensure that learners improve their literacy, numeracy and social skills as well as having a sound and balanced range of learning experiences.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Learning support assistants lead on intervention programmes

Herbert Thompson Primary School, Cardiff, uses an effective learner tracking system to monitor learners' progress and identify additional learning needs. The school has trained learning support assistants to lead on a range of intervention programmes. Learners receive well-targeted support, and nearly all learners who follow additional intervention programmes make very good progress within a short space of time. In addition, Learning support assistants develop professionally through analysing data and understanding the impact of their work.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Schools that support learners with SEN well work in partnership with learners and their parents or carers to set and review targets. They ensure that learners understand what they need to do and what support they will receive. In Glasllwch Primary School in Newport, learners and parents work together with the staff to deliver a wide range of intervention strategies, following the advice of specialist support services when required. The school deploys experienced teaching assistants who collaborate closely with parents and class teachers to monitor progress and maintain a challenging pace for learning.

In the few secondary schools with specialist resource bases that cater for learners with specific additional needs, the bases generally have a positive impact on learners' development. Often they are a real strength of the school, and their inclusive arrangements and high level of sensitive support help learners to integrate into school life. The specialist resource bases are also used to support learners across the main stream. Expertise is shared with staff across the school and in other local schools so that others can learn from good practice. The case study below exemplifies the practice.

Birchgrove Comprehensive School supports its SEN learners

Birchgrove Comprehensive School, Swansea, has a specialist resource base, known as a specialist teaching facility (STF) that caters very well for a small number of learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties and offers sensitive and caring support for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Careful planning ensures equal access to all areas of the curriculum and tailored, additional sporting opportunities for learners with multiple learning difficulties.

Staff in the STF set ambitious objectives for individuals in partnership with parents and learners. These targets include academic and behavioural goals and are designed to support the development of learners' independence. The STF ensures that teachers receive simple pen portraits of each learner that accentuate the positive achievements they have made and include further targets for improvement. All departments have been given helpful guidance on how to support learners with specific learning difficulties in booklets called "SEN at a Glance". Most teachers use this guidance well to provide tailored activities for specific learners.

Teaching assistants are also given opportunities to develop specific expertise, for example in developing literacy and communication or in tackling dyslexia. These staff ensure that learners with SEN are provided with a differentiated curriculum in all mainstream classes. They work hard to ensure that learners make independent progress and do not develop an over-reliance on support.

As a result, learners supported by the STF are well integrated into school life, make very good progress in their academic and social skills and exceed their targets in many key indicators.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Learners are at risk of underachieving if they come from relatively poor backgrounds

In Wales, the proportion of children living in poverty is about 32% (about 192,000-200,000 children). Wales also has a higher proportion of learners eligible for free school meals than in England.[6]

Learners who are eligible for free school meals are far more likely to underachieve than other learners. Schools are far more aware of this now than they were 10 years ago. The chart below shows how the gap between the performance of learners eligible for free school meals and other learners has narrowed a little in a number of performance indicators at the end of the key stages over the past few years.

Figure 1.6: For selected indicators, the gap in achievement of learners eligible for free school meals compared with other learners, 2011 to 2013
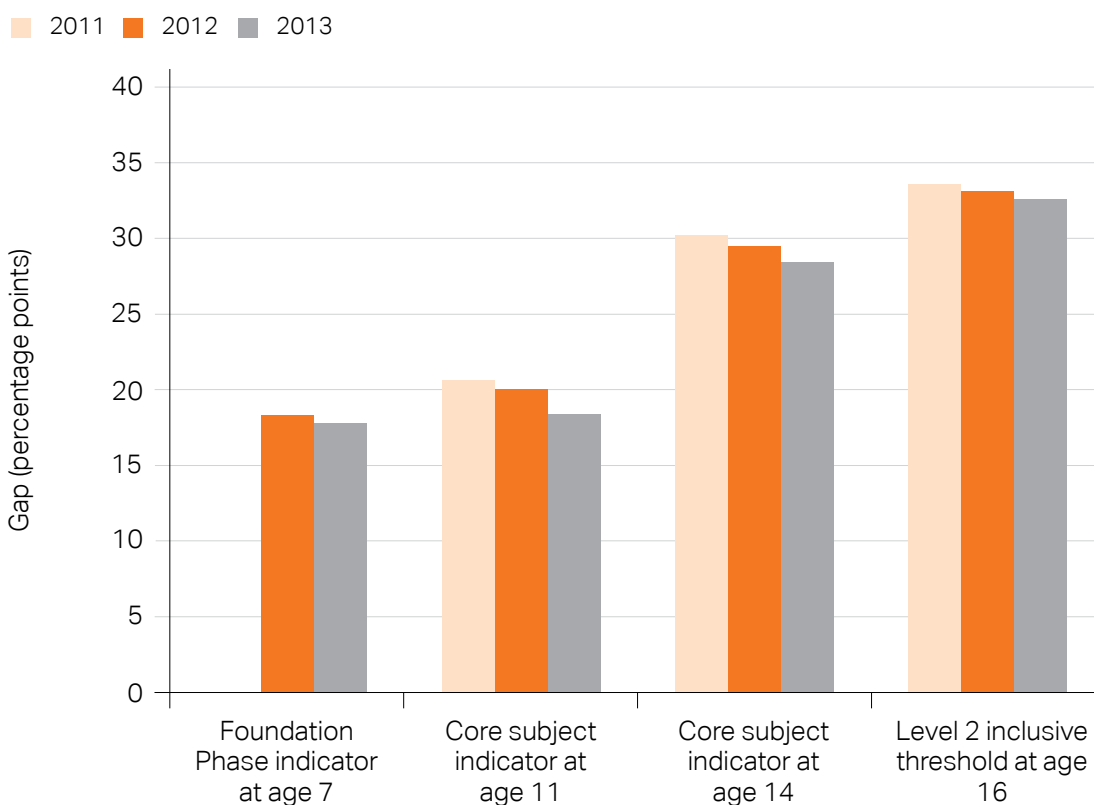
Despite this slight narrowing over time, the group of learners eligible for free school meals gets further behind other learners as they get older. The 18 percentage point gap between the two groups in achieving the Foundation Phase indicator at seven years of age becomes a 33 percentage point gap in achieving the level 2 inclusive threshold at 16 years of age.

Early underachievement often leads to weak attainment later on. For example, only 9% of learners who fail to achieve the core subject indicator at 11 turn things around and go on to achieve the level 2 inclusive threshold at 16.

Learners eligible for free school meals also take fewer qualifications at 16. For example, learners take 9 or 10 GCSEs on average in the top 10 secondary schools (in terms of learners' overall achievement of the level 2 inclusive threshold), but only 6 or 7 on average in the bottom 10. They also have fewer cultural and sporting opportunities.

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[6] 'Eradicating child poverty by 2020: An aspirational target?', Kathryn Potter, http://www.assembly.wales/NAfW%20Documents/ki-023.pdf%20-%2003112011/ki-023-English.pdf

How can schools support learners who are eligible for free school meals?

In-school strategies

Effective schools:

— take a whole-school, strategic approach to tackling disadvantage
— use data to identify and track the progress of disadvantaged learners
— focus on the development of disadvantaged learners' literacy and learning skills
— develop the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners
— improve the attendance, punctuality and behaviour of disadvantaged learners
— tailor the curriculum to the needs of disadvantaged learners
— make great efforts to provide enriching experiences that more advantaged learners take for granted
— listen to disadvantaged learners
— engage parents and carers of disadvantaged learners
— develop the expertise of staff to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners

Strategies involving partners

Successful schools:

— develop the leadership skills needed for partnership
— co-ordinate and manage on-site multi-agency services
— engage in 'Team around the family' approaches
— design a range of out-of-hours learning
— understand what it means to be community-focused and strengthen their community links
— use nurture groups to engage families of vulnerable new learners
— use family-learning programmes
— encourage participation in parenting programmes
— work in partnership to pool their resources with other providers
— evaluate their own work and that of external agencies

Learners looked after by the local authority who are at risk of underachieving

Children who are looked after by their local authority face many potential difficulties in their lives and in their education. Just over a quarter of looked-after learners are eligible for free school meals and just over three-fifths have a special educational need. Nearly two-thirds of looked-after children come into the care of social services because they have suffered abuse or neglect. Twenty-six per cent come from families in acute distress or dysfunction.[7]

Generally, the performance of looked-after children becomes worse as they move through the education system and the gap between their performance and the performance of other learners widens too. By the age of seven, there is a 30 percentage point gap between their performance and that of other learners (in relation to achieving the Foundation Phase indicator).

Only 13% of looked-after children at 16 years of age achieve the level 2 inclusive threshold compared with 53% for all learners.

[7] The Educational attainment of looked-after children and young people, Wales Audit Office (2012)

How can schools support looked-after children?

Looked-after children require support throughout their education, to deal with emotional problems, and to sustain their academic progress. Many experience disruptions in their lives and may need to move school when their home placements change, or through 'managed moves' when they are transferred to a new school to enable a new start.

Schools that support these learners well use a range of co-ordinated approaches, and create strong partnerships with a range of services and other providers. They recognise the importance of good continuity of provision, and have systems to receive information and make a smooth transfer from the learner's previous school or setting.

They help learners to make a positive start in a new school, for example by providing a special record of achievement to instil confidence. They train their staff in mentoring and counselling, or make good use of school-based counsellors so that learners have a 'safe place' in school where they can talk through their problems with a member of staff in whom they trust. In addition, they provide opportunities for family members, carers and social workers to talk through issues and discuss progress with the learner in school. A few schools create a 'support centre' in the school for learners with emotional difficulties, run on 'nurture group' principles and practices to provide a learning space where staff also support learners' emotional development.

More able and talented learners who are at risk of underachieving

More able and talented (MAT) learners are also vulnerable to underachievement if they do not receive provision that enables them to develop their abilities fully.

MAT learners in Wales do not achieve as well as they should. Too few primary school learners achieve above the expected level for their age in end-of-key stage assessments at the age of 11 and at the age of 14 in the core subjects of English or Welsh, science and mathematics. At key stage 4, too few 16-year-olds achieve the higher A/A* grades in the core subjects. Even in schools where standards are good, leadership, provision, support and teaching often do not take good enough account of the needs of MAT learners.

Internationally, Wales does not compare favourably with other countries in the performance of MAT learners. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report for 2013, which assesses the performance of learners at 15 years of age across 65 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation) countries, shows that Wales has few high achievers compared to the top-performing counties in the world.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Figure 1.7:
Proportion of learners achieving
five or more A* grades in GCSE
examinations by UK country, 2008
to 2012 combined[8]

5.2%   4.3%   3.8%

Northern
Ireland
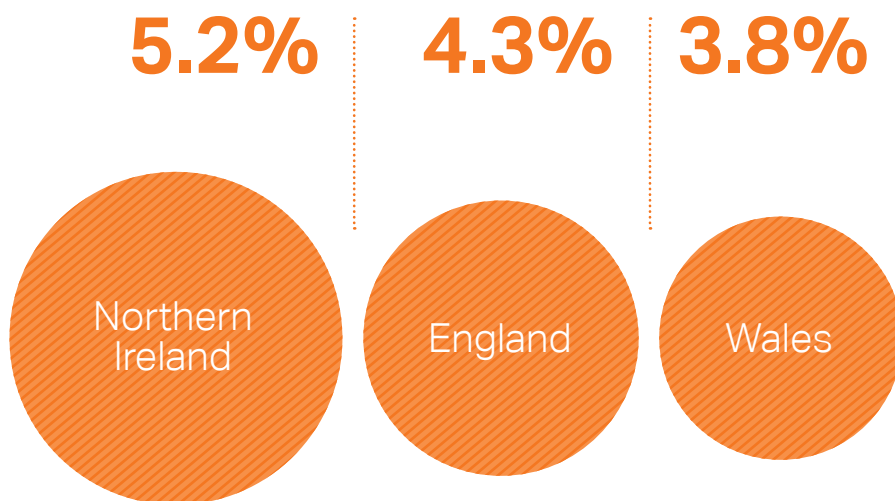
England

Wales

In Wales, attainment at the top end of the GCSE spectrum of grades
is weaker than in other regions of the UK. For example, the proportion
of learners achieving five A* grades at GCSE is lower than in England,
Northern Ireland and the UK average. The lower achievement of these
excellent GCSE grades in Wales indicates that MAT learners do not do as
well as they could.

Figure 1.8:
Of the learners who achieved level 5
or above in their subject at the age of
11 in Wales, the proportion of these
learners who went on to gain an A* or A
grade in that subject at the age of 16

Number of learners achieving
level 5 or above at the age of 11
in Wales, 2008

Of these pupils, the proportion that
went on to gain a GCSE A* or A grade
in that subject at the age of 16 in 2013

Cohort of pupils for whom
attainment data was available at
both the age of 11 in 2008 and the
age of 16 in 2013:
Mathematics and English = 32,660
Welsh first language = 6,620

Welsh first language

English

Mathematics

10,110   9,650   1,640

39%   44%   48%

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving
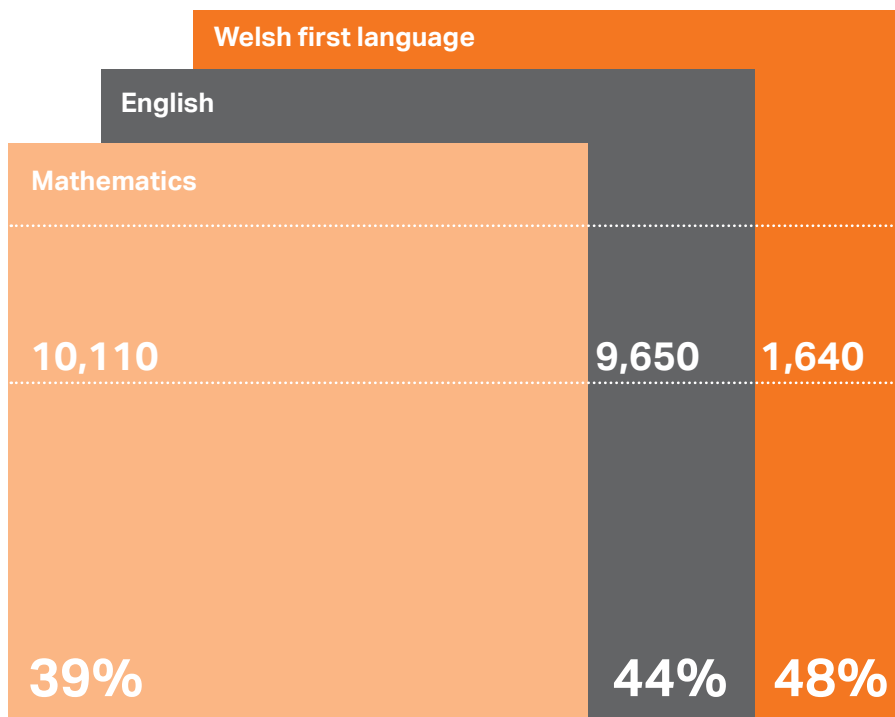
Overall, those learners who are assessed by their teachers at the age of 11 as performing at above the expected level in the core subjects do not make enough progress through the subsequent key stages to achieve the highest grades at GCSE. The progress of learners eligible for free school meals is particularly poor.

This is not just an issue in Wales. In England, Ofsted have noted that 65% of learners who achieved level 5 or above in English and mathematics at the age of 11 in 2013 failed to go on to achieve an A or A* in both these subjects at GCSE level.[9]

The proportion of learners attaining the highest grade (A*) in the core subjects at GCSE in Wales is extremely low.

At key stage 4, in 2013, in almost a quarter of secondary schools in Wales, no learners achieved an A* in English language. In around one-in-ten schools no learner achieved an A* in mathematics. In around one sixth of Welsh-medium schools, no learners achieved an A* in Welsh first language. In the case of learners who are eligible for free school meals, the figures fall dramatically. In nearly three-quarters of secondary schools no learners eligible for free school meals attained an A* in mathematics, and in nearly nine out of ten schools no learners eligible for free school meals gained an A* in English language.

However, there is a great variation between schools and within local authorities. A very few schools with high proportions of learners eligible for free school meals perform well. For example, in Bishop Gore School in Swansea, where about 27% of learners are eligible for free school meals, 21% achieved an A* or A grade in English language in 2013, with around 7% achieving an A*.

[9] The most able students: Are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools? Ofsted (2013)

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

How can providers support more able learners?

The few schools in Wales where more able learners achieve their full potential tend to be those schools where standards for all learners place them in the top 25% of schools in Wales, and where leadership and management are strong.

These schools provide curriculum options that meet the needs of more able learners. They supplement the curriculum at key stage 4 by adding courses that challenge the more able. They may provide GCSEs in astronomy, photography or classical studies, for instance.

Tailored extra-curricular provision such as film-making, writing clubs and mathematics clubs also provide learners with opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding and, in some cases, to gain extra qualifications. The best schools promote personal approaches to learning, and ensure that more able learners have access to specialist teachers, or experts such as artists or sportspeople. They give learners control over what and how they learn, and mentor them well when making choices for progression. More able learners benefit greatly from working with other more able learners, and many successful schools establish links with other schools, further education institutions and universities to offer opportunities for networking.

The best teaching to support more able learners is flexible and responsive to learners' differences and uses stimulating resource materials to inspire learners to use higher-order thinking skills. Problem-solving approaches and opportunities for learners to explore their ideas through digital media allow learners to be creative and to engage in their own learning. Teachers who improve the learning of more able learners exploit opportunities to challenge learners. They are not afraid to move away from their plans to explore avenues of learning in response to learners' questions. They support more able learners to design their own learning experiences.

These schools develop an ethos where achievement is valued highly. Learners' talents and accomplishments are validated in celebration events and in displays around the school and the local community.

Barry Island Primary School finds every child's talents

Barry Island Primary School has developed a range of strategies to improve the achievement of more able learners. The school identifies and supports learners who show ability in subjects across the curriculum, including sports and the arts, and makes the best use of the skills of staff to help learners to extend their talents. More able learners take on a range of responsibilities across the school, and extend their skills through projects and clubs.

For more information about this, please click on the inspection report

Where secondary schools and further education institutions work alongside each other to provide opportunities for MAT learners, aspirations can be raised as learners find out more about what is available to them when they leave school.

In Coleg Sir Gâr in Llanelli, learners from local secondary schools take part in a 14-19 supplementary programme for MAT learners. The programme highlights future progression and career routes and gives these learners the opportunity to visit local industry and higher education institutions to talk to staff.

Coleg Sir Gâr develops its own MAT learners well through participation in the Wales Skills competitions as well as the Worldskills International competitions that take place every two years. It also has a sports academy where learners with high potential in sport benefit from strong links with professional clubs and associations. It also has an academic, cultural and excellence (ACE) programme to challenge and support its most able learners. These learners access a range of activities within specialist tutorial groups for medicine, veterinary science, dentistry, mathematics, science, law and modern foreign languages.

Learners who learn English as an additional language who are at risk of underachieving

Around a quarter of ESOL learners on entry level courses leave before the end of the course and do not get a certificate or qualification.

In Wales, there are about 7-8% of learners in primary schools who are learning English as an additional language (EAL). This equates to about one in every thirteen learners or about two learners in each class in every primary school in Wales. Broadly speaking, of these learners about a quarter are new to English, about a half have some initial skills in English and are developing their competence in the language, and about a quarter are competent or fluent in English.

Children who are learning English as an additional language are vulnerable to underachievement when they find themselves in schools where they cannot understand what teachers and fellow learners are saying or what books or worksheets mean. However, there is effective provision for learners who arrive in school with little or no competence in English, especially in large urban centres, such as Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. Many EAL learners overcome the barriers to their learning and do well by the time they leave secondary school due to well-targeted interventions by specialist teachers, careful analysis of their progress, high levels of integration in classes, and enthusiastic support from class teachers. By the age of 16, 66% of EAL learners are competent or fluent in English. Of these, 64% achieve the level 2 inclusive threshold compared with about 54% of other learners.

It is a similar picture for adult learners of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Overall, the proportion of ESOL learners who complete their language courses in the adult community learning sector is consistently high at 94%, and many at level 1 (92%) gain a qualification or certificate at the end of the course. However, around a quarter of ESOL learners on entry level courses leave before the end of the course and do not get a certificate or qualification.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

How can providers support learners with English as an additional language?

Overall, EAL and ESOL learners develop their language skills better in the context of studying a range of topics relevant to their needs. They use these skills well in the context of the classroom or within their communities. Teachers use authentic materials to enhance the learning and provide learners with ample opportunities to practise their skills.

Many learners with few skills in English have a good understanding of concepts, for example in science and mathematics, but in their native language. A few have had little or no formal education and have limited literacy in their own language. Overall, as a group, learners who achieve some degree of competence or fluency in English achieve well compared to other learners at the end of primary and secondary education. This is a significant achievement for these learners and their families.

We find that EAL learners often receive good support in large urban centres where there is a well-developed service to support them. They receive this support from qualified teachers or teaching assistants who have received appropriate training and support. In the best practice, more advanced learners continue to receive support. Staff monitor learners' EAL attainment and progress very carefully, often using ladders or steps that describe the various stages in their development of competence and fluency in the language. However, the provision for EAL learners is more fragmented when they are the only child in the locality with EAL needs. In these cases, learners struggle to make progress due to a lack of regular EAL support, and teachers often do not have the expertise to provide as much support as they would like.

Where support is most effective, there is also a bilingual member of the support service who can assess the learner's proficiency and literacy in their first language to establish what prior knowledge they have of other subjects. They liaise well with schools so that teachers can set appropriate challenges for learners both in English and in other subjects. In the best examples, EAL staff and class teachers plan collaboratively and have a very close working relationship, particularly in the early stages of the learner's EAL development. They share information on language acquisition and on learners' general progress. In schools with effective provision for EAL learners, there is careful analysis of the attainment and progress of EAL learners as individuals and as a discrete group.

In many cases, the individual EAL learners benefit greatly from immersion in the language of the school and learn better in class with support than within withdrawal groups. Where withdrawal does occur, it is time limited and for a specific purpose rather than the usual mode of teaching and learning.

For EAL and ESOL learners, achieving fluency and competence in English is a life-changing experience and allows children and adults to move from a life of potential isolation to engage more fully with their local communities and with the education and training opportunities available to them through school, further education and adult community learning.

Mount Street Infants School supports the needs of a diverse school population

Mount Street Infants School, Powys, provides education for a diverse range of learners. Around 37% are from the nearby army base and about half are transient. They also come from a variety of ethnic groups. The school ensures that it supports the needs of the diverse school population by appointing the right staff, offering a range of activities in lessons both indoors and outdoors, and meeting religious needs.

For more information about this, please click on the <u>case study</u>

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Wellbeing in schools

30%

30% of learners in secondary schools we inspected do not think that the school listens to their views or makes changes that they suggest.

Schools that help all learners to reach their potential have a good understanding of the relationship between wellbeing and standards. They know that learners who are at risk of underachievement may feel anxious about school and are more likely to become dissatisfied and disengaged. They understand that these learners need to feel safe and confident before they can start to learn, and that they need to develop the social and emotional skills of perseverance and resilience. These schools also understand that they need to listen to the pupil voice.

Pupil voice

Opportunities for learners to have a say in all aspects of school life are important in developing learners' participation, ambition and standards. A few schools ensure that their school councils and other mechanisms for consulting learners include a range of voices from the school community. These schools adapt aspects of their teaching strategies, curriculum, policies and partnership working in response to the views of learners.

Most school councils make a difference to school life by influencing how areas of the school such as the school uniform can be improved. However, only in a minority of schools do school councils have a significant impact on school procedures and policies or on approaches to teaching and learning.

Despite the fact that all secondary schools have an elected school council that meets regularly to discuss the school's life and work, 30% of learners in schools we inspected do not think that the school listens to their views or makes changes that they suggest.

In the best cases, schools use a range of mechanisms for gathering the views of all learners, for example questionnaires or 'suggestion boxes' for learners to feed information back anonymously. They also use 'ideas walls' for learners to add creative solutions about school issues, and learning diaries where learners keep a continuous record of their thoughts about their learning. In all cases of learner feedback, effective schools ensure that learners' views are acted upon. Teachers take learners' views seriously and use them in planning work and forming policies.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

The importance of attendance

Absenteeism has a significant impact on how well learners achieve. Every unnecessary day or week off school heightens a learner's chances of underachievement to some degree.

In 2013, most learners who attended school every day in Year 6 achieved the core subject indicator. However, this dropped to just over half for the learners who missed between 30% to 50% of sessions during the year. In Year 11 in 2013, over half of learners who attended most of the time achieved the level 2 inclusive threshold, but this dropped to just 4% for learners who missed more than half the sessions during the year.

The chart below shows the relationship between achievement and rates of absence.

Figure 1.9:
Achievement of learners in Years 6 and 11, by overall absence rate, 2013

- ● Achieved core subject indicator in Year 6
- ● Achieved level 2 inclusive threshold in Year 11
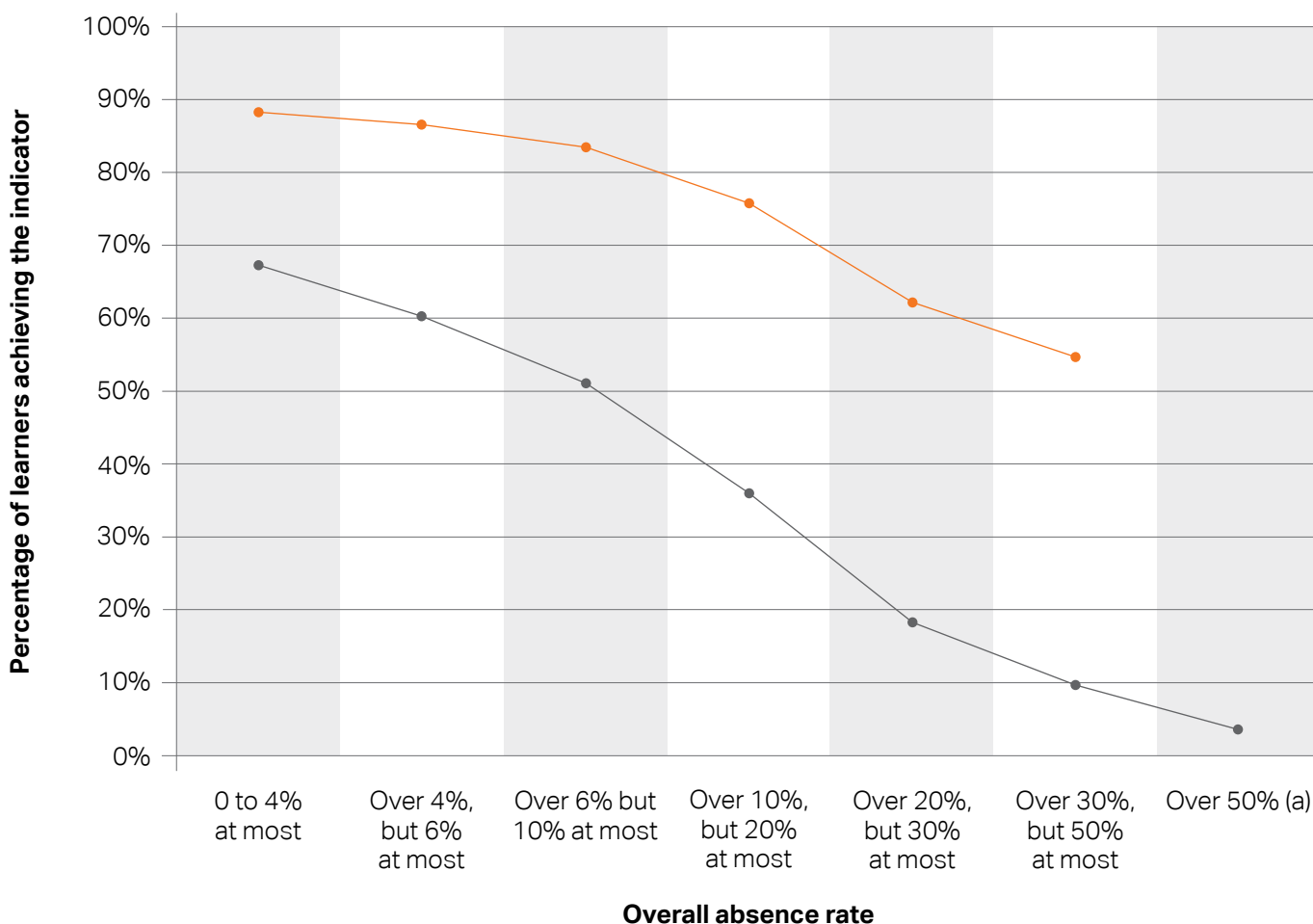
(a) A very small number of Year 6 pupils missed over 50% of sessions, so the achievement for this group of learners is not available.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

Learners who are eligible for free school meals are more likely to be absent. They are also more likely to be persistent absentees.[10] When learners start to stay away from school, they can become persistently absent. About 7% of learners eligible for free school meals are persistently absent in primary schools, but this goes up to around 18% in secondary schools.

In secondary schools, the overall absence rate[11] of learners eligible for free school meals is nearly twice the rate for learners not eligible. In primary and secondary schools, learners eligible for free school meals have an unauthorised absence rate that is around four times higher than for learners not eligible.

The chart below shows the difference between the absence rates for learners eligible for free school meals and their more advantaged peers.

Figure 1.10:
Overall absence in primary and secondary schools, by eligibility for free school meals, 2011-2012

■ Primary schools　　■ Secondary schools
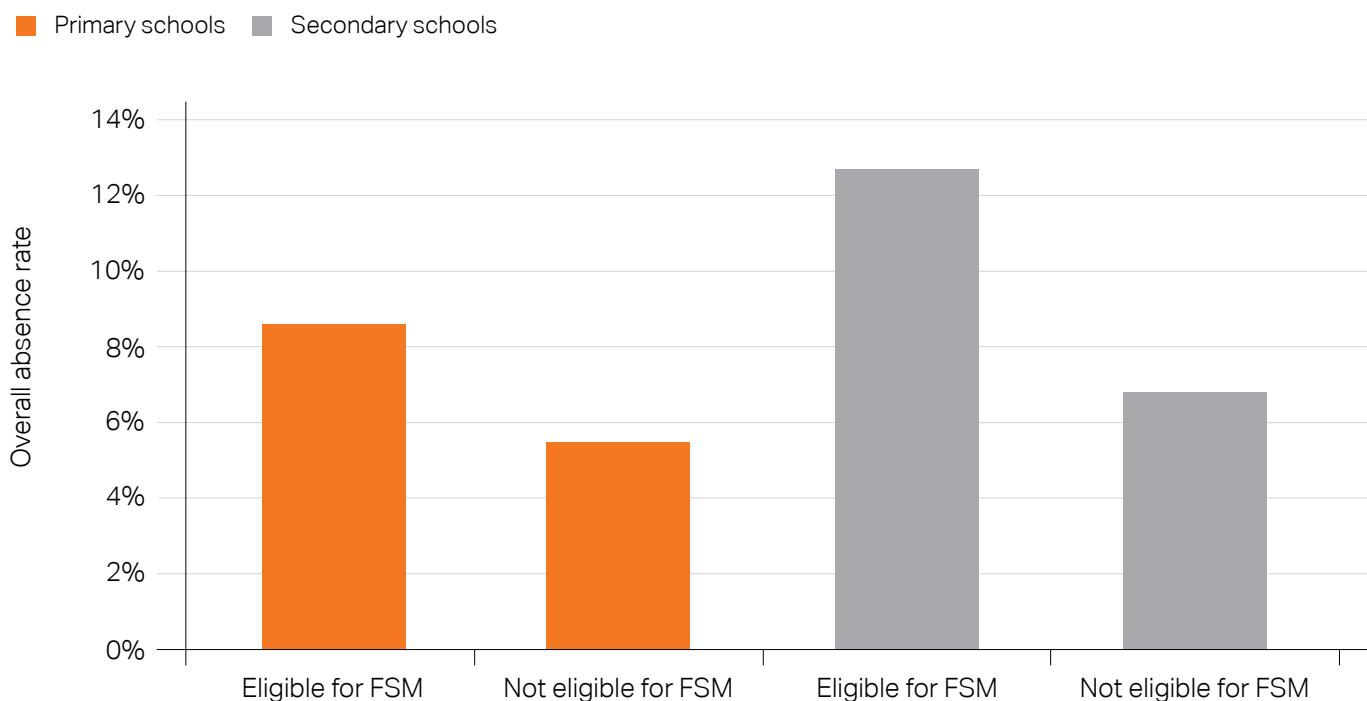
The absence rate for learners with SEN is higher than for learners with no SEN. In secondary schools, learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) have a higher absence rate than any other groups of learners with SEN. This group of learners has the highest rate of unauthorised absence too. It is almost four times higher than for learners without SEN.

[10] Learners are considered persistent absentees if they are absent from school for at least 20% of the half-day sessions that schools are open, not including inset days.
[11] The overall absence rate includes authorised absence and unauthorised absence.

How can schools improve learners' attendance?

The schools that are most successful at improving attendance recognise that teaching of good quality and a curriculum that meets learners' needs lead to greater learner engagement. They identify any shortcomings in teaching quickly and offer learners a wide range of curriculum choices. They provide good support, guidance and mentoring, and use restorative practice, pupil support centres and nurture groups to good effect, and these have helped more learners to attend school more often. They have effective partnerships with external agencies and services. They often employ or assign responsibility to a member of staff to improve the attendance of specific groups of learners. They often build good relationships with specific families and local communities. The exchange of information on individual learners' attendance patterns between primary and secondary schools is often good.

All schools, both primary and secondary, have strengthened the messages they give about the link between high attendance and good academic achievement. The emphasis on attendance data in secondary school banding and in Estyn inspections has also focused more attention on attendance issues. Many learners are aware of their current level of attendance or the weekly attendance rate of their class.

However, too many schools have not carried out a deep analysis of their attendance or have set appropriate targets for improving the attendance of specific groups of learners. A few schools do not realise fully the impact they can have on improving attendance and continue to believe that it is more an issue for families and not for them.

Cefn Hengoed Community School tackles attendance

Cefn Hengoed Community School in Swansea has improved attendance by making the curriculum more relevant for learners, especially at key stage 4. In addition, the Attendance Focus Group helps to track and monitor learners' attendance, particularly that of learners who are eligible for free school meals.

To watch a video on the effective practice in Cefn Hengoed Community School, please click on the tackling deprivation and raising standards INSET materials

The importance of behaviour

In most primary schools, and in many secondary schools, learners behave well and show respect for adults and their peers.

Good behaviour is a feature of schools where teachers deliver interesting lessons that offer sufficient challenge to learners of all abilities. Schools that adopt and successfully implement a whole-school approach to behaviour have the most positive impact on behaviour. In these schools, there is a consistent approach to behaviour management by all staff, all learners understand the school rules, and school leaders seek the views of learners about their wellbeing regularly.

However, in a very few primary schools and a minority of secondary schools, a small number of learners regularly disrupt lessons. In these schools, learners display poor social skills in classes and around the school, and this hinders their ability to learn and work with others effectively. A few learners do not show respect to their teachers or to their peers. These learners show little interest in their work, and have negative attitudes to learning.

In schools where behaviour is poor, teachers' expectations of learners are too low. The learning activities do not challenge learners enough and do not meet the needs of all learners. The pace of learning is slow, teaching strategies are repetitive and learners' skills, particularly literacy skills, and subject knowledge are under-developed. Teachers do not manage behaviour well enough and this limits learners' learning.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

How can schools help learners to manage their behaviour?

Good schools understand how developing learners' social and emotional wellbeing is an integral part of a whole-school approach to raising standards for all learners.

Establishing a clear sense of direction and a positive ethos is important in developing social responsibility and respect for others. This is especially important where learners have low self-esteem and negative attitudes to learning. Learners' respect for others develops best when the school's vision and values permeate all aspects of school life, including what they learn in lessons and how they learn. In schools that develop learners' social and behavioural skills well, leaders ensure that whole-school policies, such as those relating to anti-bullying, behaviour, and teaching and learning, are cohesive. The school's values, rules and responsibilities are consistently applied and reinforced by all staff.

Schools that support learners well use a wide range of approaches including:

— a personal and social education programme that develops learners' values and responsibilities
— counselling, including that of specialist agencies, developing support groups and peer counselling
— learner support systems
— advocacy processes
— restorative justice processes
— 'buddy systems', where learners are paired to support one another
— social communication sessions that develop learners' social skills
— anger management sessions
— the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme
— multi-agency approaches to dealing with specific issues such as substance misuse or sexual health

Improving learners' behaviour often requires schools and local authorities to work closely with other partners and agencies, particularly when the learners' behaviour problems stem from circumstances at home. The most effective support for children results from a seamless, comprehensive approach that operates across different agencies.

Rhyl High School engages the disaffected

Staff at **Rhyl High School** identified a group of learners who had behavioural issues and were at risk of permanent exclusion. The school re-engaged these learners using a multiagency approach with local organisations that supported children. Together they created a curriculum that has improved achievement, attitudes and engagement.

For more information about this, please click on the <u>case study</u>

Bullying

In one-in-four secondary schools that we have inspected, more than one-in-five learners do not think that their school manages incidents of bullying well enough.

Responses to our learner questionnaires show that 93% of primary school learners and 84% of secondary school learners believe that their school deals well with any incidents of bullying.

Learners in secondary schools are more concerned about the way that their school handles bullying behaviour than in primary schools. The questionnaires show that many secondary school learners are generally content with the anti-bullying approaches in their school. However, in one-in-four secondary schools that we have inspected, more than one-in-five learners do not think that their school manages incidents of bullying well enough.

Too many learners suffer from bullying at some point during their time in school. The effects of being bullied can be short or long-term, psychological or social, and often result in underachievement or attendance problems. Certain groups of learners are at a higher-than-average risk of being bullied, including:

— learners with special needs or a disability
— lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners
— learners from a minority ethnic or religious background

In Estyn's survey this year of 'Action on bullying', inspectors found that the way schools deal with bullying varies widely between schools and staff often adopt different approaches within the same school. Many staff, particularly in secondary schools, lack a clear understanding of what constitutes a 'reportable incident' of bullying. Most primary and secondary schools do not have a clear enough picture of patterns of behaviour over time that they can use to inform anti-bullying planning.[12]

[12] Action on bullying' (Estyn, 2014)
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/315915.6/action-on-bullying-june-2014/?navmap=30,163,

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 1: Thematic: Learners at risk of underachieving

How can schools tackle bullying?

There is a very strong link between the quality of the ethos of a school and the amount of bullying that takes place. Where the quality of the ethos is high, less bullying takes place, and, even when it does take place, these schools are more likely to deal with it effectively. In the best cases, schools help learners to understand their rights and make use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Regular and active work on the Rights of the Child, for example in assemblies, in discussion in class and in teachers' daily interactions with children, helps to foster an ethos where children understand that they have a right to be safe and they can exercise this right in school as well as in other areas of their lives. These approaches often support children in establishing their own rules in classrooms and in the school as a whole. In the best cases, children manage their own behaviour and interactions with other children with these rights in the forefront of their minds.

Most learners know whom to tell if they see bullying or experience it themselves. However, learners in primary schools are far more likely to refer incidents than in secondary schools. As learners get older, they become less confident that the school will be able to resolve the bullying issues.

Schools are increasingly effective in helping learners to understand issues around e-safety to make sure that they remain safe online and when using social media. However, incidents of cyberbullying also increase as learners move from primary to secondary school. In the best practice, staff keep up-to-date with the technologies that learners use, they understand their potential for misuse inside and outside of school, and there is strong collaboration between local primary and secondary schools in securing a common approach to these issues.

Schools limit bullying by limiting the opportunities where misbehaviour can occur. For example, they keep a close eye on communal areas, and they make sure that there is effective supervision between lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes, when bullying is more likely to occur. Schools provide counselling services and use external agencies well to support learners who experience bullying. In most schools, staff have a good understanding of the extent of verbal bullying and know the kinds of language used by learners that is a form of insult. Staff know that this is not normal 'banter' and treat it appropriately as offensive and bullying behaviour.

Recording incidents of bullying is important because it allows schools to monitor trends and to shape their anti-bullying approaches accordingly. We find that most schools keep records of poor behaviour, but only a minority keep a specific record of bullying incidents or categorise incidents according to the protected characteristics.

Eveswell Primary School tackles homophobia

In **Eveswell Primary School** in Newport has undertaken considerable work on challenging stereotypes. It works with the local authority and a national organisation to tackle homophobia and address any stereotypical choices and views among learners.

For more information about this, please click on the thematic report: Action on bullying

Section 2:
Sector report
Primary schools

In January 2014, there were 1,357 primary schools in Wales. This is 17 fewer than in January 2013. There were 269,421 pupils in primary schools in January 2014, an increase of 5,235 pupils from the previous year. This is the fourth consecutive annual rise in primary pupil numbers. This year, we inspected 229 primary schools.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools

Follow-up:
Primary schools

We identified 34 schools this year that have excellent practice under at least one quality indicator. This number has remained broadly the same over recent years at around 15% of primary schools inspected. Ten schools were judged to be excellent overall. In these schools, leaders have rigorous systems to establish high expectations of pupils and consistency in teaching and assessment across the school. As a result, pupils of all abilities make very good progress.

Around two-thirds of primary schools inspected this year need a follow-up visit. A school may have some aspects of its provision that are only adequate even though the overall judgement is 'good'. This means that some schools that are good overall require follow-up monitoring. Fifty-eight per cent of schools inspected this year need monitoring either by the local authority or by Estyn, compared with 43% last year. In schools requiring Estyn monitoring, leaders are not doing enough to address inconsistencies across the school, particularly in relation to the progress that pupils make in their numeracy skills and to a lesser extent their literacy skills.

The proportion of primary schools requiring special measures has remained fairly constant over recent years at around 2%. However, 12 primary schools this year require significant improvement. This is more than last year and represents 5% of schools inspected.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of primary schools in categories of follow-up[13]
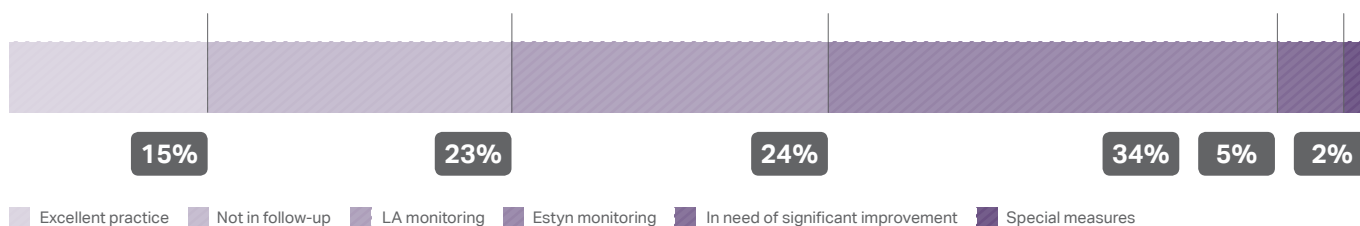
| 15% | 23% | 24% | 34% | 5% | 2% |

Excellent practice | Not in follow-up | LA monitoring | Estyn monitoring | In need of significant improvement | Special measures

[13] A very few schools are in two categories, for example where a school has excellent practice but also requires Estyn monitoring.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools

Outcomes:
Primary schools

Standards

Standards are good or better overall in around 63% of primary schools inspected. This is lower than in the previous two years when standards have been good or better in around 70% of primary schools. The proportion of schools where inspectors judged standards as excellent or unsatisfactory has remained broadly constant. This year, the increase in adequate judgements is mainly due to pupils' limited progress in numeracy. In just over a third of schools, where standards are only adequate, there is no trend of improvement, and girls tend to perform better than boys, particularly at the higher-than-expected outcomes and levels in literacy. The rate of progress across the school is too variable.

In the very few schools where standards are excellent, pupils make very good progress in their learning, often from low starting points. They apply their literacy, numeracy, thinking and problem-solving skills well across the curriculum. There is no significant difference between the standards of literacy and numeracy in English and mathematics lessons respectively and their standards in other subjects. Pupils eligible for free school meals generally perform as well as their peers and there tends to be little difference between the performance of boys and girls.

In a few schools where the Foundation Phase is not implemented fully and has become too formal, pupils do not develop thinking and problem-solving skills well enough and their development as independent learners is hampered.
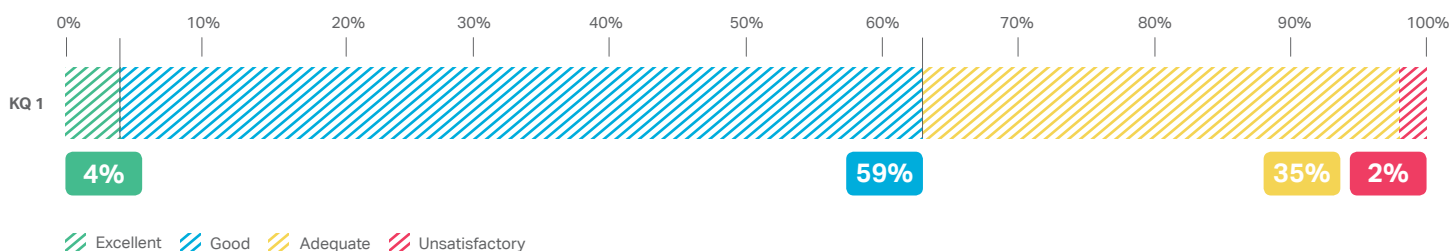
Literacy

There has been a small improvement in pupils' literacy this year, particularly in schools that provide more opportunities for pupils to write in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Progress in improving pupils' writing has been faster in the Foundation Phase than at key stage 2. In a minority of schools, pupils' writing is still too brief and lacking in imagination.

In the **Foundation Phase**, the increased focus on speaking and listening has continued to have a positive impact. Where this is particularly successful, pupils respond confidently to questions using a mature vocabulary. In a few schools that develop pupils' reading well, pupils read fluently and discuss what they have read with confidence. In a majority of schools, pupils use phonic strategies to read unfamiliar words and use other clues about the context of the book to improve their understanding and fluency. In a minority of schools, many pupils do not have the skills to decode texts. An excellent feature of a very few pupils' writing in Year 1 and Year 2 is their understanding of different writing styles and their ability to use these across the curriculum. In a majority of schools, most pupils make progress in developing their writing. By the end of the Foundation Phase, they write independently to create letters, stories and poems that sustain interest. Their spelling and punctuation are generally accurate.

In **key stage 2**, in schools where reading is excellent, pupils use higher-order reading skills such as inference and deduction. In a majority of schools, pupils discuss the characters and plot in their book in detail. They have the skills to help them read with understanding. Older pupils develop their research skills and skim and scan text to find information quickly. In a minority of schools, pupils' reading, particularly that of boys, is often hesitant and pupils lack confidence when searching for information. In a minority of schools, pupils rarely write at length in lessons other than English and they do not redraft their work. By the end of key stage 2, in a majority of schools, pupils write in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. Where writing is strong, punctuation and grammar are accurate, and vocabulary is used to create an effect and to hold the attention of the reader.

Figure 2.2: Percentages of judgements awarded for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

KQ 1

4%   59%   35%   2%

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

Numeracy

In a majority of schools, the increased focus on developing pupils' numeracy is beginning to have a positive impact, although this is from a low baseline.

In the **Foundation Phase**, many pupils find it difficult to interpret problems expressed in words and to decide which operation they need to use to solve the problem. Where standards are good, pupils talk confidently about the mathematics they use and explain the reasons for their approach.

In **key stage 2**, in schools where numeracy is strong, most pupils use their skills to solve mathematical problems in a variety of contexts. They solve real-life problems that require applying a range of numeracy skills. For example, they plan the purchase of new furniture for their classroom and calculate the cost. In a minority of schools where there are shortcomings in numeracy, pupils do not use the skills they gain in mathematics lessons at the same level in other subjects.

ICT

Most pupils use ICT well to present information, and pupils at key stage 2 develop their skills in ICT to research information in different subjects. In the very few schools where ICT is excellent, most pupils use a range of ICT equipment confidently in the Foundation Phase. They build on this to master more complex skills. For example, they produce simple computer games using simulations and spreadsheets. In a minority of schools, pupils do not use a wide enough range of ICT skills such as data handling, modelling or writing simple coded programs.

Welsh

Standards in Welsh as a second language have not improved. In the **Foundation Phase**, most pupils continue to enjoy learning Welsh and respond to commands with understanding. Many ask and answer simple questions with confidence. This year, in a few schools, there has been an increase in daily, short practice sessions to keep pupils' skills in Welsh sharp. This often improves pupils' confidence when speaking on a range of topics and has enabled them to sustain a conversation for longer periods, particularly in **key stage 2**. In most schools, pupils do not use their Welsh oracy and writing skills beyond Welsh lessons. They lack confidence and are reluctant to participate in short exchanges about everyday subjects. Most pupils have reading skills that are less well developed than their speaking and writing skills and many find it difficult to discuss what they have read. Very few pupils have a Welsh reading book.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is good or better in a majority of schools. In these schools, pupils are motivated to learn and co-operate well with one another. They have a good understanding of what they need to do to be healthy, and explain what constitutes a healthy diet and the benefits of regular exercise.

In many schools, where teachers implement the **Foundation Phase** successfully, pupils develop independent learning skills well and make appropriate choices about how and what they would like to learn. In **key stage 2**, an increasing proportion of pupils contribute to curriculum planning and identify what they already know and what they would like to find out.

In most schools, pupils behave well and show respect for adults and their peers. In a very few schools, where lessons lack pace and there is no consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour, a minority of pupils disrupt the work of others.

In 2013-2014 there is an increase in overall attendance of about one percentage point when compared with the previous year. The national rate for primaryschools shows a trend of improvement since 2006 and is around 95%. This year, just under a third of schools inspected have a recommendation to improve pupils' attendance. Although most schools have increased their focus on improving pupils' attendance to some extent, many do not maintain this focus or make sufficient progress in improving overall attendance. In a minority of schools, attendance compares poorly with that of similar schools and shows little improvement over recent years.

In most schools, there is an elected school council that can demonstrate how its actions have improved elements of provision, such as improving the outdoor area or purchasing additional toys and games for playtimes. In a very few schools, the school council has a significant impact on policies and the curriculum. For example, in one school the school council has helped staff to introduce numeracy more regularly into the curriculum and has designed the school's anti-bullying and homework policies.

Business enterprise projects improve pupils' skills

Pupils of all abilities at **Llanyrafon Primary School** take part in business enterprise projects. Participation in business enterprise greatly enhances pupils' literacy, numeracy and life skills and improves their confidence and wellbeing.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools

Provision: Primary schools

Provision is good or better overall in around 70% of schools. This proportion is lower than it was last year and reflects shortcomings in teaching. Over two-thirds of schools have at least one recommendation to improve aspects of teaching or assessment. In addition, the proportion of schools providing good or better learning experiences for pupils is lower than it was last year.

Learning experiences

In most schools, teachers provide learning experiences broadly in line with the principles of the Foundation Phase. However, even in good schools this year, there is a tendency for the **Foundation Phase** to become too formal too soon. For example, practitioners are using purchased schemes of work to deliver numeracy and literacy. This does not encourage the use of all areas of learning to strengthen pupils' skills or to make learning fun and motivating.

In **key stage 2**, there is an increase in the number of schools using a thematic approach to delivering the curriculum. A few schools allow flexibility in this planning to respond to pupils' interest and to take account of current events. A very few schools do not meet the Welsh Government's recommendation for the amount of teaching time at key stage 2 and do not allow enough time to cover the range of subjects required by the National Curriculum.

This year, the schools inspected are at varying stages of implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and are adapting their planning to include increased opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Where this is most successful, schools build on pupils' previous learning and staff capture pupils' interest in lessons that have an imaginative and stimulating context. Schools where

planning is good or better offer innovative opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy, literacy, thinking and ICT skills in cross-curricular, thematic projects such as those that focus on education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC). In schools where there are shortcomings, the curriculum does not allow enough time for the full range of subjects or areas of learning; approaches to planning are inconsistent; and teachers do not adapt schemes of work or materials well enough to respond to learners' interests and needs.

A majority of schools make good use of educational visits and visitors to the school. In a few schools, teachers make creative use of the local community as a learning resource. They link these experiences with opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in a real life and imaginative context. For example, pupils assess and report on the risks of flooding in their area in response to national news items.

Provision for Welsh remains an important area for improvement in a significant minority of schools.

Making literacy and numeracy a priority

Eveswell Primary School has raised pupils' standards by implementing literacy and numeracy successfully across the curriculum.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.3: Percentages of judgements awarded for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2	4%	68%	26%	2%

Excellent / Good / Adequate / Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools
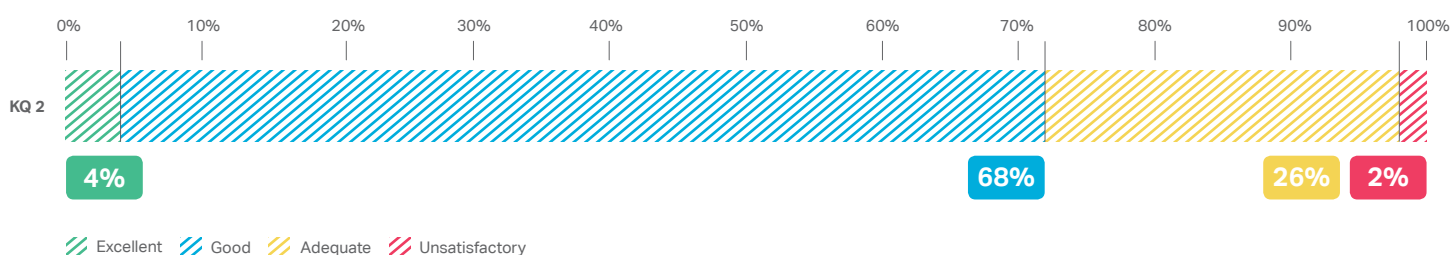
Teaching

This year, 10 schools had excellent teaching and assessment. This is an increase on last year. Although these schools are rare, they have common features, such as teachers who have high expectations of all pupils and lessons that are creative, stimulating and challenging. Staff develop pupils' ability to identify the key aspects of their work and that of others needing improvement so that they can raise their achievement to a higher level. For example, in one school, pupils read a 'letter from a dinosaur' and provide him with advice about how to improve his letter-writing skills.

Around two-thirds of schools have good or better provision for teaching and assessment. However, the quality and consistency of the feedback pupils receive, and how effective this is in helping pupils to improve their work, are weak. In most schools, teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make positive comments. Nevertheless, in a minority of schools they do not indicate clearly enough what pupils need to do to improve their work. Where marking shows pupils how they can improve, teachers do not always make sure that pupils respond to the advice given.

In schools where teaching is good, teachers make clear what they expect of pupils, and lessons build on previous learning successfully. They engage the interest of nearly all pupils, not only in the subject taught but also in developing their literacy and numeracy. Teachers adapt work to suit pupils of different ages and abilities. There is a culture of collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities. For example, teaching assistants in the Foundation Phase use skilful questioning to help pupils achieve their learning objectives because they take part in planning the lesson.

In many of the schools where teaching has shortcomings, lessons lack pace and teachers do not maintain pupils' interest. Teachers take the lead in lessons too often and do not always offer enough opportunities for pupils to work independently. As a result, pupils, especially the more able, do not always achieve high enough standards. In a few schools, teachers use worksheets too often. This constrains the amount of writing pupils produce and prevents them from making decisions about how to present their work. This also impedes pupils' development as independent learners. In a few schools, teachers do not consider the needs of individual pupils or groups of pupils. They present the same work to pupils of all abilities and look for different outcomes, rather than matching the work to pupils' levels of development.

Care, support and guidance

The quality of care, support and guidance is good or better in nine-in-ten schools. Most primary schools have suitable policies and procedures to combat bullying and to manage pupils' behaviour, but they do not always keep records that would help them identify patterns of bullying. Nearly all schools have arrangements for safeguarding pupils that meet requirements. Most schools make effective use of specialist services and support pupils with additional learning needs. A few schools are making good use of a pastoral support worker to link between home and school and to provide a valuable point of contact and advice for parents and pupils. This has had a positive impact on pupils' attendance and increased the numbers of parents who attend meetings to discuss their child's progress.

Most schools promote healthy eating and drinking and make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to be active during the school week. In many schools, lessons about how to lead a healthy lifestyle form an integral part of the curriculum.

Learning environment

In most schools, there is a suitable emphasis on celebrating equality and diversity. Most schools provide pupils with a safe and secure learning environment where everyone is valued equally. In many schools, staff create bright and welcoming rooms and use displays to celebrate pupils' work and achievements. Most schools have a suitable range of resources that are organised in a way that is easily accessible to pupils and support independent working. A few schools do not make good enough use of the outdoor learning environment to support learning in the Foundation Phase, particularly in Years 1 and 2. This year, there has been an increase in the number of schools where poor building maintenance and security have a negative impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Leadership and management: Primary schools

Leadership

Leadership is good or better in two-thirds of primary schools. This is down from last year when it was good or better in three-quarters of schools. The proportion of schools where leadership is only adequate has increased this year. In these schools, the senior leadership team does not always work as a unit, and roles and responsibilities are not clear enough. As a result, leaders do not hold senior and middle managers accountable for the standards pupils achieve, and do not place an appropriate focus on improving standards. In a few schools, senior leaders do not understand the Foundation Phase, and do not ensure that teachers implement it fully to develop pupils' independent working and problem-solving skills.

In the few schools where leadership is excellent, improving standards is a priority, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and all staff, governors and pupils understand this. Leaders and managers make good use of information from self-evaluation processes to analyse performance and set priorities. Senior and middle leaders have clearly defined roles and there is a culture of accountability. Performance management is highly effective and linked to pupil performance. There is a challenging, yet supportive, ethos of improvement.

In around one-in-seven schools, leadership is judged to be better than standards. In most of these schools, new practices have not yet had enough time to impact fully on outcomes. In many of these schools, there has been a relatively recent change in leadership or a new emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders.

Governing bodies generally provide good support for headteachers and help to set the strategic direction in most primary schools. In nearly all schools, governors make sure that the school meets statutory requirements. There have been improvements in governors' ability to provide enough challenge to the school, particularly in relation to the standards that pupils achieve. However, this remains an issue in over a fifth of primary schools. In many of these schools, governors' understanding of school performance data is improving, but they rely too much on the information supplied to them by the headteacher.

Improving quality

A majority of schools have effective processes for improving quality. In these schools, leaders use a range of first-hand information to support their analysis of the school's performance. This includes analysing data, listening to learners, observing lessons, scrutinising work and obtaining the views of parents. They use the results to highlight strengths and to identify areas for development that feed directly into the school's improvement plan. The number of areas for improvement is manageable, and targets focus on improving pupils' outcomes. In the very few schools where improving quality is excellent, leaders and managers, at all levels, monitor and evaluate the progress of plans rigorously and ensure that staff comply with agreed actions. There is a concentrated focus on closing the gap in achievement between pupils living in deprivation and their peers.

Many schools make good use of data to analyse overall pupil performance and to track progress. However, only a minority of schools make effective use of data to track the progress of different groups of pupils. In a few schools, systems for analysing pupils' performance are over-complicated, and the results of data analysis do not provide a clear picture of what needs to be improved. This is particularly true when schools use more than one system for tracking.

Figure 2.4: Percentages of judgements awarded for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3 — 7% | 62% | 28% | 3%

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Primary schools
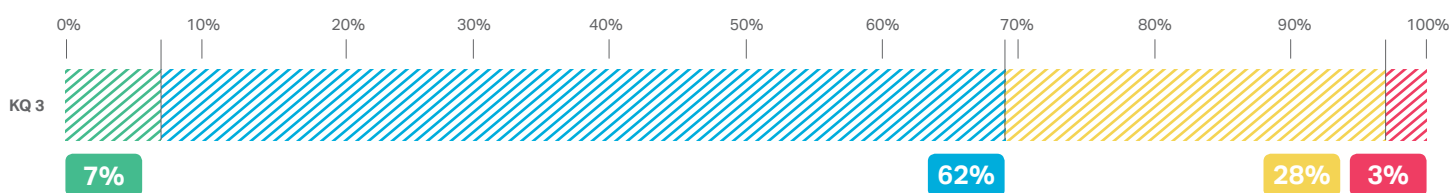
Partnership working

Most schools have a good range of partnerships that impact positively on pupils' learning. For example, a few schools work with local sports groups to allow pupils to experience new sports and specialist coaching. Many schools have strong partnerships with parents, involve them in school activities and provide useful information to help them to support their child's learning at home. In a very few schools, partnerships are only adequate. In these schools, links with other schools are often limited to joint moderation and assessment activities.

Resource management

Around two-thirds of schools provide good or better value for money. This is fewer than was the case last year. Most schools have enough suitably qualified staff. Many schools deploy support staff well to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. However, many schools do not use the pupil deprivation grant specifically to support pupils eligible for free school meals. Instead, they use the funding to employ additional staff and to introduce programmes that support pupils with low attainment. As a result, these schools do not challenge or support more able pupils experiencing poverty. Most schools respond to staff training needs appropriately. However, many staff lack confidence in teaching Welsh as a second language and opportunities to improve these skills are often limited.

In most schools, there are suitable arrangements to set and monitor the school's budget and to address a significant budget surplus or deficit. However, the link between spending plans and the standards pupils achieve is often unclear and generally governors do not monitor plans well enough in this respect. In 2013-2014, there was an increase in the proportion of primary schools with a budget deficit to 11%, from 9% in the previous year.

Creating a learning culture

At **High Cross Primary School,** leaders have created a learning environment that helps staff to identify how best they can develop their own skills to improve pupils' learning. Teachers are encouraged by the school to seize opportunities for professional development and to contribute their ideas to the school development plan. As a result, pupil results have significantly improved.

For more information about this, please click on the case study
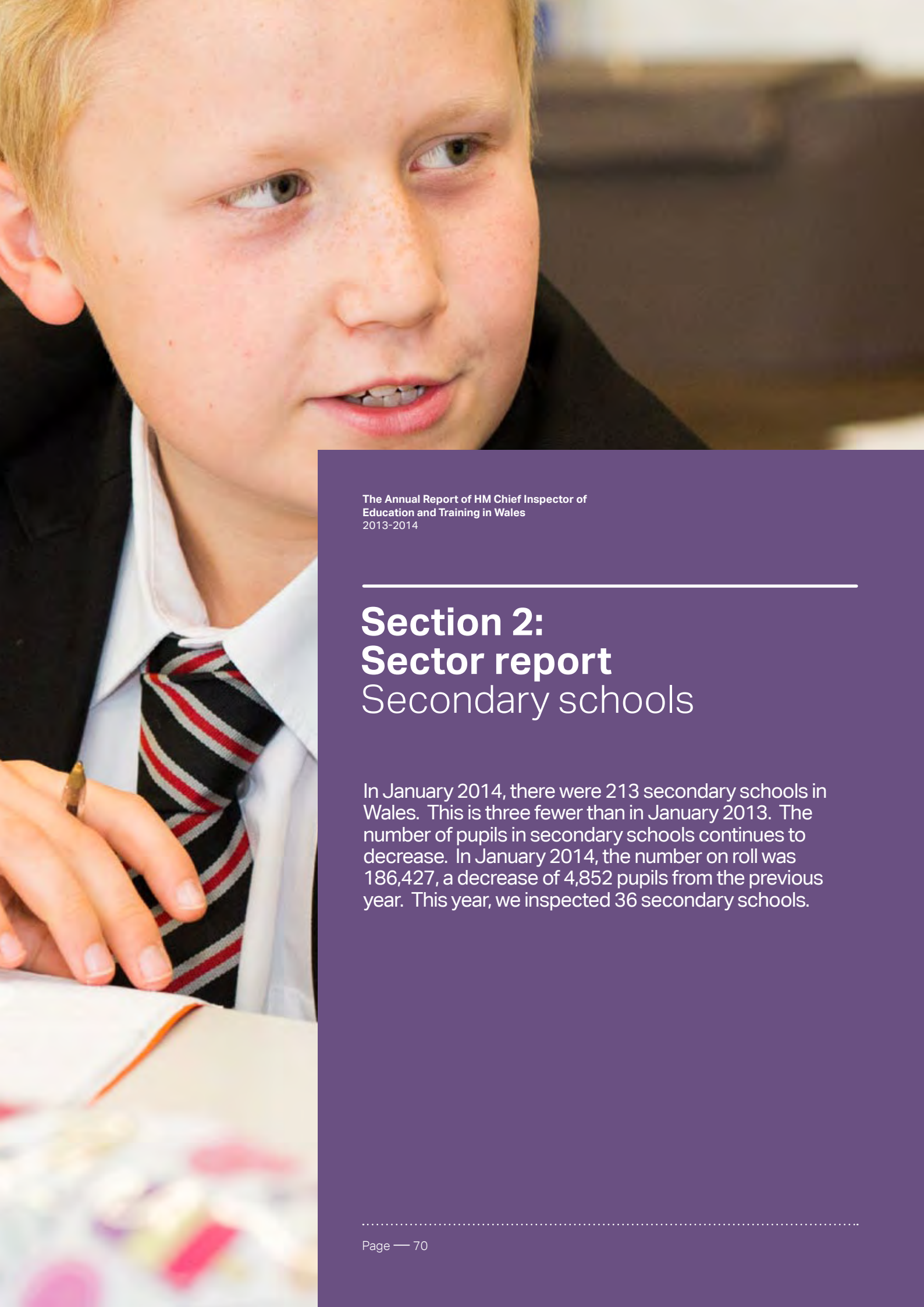
Section 2:
Sector report
Secondary schools

In January 2014, there were 213 secondary schools in Wales. This is three fewer than in January 2013. The number of pupils in secondary schools continues to decrease. In January 2014, the number on roll was 186,427, a decrease of 4,852 pupils from the previous year. This year, we inspected 36 secondary schools.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Secondary schools

Follow-up:
Secondary schools

This year, nine schools were identified as having sector leading practice. This is a similar proportion to that in the last three years. Seven schools were identified as requiring monitoring by the local authority. This figure is slightly higher than last year's. These are generally good schools, but they have minor aspects that need improvement. This year, the number of schools requiring monitoring by Estyn increased from 11 to 17. Many of these schools have inconsistent or poor performance in one or more of the core subjects. They also have important shortcomings in aspects of their teaching and assessment and this leads to too much inconsistency in pupils' experiences. In these schools, leaders have only just begun to address these shortcomings.

This year, only one school was placed in a statutory category following a core inspection. This is the lowest number since the first year of the current inspection cycle and represents an improvement on last year, when nearly a third of schools were placed in a statutory category. Last year, six secondary schools required special measures. This year, none requires special measures.

Figure 2.5: Percentages of secondary schools in a category of follow-up[14]

| 25% | 17% | 19% | 47% | 3% |

Excellent practice   Not in follow-up   LA monitoring   Estyn monitoring   In need of significant improvement

[14] A very few schools are in two categories, for example where a school has excellent practice but also requires Estyn monitoring.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Secondary schools

Outcomes:
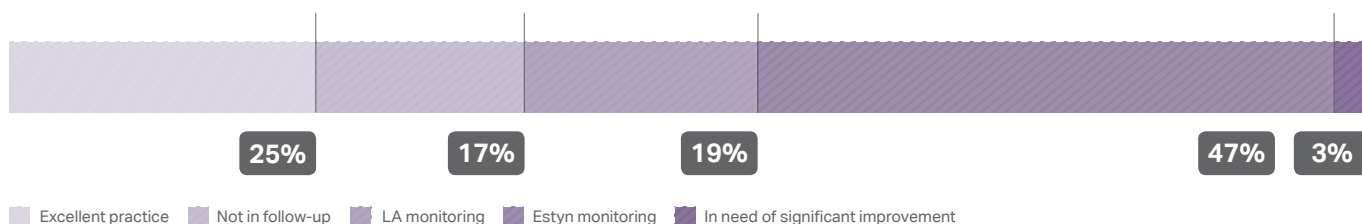# Secondary schools

Standards

Standards are good or better in just over half of secondary schools inspected. This is an improvement on last year, but the proportion of schools where standards are excellent has declined. Even in good schools, there are groups of pupils, particularly the most able, who are not making as much progress as they should. This year, no school was judged to have unsatisfactory standards. This is much better than last year and the majority of schools inspected show a steady improvement in examination performance. Only a very few schools show a decline in examination performance.

In a very few schools where standards are excellent, examination results are very good and consistently compare well with those of similar schools. Nearly all pupils display high levels of achievement and progress in their learning. During their time in school, many pupils develop a range of higher-order reading and writing skills and some are able to apply these well across the curriculum. However, even in these excellent schools, pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are generally not as strong as their literacy skills.

In around half of schools where standards are good, examination performance compares well with that in similar schools. However, in the majority of these schools, boys do not perform as well as girls, more able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as expected, or the progress in lessons of more able pupils is variable. Pupils with additional learning needs

achieve well and those who receive additional support to address weak literacy or numeracy skills make good or better progress. Many pupils have a thorough and accurate recall of prior learning and can write for a range of purposes and audiences. They demonstrate secure reading skills and use a wide and varied vocabulary. However, their numeracy skills are often at a lower level than their literacy skills. This is partly because pupils tend to practise a relatively narrow range of numeracy skills that are not challenging enough for their level of ability. They lack fluency with basic calculations or are unable to interpret data fully, and this hinders their progress.

Standards in Welsh second language at key stage 3 are improving. More schools now enter pupils for Welsh language qualifications that match their ability and, this year, fewer schools have recommendations to improve standards of Welsh second language. Generally, pupils still do not practise and develop their Welsh often enough outside the classroom.

Wellbeing

In over two-thirds of schools, wellbeing is good or better. This is a slightly higher than was the case last year. There are also fewer schools where wellbeing is unsatisfactory. In most schools, wellbeing is the strongest aspect of their work. This improvement reflects a steady improvement in attendance and a reduction in fixed-term exclusions. However, the proportion of schools with excellent wellbeing has reduced.

**Figure 2.6: Percentages of judgements awarded for
Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
KQ 1	6%	47%	47%	
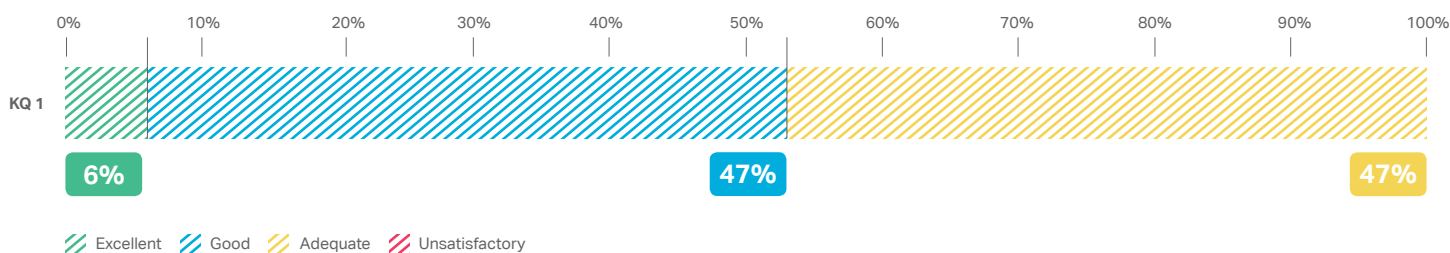
In many schools, pupils generally demonstrate a willingness to learn and have positive attitudes towards their work and the life of the school. Most pupils feel safe and believe that bullying is dealt with appropriately. Many pupils understand the importance of healthy living and participate in a wide range of sporting activities. Behaviour is good, although in a few schools a small number of pupils present challenging behaviour and this has an impact on the progress and learning of other pupils. In many schools, the school council is well established and makes thoughtful contributions towards the life of the school. These school councils influence policy and are considered a valuable forum for sharing ideas about school life. In a very few schools, pupils' contribution to decision-making and school improvements is outstanding. For example, in one school they have helped to design and establish a suite of resources to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Attendance in secondary schools continues to improve and fewer schools have recommendations to improve attendance. Most pupils develop an appropriate range of social and life skills. Many participate in a wide range of activities to support their local community and raise funds for charities.

In a minority of schools, there are important shortcomings in aspects of wellbeing. These include poor attendance or rates of attendance that are not improving quickly enough, high levels of absenteeism or poor behaviour of a few pupils. In only a very few schools, there are high rates of temporary exclusions, or the school council is inappropriate and there are limits on how it can influence provision.

Valuing learner voice

Castell Alun High School has developed a number of processes so that pupils can make their voice heard. Pupils take part in the self-evaluation process and are proud of their place in the school community. Positive attitudes to learning have had a very strong impact on pupils' attendance, behaviour and standards.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Provision: Secondary schools

Provision is good or better in just over two-thirds of schools. This is better than was the case last year and reflects the progress made by schools in improving their provision for skills and in ensuring greater in-school consistency in the quality of teaching.

Nearly all schools offer a suitable range of courses at key stage 4. Many schools have effective strategies to support pupils with low levels of literacy and numeracy skills. They are making appropriate progress in implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). Most use the LNF as a framework within which to structure and monitor their provision. However, in only around half of schools are the co-ordination and monitoring of literacy across all curriculum subjects good. The quality of support received by schools from National Support Programme partners has been variable. In schools where support has been less effective, partners lack experience of the age-range of the school they are supporting, or do not have the same breadth of expertise across both literacy and numeracy.

A minority of schools have shortcomings in the way in which they are planning for progression in both literacy and numeracy and a lack of knowledge about how and where to include higher-order numeracy tasks appropriately across subjects other than mathematics.

The promotion of the Welsh dimension is a strong feature in most Welsh-medium and bilingual schools and in the majority of English-medium schools. For example, pupils can take up a range of extra-curricular sporting and cultural activities that enable them to develop their use of the Welsh language in more social and informal settings. This year, inspectors found that pupils are able to study Welsh at an appropriate level in a majority of schools. However as reported last year, in a minority of schools, including a very few bilingual schools, pupils are not suitably challenged and do not take qualifications appropriate to their ability in Welsh.

By working in partnership with charities and environmental organisations and using guest speakers, a majority of schools offer a good range of activities that support sustainable development and global citizenship activities. In previous years, we reported that global citizenship was less well developed than sustainable development, but the two aspects now receive similar attention.

Teaching

This year, there has been a small improvement in the quality of teaching, which is now good or better in half of schools, but there are fewer schools where teaching is excellent.

In the very few schools where teaching is excellent, there is a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching across all subjects. Activities are challenging, and engage pupils' imagination fully. Teachers' questioning is skilful and probing and explores pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils make better than expected progress.

In around half of schools where teaching is consistently good, teachers have high expectations, present well-planned tasks and provide effective questioning. However in half of schools, teaching is inconsistent and there is too much variation in pupils' experiences. In these schools, there are weaknesses in lesson planning, questioning, pace or expectations.

Assessment is consistently good in a majority of the schools inspected this year. Good features include clear feedback to pupils about what needs to improve and guidance on how to respond. Teachers and leaders monitor the progress of pupils carefully. This information is used well to identify where additional support or greater challenge is needed. However, the quality of assessment is variable in a minority of schools. In these schools, there is inconsistency in the quality of written feedback and pupils do not routinely act on teachers' comments to correct and improve their work.

Figure 2.7: Percentage judgements awarded for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2: Excellent 3% | Good 69% | Adequate 28%

Legend: Excellent, Good, Adequate, Unsatisfactory
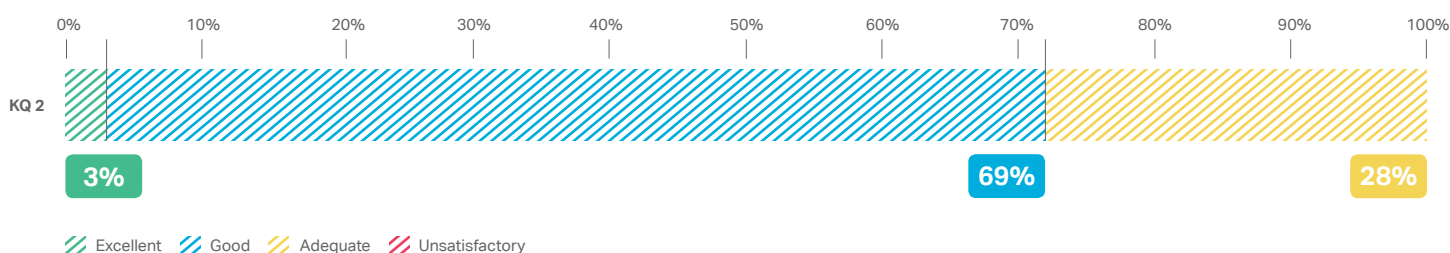
Care, support and guidance

Care, support and guidance are good or better in around four-fifths of schools. These schools have well-established and co-ordinated arrangements to make sure that pupils are looked after, safe and given timely and helpful support and guidance. In many schools, the impact is evident in the strength of relationships, good behaviour, attendance and achievement against indicators that measure success in a range of qualifications. In these schools, staff deal promptly and appropriately with bullying.

In a small minority of schools, care, support and guidance are only adequate because of important shortcomings in key areas, including insufficiently robust risk assessment of site safety. In a few schools, care, support and guidance arrangements have not improved behaviour, attendance and attainment. In a very few schools, arrangements for safeguarding give cause for concern as guidance and training have not had enough impact on the practices of a few staff.

In many schools, provision for pupils with additional learning needs is strong. Even in schools where provision overall is only adequate, this aspect of their work is often a strength. In a very few schools there are shortcomings in the co-ordination of this provision and inconsistency in the quality of planning to meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs. A few teachers do not plan well enough to meet these pupils' needs and leaders do not communicate fully with parents.

This year, we reported for the first time on arrangements schools make to implement the Healthy Eating and Drinking in Schools Measure (Wales). Nearly all schools make appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Learning environment

This year, there is a higher proportion of schools with an excellent learning environment. These schools are exceptionally successful at creating a strong sense of pride and community. This is evident in high attendance, very good behaviour and the above-expected attainment of many pupils. Many schools provide a good or very good learning environment. In most schools, the accommodation supports learning well. However, in a few schools, there are shortcomings related to health and safety or the school buildings and grounds. In a few schools, where the ethos is poor and expectations are low, this affects behaviour and often leads to high levels of exclusion.

Promoting the Welsh language

Staff at **Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw** act as language models to ensure that the Welsh language is at the forefront of school life. The school encourages pupils to take pride in their Welsh heritage and events are planned throughout the year to make Welsh a priority for everybody. As a result, pupils make significant progress in their Welsh linguistic skills.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Secondary schools

Leadership and management: Secondary schools

Leadership

Overall, leadership is good or better in more schools than identified last year. This year, the proportion of schools where leadership is adequate has increased, but there are no schools where leadership is unsatisfactory.

In a significant majority of schools, the headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership and is supported well by senior leaders. In these schools, they create a culture of high expectations and strong accountability and deliver a clear strategic vision to staff and pupils. However, in a few schools, there is an imbalance between the responsibilities at senior level because responsibilities are not distributed equitably or senior leaders do not have enough time to carry out all their responsibilities.

Leaders in a majority of schools challenge underperformance. These schools have well-developed arrangements for performance management and leaders set challenging and measurable objectives linked to school priorities. However, in a few instances, leaders have not yet had a sustained impact on improving examination performance in English/Welsh and mathematics.

In a minority of schools where leadership is only adequate, leaders at all levels do not have enough impact on teaching and standards. Often, this is because leaders do not set a high enough priority on improving teaching and learning and raising standards, notably in English/Welsh and mathematics.

This year, there has been a strong improvement in the role played by and capacity of governors. There are no recommendations linked to governance in this year's inspection reports, compared with the situation last year when a third of secondary schools had recommendations in this area. In a majority of

schools, governors provide strong challenge regarding standards and provision and are actively involved with the senior leaders in setting the school's strategic direction. Governors make beneficial links with subjects and provide useful support and challenge to middle leaders. In a few secondary schools, governors have a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They receive a wide range of information from leaders, staff and learners. This helps to ensure that governors provide an appropriate level of challenge and support. For example, in one school, governors are well informed of the school's progress because they observe lessons, listen to learners and receive reports on progress. In a very few schools, governors do not hold leaders to account well enough for their responsibilities or challenge the school enough on areas for improvement.

Improving quality

The proportion of schools where improving quality is good or better has increased from last year. Even so, over half of schools inspected are only adequate in this respect. No school is unsatisfactory.

In around half of schools where improving quality is good or better, self-evaluation processes are comprehensive and reports at all levels accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. These schools have systematic processes to evaluate performance based on a detailed analysis of data and wide range of first-hand evidence from lesson observation, book scrutiny and gathering views of parents, pupils and staff. In a few of these schools, pupils play a significant role in evaluating provision for teaching and learning through their involvement in reviews and lesson observation.

In many schools, development plans link closely to the outcomes of self-evaluation and identify clear priorities for improvement. Many middle leaders in schools where improving quality is good or better use data thoroughly to identify what needs to improve.

Figure 2.8: Percentage of judgements awarded for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

3%   56%   42%

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Secondary schools
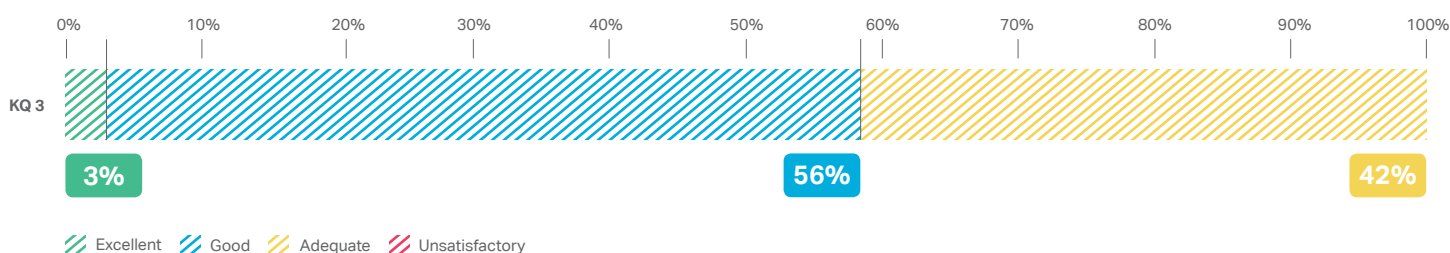
In just over half of schools, while self-evaluation and improvement planning have helped to improve aspects of provision or performance, these processes are not consistently leading to improvements in key areas, such as attendance, teaching or performance in indicators that include English/Welsh and mathematics. The main shortcoming in these schools is that self-evaluation reports do not identify important areas for development, such as those in teaching, assessment and the use of data. Also, there is too much inconsistency in the rigour of departmental self-evaluation and improvement plans.

In schools where improving quality is only adequate, often senior and middle leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are too generous. In these schools, lesson evaluations do not have a sharp enough focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress or provide specific advice for teachers to improve standards.

Partnership working

The number of schools where partnership working is good or better has increased since last year. One-in-nine schools are now adequate only, a significant decrease from the quarter of schools identified as adequate last year.

Most secondary schools have well-established links with a wide range of partners, which have contributed to improvements in standards and wellbeing. In a few schools, the combined impact of these partnerships has made an exceptional contribution to improving or maintaining high standards of attainment and wellbeing.

In most schools, closer collaboration with local colleges, schools and work-based providers has broadened the range of courses for 14 to 19-year-olds. These partnerships have also had an impact on reducing the number of pupils not in education, employment or training as well as helping vulnerable pupils to gain worthwhile qualifications.

There are helpful partnerships with parents in most schools and valuable links to the community, local businesses and external agencies, so that provision is matched well to pupils' needs. A few schools have links with local sports, drama and musical groups to put on sporting and musical events to connect to their local community and encourage pupils to continue their involvement after leaving school.

In a few schools where partnership working is only adequate, partnerships with parents are underdeveloped. Parents do not have enough opportunity to participate in aspects of school life, and in a few cases they do not receive timely feedback, or an indication of actions, following consultations.

Resource management

In over half of secondary schools, resource management is good or better. This is a significant improvement on the previous year where it was good or better in only 43%. This year, there are no schools where resource management is unsatisfactory, compared with nearly a quarter of schools last year.

Many schools use performance management appropriately to identify staff development needs. In the majority of schools, professional development is a strength, leaders invest in supporting teachers at all stages in their career and staff are involved in sharing best practice through influential working groups. A majority of these schools have productive links with other schools and organisations and these are used to good effect to improve provision and consistency in teaching. In a minority of schools, there are few opportunities to share good practice routinely within the school or with other schools.

In most secondary schools, the headteacher and governors monitor spending closely and manage resources well. In a very few schools, the use of the pupil deprivation grant does not focus sufficiently on the particular needs of disadvantaged pupils. Actions do not target pupils eligible for free school meals, and tend to be too generalised. A minority of schools have successfully managed a decrease in their budget due to falling rolls or have recovered successfully from a weak financial position. A minority of schools have retained suitable surplus funds and maintained a sound financial position.

Effective transition from primary to secondary school

Porthcawl Comprehensive School has support programmes that help pupils with the transition from primary to secondary school effectively. Parents are also engaged in the programme, which helps to ease any of their own concerns. As a result, the emotional wellbeing of students has improved and attendance has increased.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Section 2:
Sector report
Maintained special schools

In January 2014, there were 42 maintained special schools in Wales providing for 4,338 pupils. The number of pupils has increased gradually since 2010. This year, we inspected six special schools.

Follow-up:
Maintained special schools

This year, five special schools were identified as having sector-leading practice.   This is similar to the number last year.

Pupils at three of these schools achieve significant progress in relation to their needs and abilities. Individualised learning programmes, often planned in partnership with parents and professionals from other agencies, provide focus on the specific needs of each pupil. With support, nearly all pupils take an active part in planning and evaluating their learning. Over time, pupils apply their learning across all aspects of their work in school and successfully extend their learning to achieve qualifications appropriate to their individual needs.

The excellent leaders at three of these schools have high expectations and provide robust, coherent strategic direction. They create an outstandingly positive ethos that allows pupils to achieve their potential. Focused improvement planning and self-evaluation provide these schools with comprehensive understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Training for teachers and support staff links well to schools' improvement planning. A clear focus on promoting pupils' standards through exemplary pupil-centred planning and extensive partnerships with parents, other schools and the community continues to be a common feature of excellent special schools.

One school required further monitoring by Estyn.

Figure 2.9: Numbers of maintained special schools in categories of follow-up

| 5 | 1 |

Excellent practice   Estyn monitoring

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Maintained special schools

Outcomes:
Maintained special schools

Standards

Three of the schools inspected this year have good standards and three have excellent standards. Nearly all pupils make significant progress in meeting their individual learning targets. They are well motivated and expect to achieve highly. Nearly all older pupils gain appropriate qualifications suited to their needs and abilities.

In relation to their identified needs, pupils gain high levels of achievement and make at least good progress in their learning. Nearly all pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and apply them well in a variety of practical activities. For example, at one school, key stage 4 pupils use their numeracy skills to calculate the profits from their enterprise activity.

Nearly all pupils make significant improvement in their communication skills, verbally, by signing, or by using symbols or technology. Pupils who are able to do so make good progress with their reading and writing skills. They use these skills well to write about their experiences in extended writing tasks, and to read aloud confidently and for pleasure. Most pupils develop good thinking skills. They ask considered questions that indicate they are extending their understanding.

Wellbeing

Pupils' wellbeing is excellent in three and good in three schools.

Nearly all pupils make outstanding progress in improving their behaviour. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions over the past three years, and only a very few fixed-term exclusions. Attendance rates compare well with those at similar schools, with many pupils attending regularly once they settle at the school.

Nearly all pupils have a good attitude to learning and participate with enthusiasm. They show courtesy and respect to each other. Many pupils take part in a range of healthy additional activities offered by their schools, such as lunch-time yoga lessons and morning swim club. Through these activities, pupils learn to work with others as they develop their independence, social and life skills. They apply themselves to learning and take pride in their achievements.

Helping pupils to achieve qualifications

Pupils at **St Christopher's Special School,** Wrexham, take part in the 14-19 years options programme to help them achieve a range of qualifications. Staff provide pupils with advice on choosing options that will help them further their career and pupils have access to a range of work placements.

Pupils have made excellent progress and gain a wide range of recognised qualifications by the time they leave school. The programme has inspired and motivated pupils to continue learning after school.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.10: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ 1

| 3 | 3 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Maintained special schools
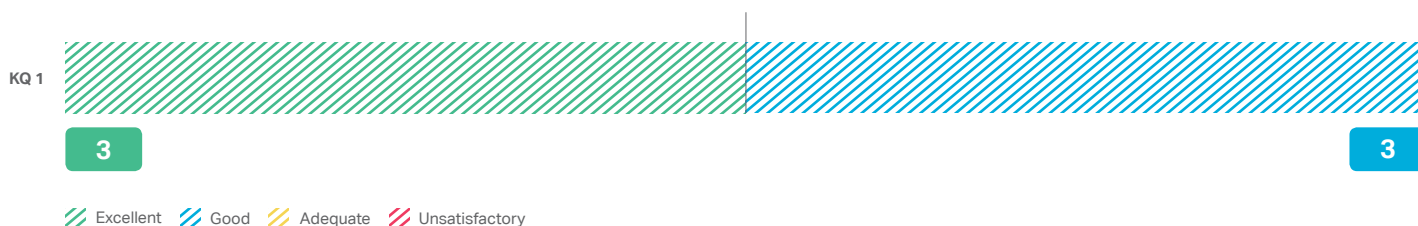
Provision:
Maintained special schools

Provision is good or better in all schools.

In four schools, learning experiences are excellent. These schools have well-developed assessment practices and track and record pupils' progress meticulously. They know pupils very well and staff use pupil-centred planning to provide challenging, individualised targets that support pupils' learning well.

All schools provide a curriculum that is interesting and stimulates pupils' learning. Cohesive teamwork between schools and other agencies secures broad and balanced experiences that meet pupils' learning and therapeutic needs. However, in four schools, there is not enough sharing of good practice to support staff development. A few schools do not provide opportunities for all pupils to study qualifications that challenge them sufficiently.

In four schools, there are well-embedded strategies and interventions to improve literacy, particularly communication. These include the use of published schemes and targeted approaches, such as signs and symbols, picture exchange communication and sensory stories. These schools provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in practical situations across the curriculum.

Teachers do not consistently give pupils enough opportunities to develop their numeracy across the curriculum. Three schools need to do more to plan how to integrate skills across the curriculum.

In five schools, provision for Welsh second language is good. Many staff and pupils use Welsh throughout the school day. The Welsh language and culture are an established part of the pupils' learning experiences.

In all schools, the provision of care, support and guidance is at least good. Schools are calm, nurturing and purposeful, with high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Sensitive teaching supports pupils to manage their own feelings and be considerate of the feelings of others. Effective personal and social education programmes place appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' personal safety, sex and relationships education, health, hygiene and staying healthy. Arrangements for safeguarding give no cause for concern.

All schools provide a range of lunchtime and out-of-school clubs and activities to enrich pupils' experiences, develop their fitness and improve their social skills. One school provides too few opportunities for pupils to learn and develop their skills alongside mainstream peers.

All schools provide an inclusive learning environment that promotes pupils' independence. In nearly all schools, accommodation is well maintained and stimulating. Specialist equipment and thoughtful adaptions ensure that all pupils have full access to their school. In one school, toilet facilities do not meet statutory requirements for the number of pupils and there are areas in need of improvement; for example, rooms are not decorated to provide an appropriate environment.

Figure 2.11: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

| 2 | 4 |

Excellent | Good | Adequate | Unsatisfactory

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Maintained special schools

Leadership and management:
Maintained special schools

In the three schools with excellent leadership, senior leaders have high expectations of performance and are consistent in rigorously challenging and holding staff to account.

All of the schools have suitable performance management arrangements for teachers and support staff. They have robust arrangements for improving quality, make detailed analyses of data on pupils' progress and use evidence from lessons and pupils' work to monitor performance and set suitable targets for improvement.

In two schools, governing bodies provide robust support and challenge to the leadership team. These governors are well informed and have a sound understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They scrutinise performance data and monitor provision to support improvement.

In the two schools where improvement planning is excellent, there is a regular cycle of quality assurance, with detailed targets with clearly identified outcomes. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate with an appropriate emphasis on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and standards. These schools take good account of the views of parents, pupils and other stakeholders in planning development.

Partnership working is excellent in five schools. All schools have a culture of collaborative working to extend pupils' experiences and improve their health and wellbeing. They all work closely with parents, and with health and other agencies, in a 'team around the family' approach to provide the specialist support needed to address pupils' needs. For example, these arrangements ensure that pupils have a range of therapy to improve their communication or physical development. Teachers, support staff and parents benefit from the advice of therapists as they learn how best to support pupils' therapy programmes. Nearly all schools provide outreach support services to mainstream schools to extend pupils' learning opportunities.

There is outstanding joint work between two schools to develop accurate and consistent moderation of pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy. These schools work highly effectively with partners, such as the National Support Programme, to increase their resources and improve their practice.

Work with colleges to widen pupils' opportunities to study vocational courses and develop the skills they need in work is at least good at all schools. Extensive links with the local community, including local businesses and industries, and innovative practice to provide work experiences are a strong feature in a minority of schools. These schools provide enterprise opportunities, such as cafés, retail shops, bicycle maintenance and car washing facilities within the school building and grounds.

All schools have well-qualified and experienced staff. These staff benefit from regular training to maximise their skills. All schools provide at least good value for money, and have comprehensive resources that they use successfully to support the needs of pupils.

Figure 2.12: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

| 3 | 2 | 1 |

🔲 Excellent 🔲 Good 🔲 Adequate 🔲 Unsatisfactory
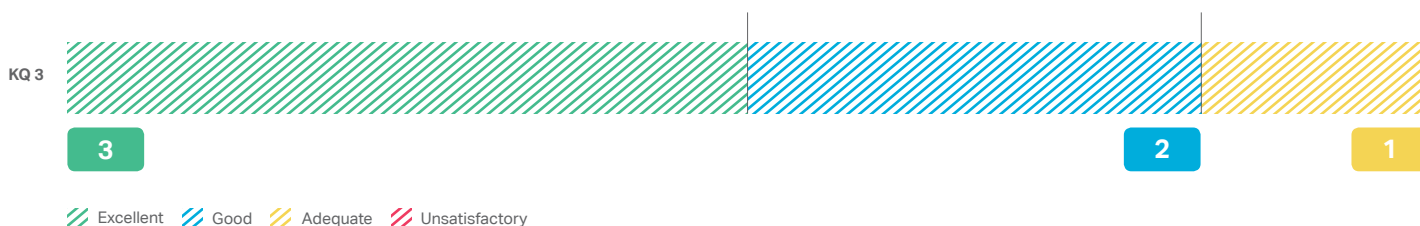
Section 2:
Sector report
Independent
special schools

In January 2014, there were 31 registered independent special schools in Wales. These schools educate approximately 550 pupils. Many of the schools are small and pupils generally live in children's homes linked to the school. The schools provide for a range of needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many of the pupils attend these schools because they have not managed to cope with larger mainstream settings.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Independent special schools

During 2013-2014, three new independent special schools opened. One school that provided for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and challenging behaviour closed. In July 2014, nine schools had no pupils. This is because there were no young people in the linked children's homes or because the young people residing in the homes were attending mainstream schools or alternative educational provision.

In addition to full inspections every six years, Estyn carries out annual monitoring inspections of independent special schools. This year we inspected four independent special schools and carried out annual monitoring visits to 21 schools.

Follow-up: Independent special schools

In inspections of independent special schools, we judge the extent to which the school complies with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. This year, two out of the four schools inspected met all the standards. One school failed to meet one of the standards, due to shortcomings in relation to a building issue. The other school failed to meet two of the standards.

None of the schools inspected this year were identified as having sector-leading practice. In comparison, four of the seven schools inspected during 2012-2103 were identified as having sector-leading practice. This reflects the significant variation in the quality of education at schools within the sector.

Out of the 21 schools visited as part of the annual monitoring process, six schools failed to meet one or more of the seven standards. Estyn carried out additional visits to three of these schools to monitor progress in relation to compliance with these standards. We shall revisit the other schools as part of the annual monitoring process to make sure that they have made the necessary improvements to maintain their registered status.

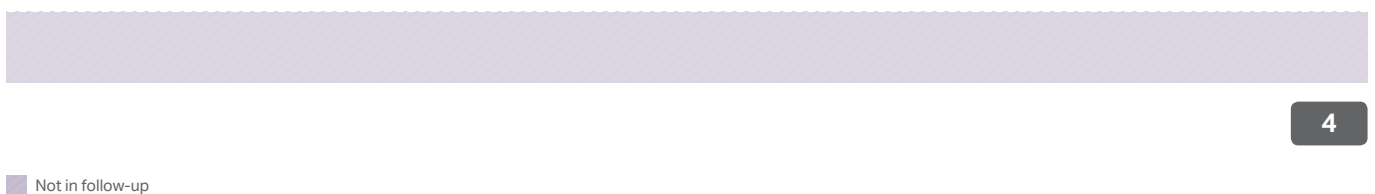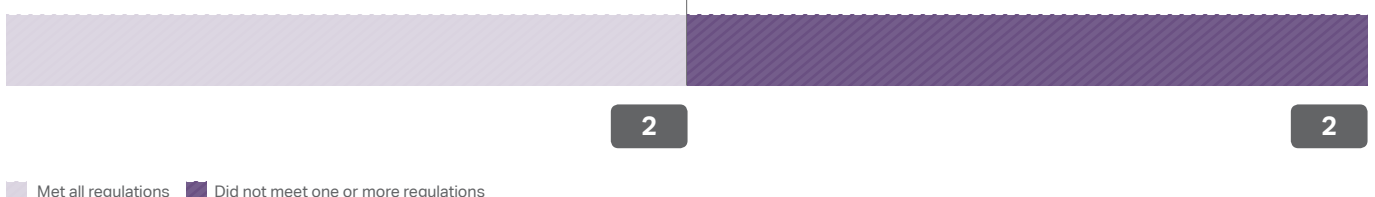**Figure 2.13: Numbers of schools in categories of follow-up**

4

☐ Not in follow-up

Figure 2.14: Numbers of schools that met regulations / did not meet all regulations

2   2

☐ Met all regulations   ☐ Did not meet one or more regulations

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Independent special schools

Outcomes: Independent special schools

Standards

Standards are good in three of the four schools inspected and adequate in the other. In the schools where standards are good, nearly all pupils make good progress in line with their individual abilities and needs. However, in the school where standards are only adequate, a minority of pupils do not make enough progress in line with their abilities.

In all of the schools, nearly all pupils develop their communication skills well. They speak politely and confidently to staff as well as to visitors to the school.

Most pupils in these schools develop their literacy and numeracy skills well, and apply them in lessons across the curriculum. In one school, pupils with complex needs apply their numeracy skills effectively to activities outside the school environment, for example by managing their money at the local bank and shops.

Where they are able to do so, pupils participate successfully in work placements. These include placements at local shops, cafes and farms.

In the three schools where standards are good, many or all of the school leavers progress to further education, employment or training. In two of the schools, one or more pupils gain the skills they need to return to mainstream schools.

In around three quarters of the schools visited as part of the annual monitoring process, pupils make good progress in line with their individual needs. However, in the remaining schools, there is not enough focus on the educational provision and pupils do not make satisfactory progress as a result.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is good in three of the four schools inspected and adequate in the other one.

Most pupils attend school regularly and attend lessons punctually. However, in one school, a minority of pupils arrive late frequently and miss too much school.

Despite their difficulties, nearly all pupils behave well most of the time. On the few occasions where pupils display challenging behaviour, they generally manage their emotions well and settle down quickly. However, in one school, the behaviour of a small number of pupils makes it hard for others to concentrate on their work.

With very few exceptions, pupils feel safe at school. They know whom to go to if they have a problem, and have the confidence to discuss their concerns with staff.

In all of the schools, pupils have regular opportunities to express their views on an informal basis. One of the schools has a well-established school council, where pupils chair the monthly meetings and take minutes. Two more schools have recently established a school council or forum, to give pupils further opportunities to express their views and contribute to decision-making.

In nearly all the schools visited as part of the annual monitoring process, pupils improve their behaviour and social skills well over time. However, in a few schools, pupils do not engage well enough in their learning.

Figure 2.15: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ 1

| 3 | 1 |

Excellent Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Independent special schools

Provision: Independent special schools

The quality of learning experiences is good in two of the schools inspected and adequate in the other two.

In all four schools, the curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. In one of the schools, opportunities to study science are limited.

In all the schools, there is a suitable range of activities that meet the abilities and needs of the pupils. Where appropriate, this includes a range of vocational opportunities, such as bricklaying, catering and woodwork. However, in one school, schemes of work are not planned well enough to engage pupils in activities that develop their independent thinking.

In all of the schools inspected, there are opportunities in many lessons for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. However, in three of the four schools, planning is not co-ordinated effectively enough at a strategic level. As a result, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' skills.

Teaching is good at two of the schools inspected and adequate at the other two. In all these schools, staff have a very clear understanding of the learning and behavioural needs of the individual pupils and, in most lessons, prepare appropriate activities. In two schools, teachers and support staff work well together to support the individual pupils. For example, they are consistent in the way they manage pupils' behaviour, and this helps pupils to settle down quickly. However, in one school, teachers do not always make good use of support staff. In another school, support staff provide too much help and do not give pupils enough opportunities to improve their skills.

The use of data varies considerably between schools. All of the schools carry out a baseline assessment, but two of the schools do not use data well enough to track pupil progress. In three of the schools, staff do not use data well enough to evaluate the impact of their work on pupils' standards or to inform their planning.

In one of the schools, teachers use a range of strategies to encourage pupils to judge their progress and think about how they might improve. For example, they encourage pupils to discuss with their peers the work they have done and what they could do to improve. However, in the other three schools, developing these peer and self-assessment techniques is at an early stage.

Care, support and guidance are good in three of the schools inspected, and adequate in the other. All four schools make effective use of outside agencies to support the wellbeing of the pupils. In one school, a nurse provides valuable sessions on drug and alcohol abuse. In another, a community police officer delivers programmes on e-safety, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.

Behaviour management is a strong feature of all the schools, and this has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and ability to engage in learning. For example, clear and consistent procedures help pupils learn to manage their feelings, take responsibility for their actions and show respect for others.

All of the schools inspected have a highly inclusive ethos and provide a calm, supportive environment that helps nearly all pupils to engage in their learning.

In many of the schools visited as part of the annual monitoring process, staff create a nurturing learning environment that gives pupils confidence and helps them to engage in learning. In these schools, the curriculum is well matched to the pupils' individual needs and teachers plan lessons carefully. However, in a few schools, the curriculum is not developed well enough to engage, inspire and challenge pupils fully and lessons do not have clear objectives.

Figure 2.16: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

| 3 | 1 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Independent special schools

Leadership and management: Independent special schools

Leadership and management are good in one of the schools and adequate in the other three although, due to the high quality of support for individual pupils, standards are good at three of the schools. There are, however, shortcomings in strategic management in three schools.

In all of the schools, leaders have a clear vision for the school, which is shared with all staff. There is a focus on creating an environment in which pupils can thrive. However, in three of the schools, managers do not focus enough on planning for school improvement or on monitoring the school's performance at a strategic level.

In all of the schools, proprietors or directors provide support, but they do not always challenge and hold the school to account for the standards pupils achieve.

All of the schools have made progress in developing self-evaluation processes, but these are still at an early stage. Self-evaluation reports do not identify clearly areas for development or focus enough on pupils' standards.

Planning for school improvement is also under-developed in all of the schools. In three of the schools, development plans do not help managers to monitor progress, due to a lack of clearly defined actions, responsibilities or timescales.

Partnership working is good in three of the schools inspected and adequate in the other school.

All of the schools have developed effective partnerships to support pupils' wellbeing, increase pupils' learning opportunities, or help them to move on to further education or training. Three of the schools have started to develop useful links with mainstream schools so as to develop staff knowledge and expertise. The other liaises with the local authority, which provides valuable training and support to the school.

In the most effective schools visited as part of the annual monitoring process, leaders and managers know the school's strengths and prioritise areas for improvement well. However, in the other schools, self-evaluation and planning for improvement are under-developed and do not focus enough on pupil outcomes.

Figure 2.17: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

1   3

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

Section 2:
Sector report
Independent mainstream schools

In January 2014, there were 39 independent mainstream schools in Wales providing education for 8,035 pupils. This year, we inspected seven of these schools. Three of the schools inspected are all-age schools providing for pupils across the primary and secondary phases. Two schools provide solely for the primary phase and two for the secondary phase. The 2,023 pupils in the independent mainstream schools we inspected in 2013-2014 represent just over 25% of the sector cohort.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Follow-up: Independent mainstream schools

This year, we identified three schools as having sector-leading practice, which is the same number as last year. Both of these schools have exceptionally strong partnership arrangements, which contribute to high standards.

In the inspection of independent schools, we judge the extent to which the school complies with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. This year, five of the schools inspected met all of the regulations. We shall revisit the two schools that did not meet all of these regulations to make sure that they have made the required improvements to maintain registration.

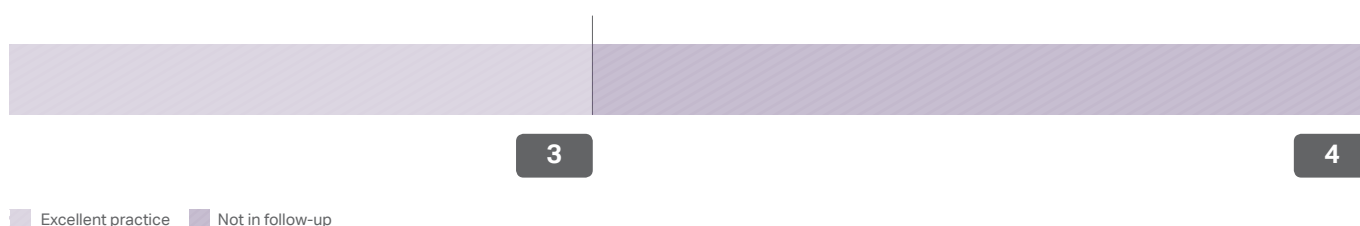**Figure 2.18: Numbers of schools in categories of follow-up**

3   4

Excellent practice   Not in follow-up

Figure 2.19: Numbers of schools that met regulations / did not meet all regulations

5   2

Met all regulations   Did not meet one or more regulations

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Outcomes: Independent mainstream schools

Standards

Standards are good or better in all schools inspected this year.

Two schools have excellent standards. In both of these schools, many pupils make good and often excellent progress based on their attainment at entry to the school. By the time they leave school at the end of key stage 4 or the sixth form, pupils' performance in public examinations is outstanding when compared with that of pupils in other schools in the maintained and independent sectors.

In the schools where standards are good, most pupils show high levels of interest and apply themselves diligently to their work to make consistently good progress. They recall previous learning particularly well and use their prior knowledge and skills ably to deepen their understanding of their current work.

In most schools, pupils develop strong literacy skills, which they use effectively in a range of contexts. At the end of key stage 2, most pupils read fluently, with appropriate intonation and understanding. Many pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 interpret, analyse and synthesise information from different texts well to form their own views and apply this to their work successfully.

In most schools, many pupils develop their writing skills well. They write extensively, taking good account of different subject contexts and using language and subject terms aptly. In a few schools, pupils do not extend their writing skills enough in a range of different genres and tasks.

In all schools, pupils' numeracy skills are generally strong. Many pupils have secure mathematical knowledge and understanding, which they apply competently in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

Wellbeing

In most schools, pupil attendance rates are high. Most pupils enjoy participating in their learning, both in and beyond the classroom. They gain an understanding of their role in the wider community through undertaking a wide range of responsibilities and voluntary activities such as community service with local organisations and joint fund-raising events. This helps them to develop their social and life skills well.

In many schools, pupils play an important part in influencing the school's work, particularly the standard of provision. They do this by means of their membership of school councils, food forums, boarders' forums, house groups, eco-committees, prefect committees and a variety of action groups that organise fund-raising activities. The groups are effective in representing the views of other pupils and providing them with feedback. They have successfully influenced decisions such as extending enrichment activities, changing lunch-time arrangements and, in one school, building bird houses and a vegetable and flower garden in the school grounds.

Figure 2.20: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ1

| 2 | 5 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Provision: Independent mainstream schools

Provision is excellent in one school, good in five and adequate in the other.

In all schools, learning experiences are either good or excellent. The curriculum meets requirements and generally builds on earlier learning experiences. A majority of schools have comprehensive extra-curricular programmes, with high participation rates. This includes opportunities for pupils to be involved in subject-based, community, creative, musical, sporting and cultural activities that make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

Many schools have a systematic approach to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, which is having a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve. These schools have comprehensive policies that set out a range of guidance and support material to help ensure that literacy and numeracy are taught in a methodical way across the curriculum. This includes the requirement to identify specific opportunities for literacy and numeracy in each subject, with whole-school marking and correction policies adhered to closely. However, in a few schools, arrangements to develop these skills and pupils' ICT skills across the school are not planned well enough.

Teaching is good or better in six of the schools and adequate in the other. In the one school where teaching is excellent, teachers have very high expectations of pupils, present them with a strong level of challenge and instil in them the confidence to meet that challenge. This helps pupils to explore key ideas in depth and secure significant gains in their understanding.

Where teaching is good, this is most often because teachers have secure subject knowledge that they employ to explain new topics in novel ways and to ask probing questions. They set clear aims for the lesson and plan a variety of interesting and challenging activities to meet these.

Where teaching needs to improve, this is most often because learning activities do not match the needs of pupils and there are too many teacher-dominated activities and over use of worksheets or published schemes of work. This means that pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn independently, or to apply and extend their understanding at a level appropriate to their ability.

Schools have sound arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly, with many providing pupils with helpful verbal feedback and advice during lessons on how they can improve their work.

Most schools provide a high level of care, support and guidance, which contributes well to pupils' health, wellbeing and learning. Many schools' arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Although a few schools meet almost all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, there are a few regulations these schools do not meet, which are specific to the individual school.

All schools have a strong sense of community with an emphasis on respecting others and ensuring that pupils receive equal access to the school's provision.

Figure 2.21: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

| 1 | | 5 | 1 |

▨ Excellent   ▨ Good   ▨ Adequate   ▨ Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Leadership and management: Independent mainstream schools

Leadership is good or better in five schools and adequate in the other two.

In the school where leadership and management are excellent, the senior management team provides strong direction and sets high expectations for all aspects of the school's work. At all levels, regular leadership, subject, pastoral and full staff meetings provide particularly effective opportunities for staff to share information, determine priorities and influence strategic developments. This helps to promote a clear sense of purpose and commitment to the school's aims.

Where leadership is good, senior leaders provide firm direction to the school's work. They are successful in promoting a common vision for the school, based on shared values and a culture of high aspirations. The roles and responsibilities of all staff are defined clearly and under-performance is challenged effectively.

Where leadership needs to improve, roles and responsibilities for important areas of the school's work are not defined clearly and expectations are not communicated well enough to all staff. This means that lines of accountability are blurred and lack the rigour required to drive forward improvements.

In most schools, proprietors provide effective oversight of the school's work and monitor performance appropriately. They make sure that financial arrangements are robust and often provide useful business advice for the school.

Only three schools' arrangements for improving quality are good or better. Similar to last year, the majority of schools' arrangements for securing improvement lack rigour. These schools do not collect enough first-hand evidence to evaluate important aspects of their work accurately, particularly the quality of teaching from lesson observations, and standards through the scrutiny of pupils' work. There is no clear alignment between self-evaluation and improvement planning, and they have made limited progress in addressing the recommendations from the school's last inspection.

Most schools' partnership arrangements are good or better. Many of these schools have particularly strong partnerships with parents, and are increasingly working with local schools and organisations, to achieve mutual benefits. For example, one school has set up an innovative science partnership with universities and five local schools, maintained and independent, to improve outcomes and influence the career choices of local sixth form pupils. This has helped pupils to improve their standards and has increased the uptake of science-related courses at university by pupils who have participated in the programme

All schools have good or better arrangements for resource management that contribute to the high standards pupils achieve. In many schools, staff benefit from a range of activities to improve their practice that take account of performance management reviews and reflect whole school or departmental priorities. However, in a few schools, procedures to identify and meet the professional development needs of staff are underdeveloped because they do not have systematic performance management arrangements.

Science initiative inspires pupils

Monmouth School has successfully collaborated with other local schools to set up a science initiative. Through the partnership model, the school has opened its doors to over 300 additional pupils. Standards in science have improved, and there has been a higher uptake in science related university courses by those pupils who participated in the programme.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.22: Numbers of schools and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

| 1 | 4 | 2 |

Excellent Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Section 2:
Sector report
Independent
specialist colleges

In January 2014, there were six independent specialist colleges in Wales. These colleges educate approximately 200 learners aged 16 years and over. The colleges cater for a range of needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In addition to full inspections every six years, Estyn carries out annual monitoring inspections of independent specialist colleges. This year we inspected two independent specialist colleges and carried out three annual monitoring visits.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Follow-up: Independent specialist colleges

One of the colleges inspected this year was identified as having sector-leading practice. This includes exemplary planning for skills across the curriculum, which results in exceptional progress for nearly all learners and outstanding opportunities for work experience.

Outcomes: Independent specialist colleges

Standards

Standards are excellent in one of the colleges inspected and adequate in the other.

In the college where standards are excellent, nearly all learners make exceptional progress in the development of their literacy, numeracy and independent living skills. They make outstanding progress in applying their skills in practical, meaningful situations, for example when working in the on-site shop. Nearly all learners communicate confidently with staff and other adults. For example, they welcome visitors to the college, show them where to park and ask them to sign in at reception. All learners at this college gain units of credit that are well matched to their abilities. These include units in a range of practical subjects, such as basic feeding of livestock, managing personal finances and shopping skills.

In the college where standards are only adequate, learners communicate confidently with tutors and support staff. They practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. However, due to the lack of effective systems for recording and tracking learners' progress, it is not clear from records whether learners make appropriate progress in line with their abilities and needs.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is excellent in one of the colleges inspected and adequate in the other.

In the college where wellbeing is excellent, the rate of learners' attendance is very high. Learners attend sessions on time, settle to work quickly and remain engaged throughout the day. In the college where wellbeing is only adequate, too many learners do not attend college regularly enough and punctual arrival in lessons is inconsistent.

In both colleges, learners behave well in lessons and during unstructured times. They are polite and courteous towards adults and their peers. In the college where wellbeing is excellent, learners make outstanding progress in developing their social skills, and this enables them to participate successfully in activities in the local community, for example visiting a care home.

Learners in both the colleges inspected contribute effectively to decision-making through the college council or forum. In the college where wellbeing is excellent, learners report the outcomes of forum discussions to the trustees of the organisation. This includes issues relating to policies and health and safety around the college. The learners' contribution to decision-making processes at this college is a particular strength.

In all of the colleges visited as part of the full inspection and annual monitoring process, learners who have significant difficulties learn to manage their difficulties and anxieties and improve their confidence levels.

Figure 2.23: Numbers of colleges and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ 1

1   1

⬤ Excellent ⬤ Good ⬤ Adequate ⬤ Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Provision: Independent specialist colleges

The quality of learning experiences is excellent in one of the colleges inspected and adequate in the other.

In the college where learning experiences are excellent, the college provides an extremely well-planned and well-managed curriculum, which it reviews regularly to ensure that the needs of individual learners are met. Planning for work experience opportunities within and outside the college is outstanding. In this college, planning for skills is exemplary. The main focus of all planning is the development of skills through practical and relevant activities such as working in the on-site shop or on the farm.

The college where learning experiences are only adequate offers a range of relevant opportunities. However, very few learners have the opportunity to participate in meaningful work-based learning or to develop their vocational skills in realistic settings. In this college, planning does not focus enough on the specific needs of individual learners to prepare them for life after college.

Teaching is good at one of the colleges and adequate at the other. At both colleges, staff prepare lessons carefully and in most lessons they use an appropriate range of strategies and resources to support teaching and learning. In one of the colleges, staff do not challenge the more able learners well enough.
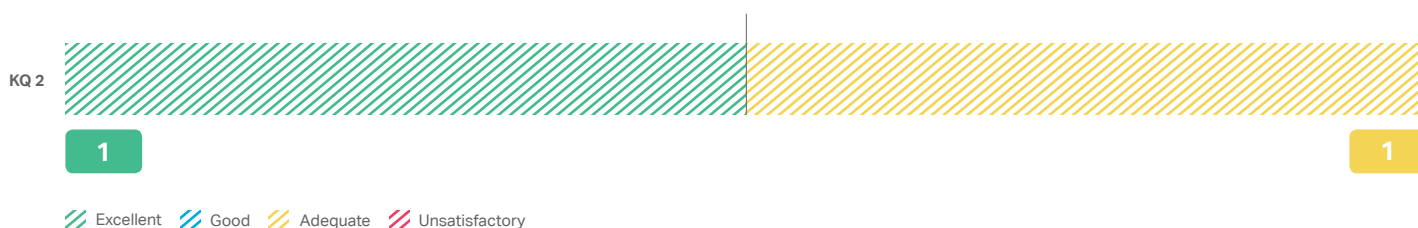
In one college, there are robust assessment processes which enable staff to plan effectively and track learner progress rigorously. The other college does not have effective systems in place for recording learners' progress and this means that managers are unable to track how much progress learners make over time.

Care, support and guidance are excellent in one of the colleges inspected, and good in the other. Both of the colleges work well with a range of specialists, for example speech and language therapists and clinical psychologists, to support the wellbeing of the learners. The effective joint-working between the education staff and specialists is a strength in both colleges.

In the college where care, support and guidance are excellent, there is a well co-ordinated process for identifying learners' additional needs and providing highly effective support across the 24-hour curriculum. As a result, all learners make outstanding progress in developing their confidence, behaviour and skills.

In two of the three other colleges visited as part of the annual monitoring process, very close links with colleges of further education enable learners to access a wide range of relevant learning opportunities and to achieve appropriate qualifications. However, in all of the three colleges visited, systems for tracking learner progress are under-developed.

Figure 2.24: Numbers of colleges and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

1

1

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Independent mainstream schools

Leadership and management: Independent specialist colleges

Leadership and management are excellent in one of the colleges inspected and adequate in the other.

In the college where leadership and management are excellent, the leadership team provides an exceptionally strong strategic lead, and this has resulted in significant improvements. The college trustees provide a high degree of knowledgeable challenge and support. At this college, self-assessment processes are robust. Leaders and managers have a comprehensive understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development. The quality improvement plan clearly identifies appropriate targets, and managers monitor and review these regularly. Managers use an extensive range of data to set challenging targets.
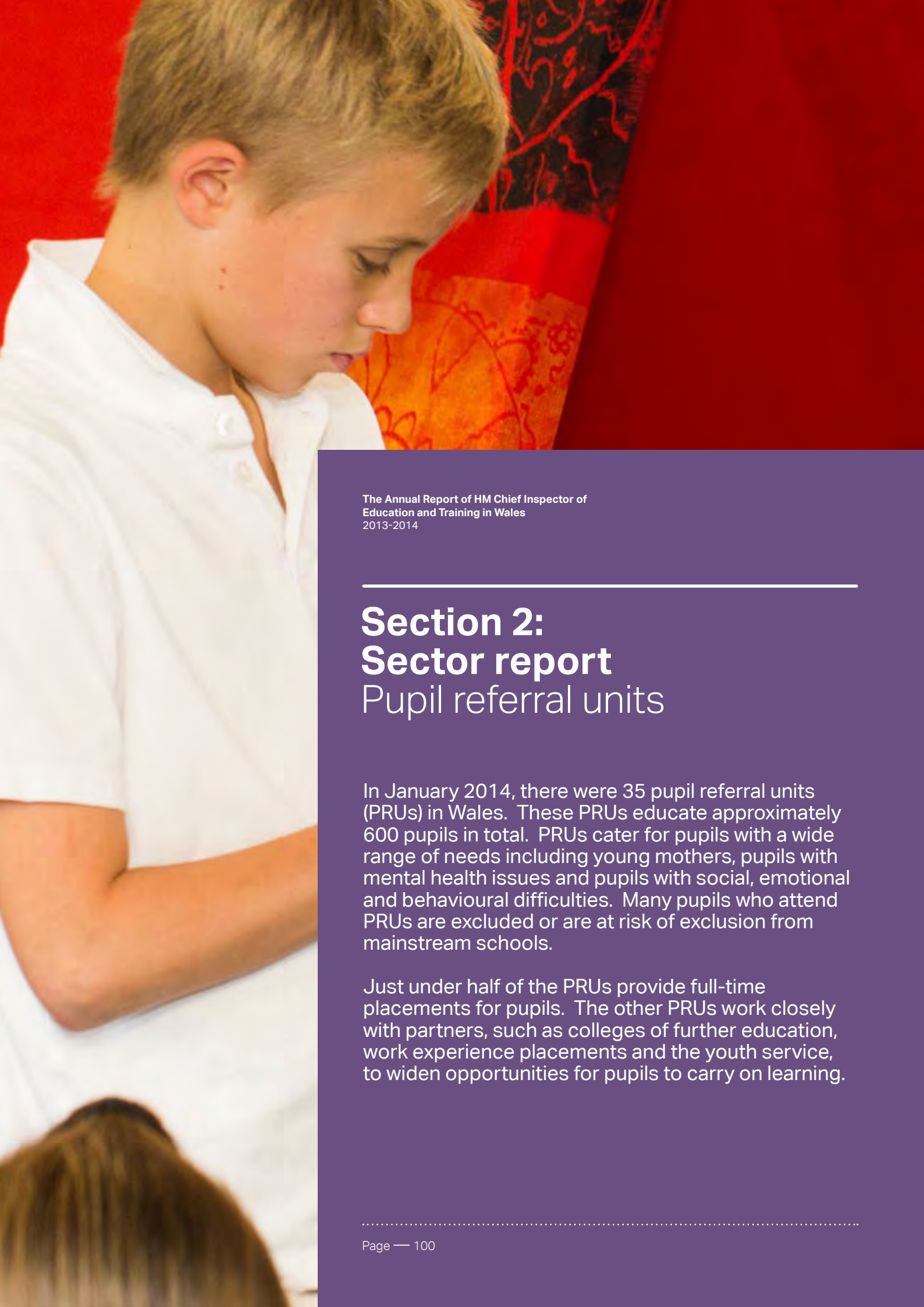
At the college where leadership and management are only adequate, senior managers promote high standards for the behaviour and care of all learners. The board of directors provides useful support. However, senior managers and directors do not always place a clear enough focus on improving educational provision or standards. Self-assessment processes at this college are well established, and the self-assessment report accurately reflects the position of the college. However, the report does not focus well enough on learner outcomes. The college improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development, although processes for tracking and evaluating progress against these targets are underdeveloped. The lack of educational data at this college means that managers are unable to evaluate the impact of their work on learners' standards.

Partnership working is excellent in one of the colleges inspected and good in the other. In one college, highly effective links with local businesses enable learners to take part in meaningful work experience and develop the skills they need to move on to life after college. In the other college, well-developed links with schools and local authorities enable the college to plan for learners' individual needs.

In one of the colleges visited as part of the annual monitoring process, the self-assessment report is evaluative and the quality improvement plan sets clear targets for improvement. However, in the other two colleges visited, self-assessment does not inform improvement planning enough.

Figure 2.25: Numbers of colleges and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

| 1 | | 1 |

▨ Excellent ▨ Good ▨ Adequate ▨ Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2:
Sector report
Pupil referral units

In January 2014, there were 35 pupil referral units (PRUs) in Wales. These PRUs educate approximately 600 pupils in total. PRUs cater for pupils with a wide range of needs including young mothers, pupils with mental health issues and pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils who attend PRUs are excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools.

Just under half of the PRUs provide full-time placements for pupils. The other PRUs work closely with partners, such as colleges of further education, work experience placements and the youth service, to widen opportunities for pupils to carry on learning.
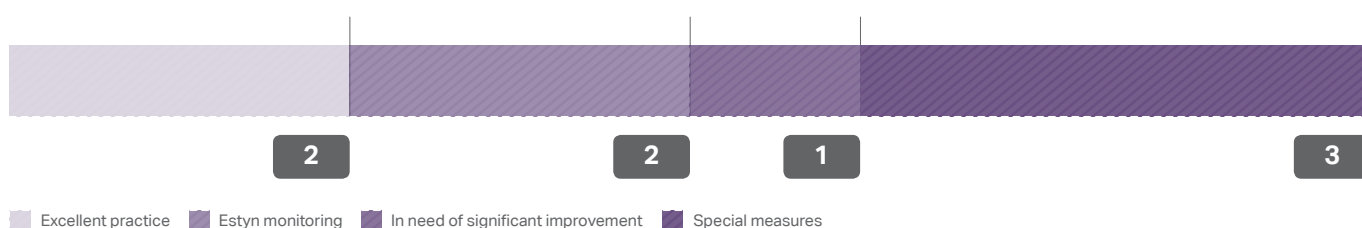
Only three of the eight PRUs inspected this year are performing well. These all cater for younger pupils. In general, inspection outcomes are worse for PRUs than for other sectors. This is similar to the picture last year and there is still an urgent need for stronger leadership from local authorities. Local authorities manage PRUs directly and are well positioned to influence the quality of provision. However, too few local authorities have a clear vision or strategy for how their PRUs fit into the range of services they offer to support vulnerable pupils. Strong leadership is the key to improving teaching, the curriculum and outcomes in PRUs, but there is not enough leadership development training or support for teachers-in-charge.

Follow-up:
Pupil referral units

This year, we asked two of the eight PRUs to provide excellent case studies. These PRUs work well with schools, parents and other agencies. As a result, they improve pupils' outcomes, confidence and behaviour and return them quickly to a mainstream school. Staff track pupils' progress carefully and step in quickly when pupils need extra help.

Three PRUs require special measures, one is in need of significant improvement and two require monitoring by Estyn. Shortcomings include poor outcomes for pupils and a failure by staff to track progress and plan for skills. Also, management committees do not do enough to improve teaching and learning. Managers do not use data well to set targets for improvement and self-evaluation is weak.

Figure 2.26: Numbers of pupil referral units in categories of follow-up

2	2	1	3

Excellent practice · Estyn monitoring · In need of significant improvement · Special measures

Outcomes: Pupil referral units

Standards

Standards are excellent in one and good in two of the eight PRUs inspected this year. In these three PRUs, pupils enjoy their lessons and are proud of their work. They listen carefully, and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills very well. They use their skills to research and record answers and results accurately in mathematics and science lessons and when writing in language lessons. They practise and develop their language skills throughout the school day and are keen to take part in presentations and discussions. In the two Welsh-medium PRUs, nearly all learners, in line with their ability, show a good understanding of Welsh and English and use them naturally in all aspects of school life. Pupils in all PRUs gain a reasonable understanding of Welsh culture.

However, in three PRUs, pupils' standards are at best adequate and, in two PRUs, they are unsatisfactory. In these PRUs, standards that pupils achieve are too variable and a significant minority do not do as well as they should. Although nearly all pupils in key stage 4 gain qualifications, these are not always at a high enough level or in line with pupils' abilities. Pupils do not practise their literacy and numeracy skills in a variety of lessons and do not make enough progress. In three out of the five PRUs, too many pupils do not move on to education, training or employment and, in one PRU, almost two thirds of pupils do not progress to the next stage of learning or work.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is excellent in two PRUs and good in three. Pupils in these PRUs feel safe and work well with staff and each other. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. They enjoy their lessons and arrive on time. Most pupils' behaviour is good and they show respect for others. Most pupils improve their attendance over time. In the two PRUs where wellbeing is excellent, attendance is over 94%.

In the other three PRUs where wellbeing is only adequate or unsatisfactory, pupils do not attend well. Attendance is as low as 65% and 75%. In two of the PRUs, most pupils behave well, but in the other PRU a minority do not and this has a negative effect on the work of other pupils.

In nearly all PRUs, pupils benefit from good opportunities to make decisions about the life and work of the PRU. For example, they take part in fundraising, choosing new staff and deciding on new ICT resources.

Figure 2.27: Numbers of pupil referral units and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ1

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Pupil referral units

Provision: pupil referral units

Provision is excellent in one PRU and good in another. In these PRUs, the comprehensive curriculum meets pupils' needs and there is a focus on developing literacy and numeracy across the school day. Staff in these PRUs ensure that pupils develop the skills that they need to move on to further education, training or employment. They provide pupils with opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications. Teachers in these PRUs use assessment to identify pupils' strengths and areas of need and set the work for pupils at the right level. They use information well to set targets on individual education plans. They plan their lessons carefully to make use of a wide range of resources and strategies to help pupils concentrate for extended periods. In most lessons, teachers and assistants work well together. Staff track pupils' academic and social progress and work with pupils to set targets for improvement. Pupils get helpful feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

In one PRU, pupils spend at least one day each week at their mainstream schools. Staff support, where necessary, ensures that pupils' transition back to school runs smoothly.

In four PRUs, provision is only adequate and in two it is unsatisfactory. In these PRUs, the curriculum does not offer a wide enough range of subjects and is not suited to pupils' needs. For example, one PRU does not provide personal and social education. Another PRU does not provide science for key stage 3 pupils. In these PRUs, pupils do not get enough help with their skills and there is not enough focus on literacy and numeracy. Although most of these PRUs give pupils opportunities to gain qualifications, they are often at too low a level.

In five PRUs, teaching is only adequate or it is unsatisfactory. Teachers at these PRUs do not have high enough expectations of pupils. Lessons lack pace and teachers rely too much on worksheets. Teachers do not use a wide range of materials to hold pupils' interest. They teach a variety of subjects, often in addition to the subject in which they trained, and their subject knowledge is not always as good as it should be. Teachers in these PRUs do not always complete their marking or show pupils what they have to do to get better results. They do not use assessment information to plan pupils' work at the right level. As a result, they cannot show pupils that they have improved, and do not encourage pupils to reflect on how well they have completed their work.

Care, support and guidance are good or excellent in three PRUs. Where this is the case, the PRUs give pupils good support. Staff help pupils learn to manage their behaviour. They are consistent in their approach and make good use of positive reward systems. They encourage good attendance and work well with educational social workers to offer support to families quickly when pupils are absent. These PRUs tailor their personal and social education programmes to meet pupils' needs.

Care, support and guidance in three of the PRUs are adequate, but they are unsatisfactory in a further two. In two PRUs, there are safeguarding concerns, including the lack of an anti-bullying policy, poor supervision of pupils and incorrect reporting of physical interventions. In one PRU, staff do not manage behaviour well enough. They sometimes reward pupils when they do not behave well. The weaker PRUs do not do enough to meet pupils' special educational and additional learning needs.

Figure 2.28: Numbers of pupil referral units and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

| 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Pupil referral units

Leadership and management: Pupil referral units

Only two PRUs out of eight have leadership and management that are good or excellent. In these PRUs, the local authority gives good support and challenge. Management committees know their PRUs well. These PRUs collect and use data and first-hand evidence of teaching and learning. As a result, they have a clear understanding of their strengths and their weaknesses. They make careful plans for improvement. They have good arrangements to work out how well staff are doing. They make sure that staff have the resources and training that they need to do a good job.

In the other six PRUs, leadership is at best adequate and, in three cases, unsatisfactory. These PRUs are let down by their local authorities and their management committees, who do not provide the support and challenge that the PRUs need. In these PRUs, managers focus on improving behaviour at the expense of challenging all pupils to achieve as well as they can. These PRUs do not use data to analyse how well they are doing and there is not enough focus on pupils' outcomes. They do not make use of regular lesson observations to identify where teaching is not good enough. As a result, they have an inflated idea of how well they are doing. They do not set clear targets for improvement.

Four PRUs work particularly well with their partners including parents. They work closely with schools to make sure that pupils are welcomed and supported when they return to school. They make strong leadership and curriculum links to improve and share good practice within the PRUs. However, the other four PRUs do not work closely enough with their partners. They do not always work well with parents and carers or keep them informed about their child's progress.

Only three PRUs provide good or better value for money. These PRUs make sure that staff are well trained to teach the curriculum and manage behaviour. They collaborate with mainstream schools to increase their capacity. However, the other PRUs do not improve the skills and expertise of staff enough, either through continuing professional development or by sharing good practice and learning from others. One PRU failed to implement all health and safety recommendations.

Supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs

An effective management committee holds **Ceredigion Pupil Referral Unit** to account for pupils' performance and wellbeing. The local authority has also supported and monitored provision very carefully, which has helped to strengthen the role of the management committee.

Over time, pupils at the PRU make excellent progress in their behaviour and attitudes. There has been a significant reduction in exclusions, improved attendance levels and good progress in skills development, and pupils have either returned to mainstream education or moved onto further education, training or employment.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.29: Numbers of pupil referral units and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ1

| 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |

Excellent Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Section 2:
Sector report
Non-school settings for children under five

Almost all local authorities in Wales fund some part-time education for three-year-olds, and very occasionally four-year-olds, in settings as well as in schools. Local authorities do not maintain these settings, although they are responsible for ensuring that settings provide good quality early education. Settings that provide education include day-care providers and playgroups. However, not all settings are eligible to receive funding for education.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Non-school settings for children under five

Over the past few years, we have reported a downward trend in the number of non-school settings providing part-time education for three and four-year-olds. This trend has continued from a peak of around 780 settings in 2008-2009 to approximately 660 providers this year. Settings may decide not to continue to provide education for many reasons, such as difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified leaders, or too few three-year-olds eligible for funding to make it worth their while to offer part-time education places. In a few instances, the local authority removes settings from their list of education providers if the setting fails to provide an acceptable standard of education.

This year, we inspected 105 settings. One in four settings is small, with fewer than six three-year-olds attending. In small settings, inspectors report on provision and leadership only, to avoid identifying individual children. This year, around half of all Welsh-medium settings and around one-third of English-medium settings inspected were small settings.
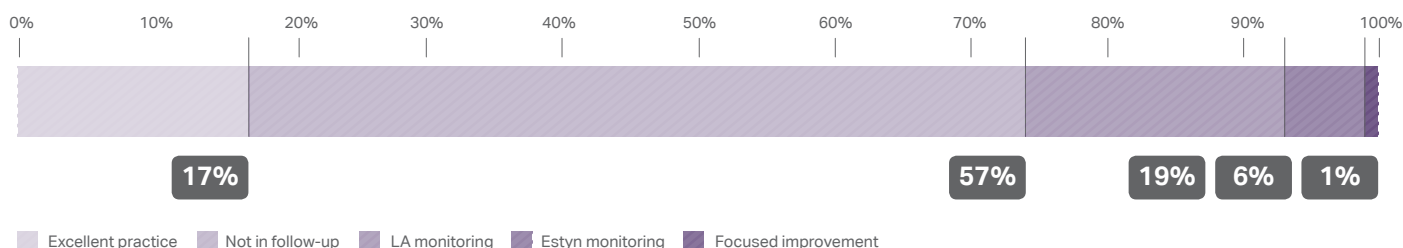
Follow-up: Non-school settings for children under five

This year, 18 settings had excellent practice. This is more than was the case last year. Around three-quarters of these were English-medium and about a quarter were small. Settings with excellent practice have thorough and comprehensive curriculum planning. They use assessment well to plan children's next steps, and practitioners are skilful in listening to and interacting with children. Leaders encourage a culture of reflection and have a strong focus on improving outcomes for children.

A quarter of settings need a follow-up visit from the local authority or from Estyn, which is similar to the proportion last year. This year, we identified one setting requiring focused improvement.[14]

Settings that require a visit from the local authority usually need more time to embed practice, such as self-evaluation procedures, or time to refine planning and assessment. Settings that require a visit from Estyn often struggle to identify where they need to improve, and have weak improvement planning. Leaders in these settings do not always show enough drive in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection or in considering national priorities such as developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills, or encouraging children to eat healthily.

Figure 2.30: Percentages of settings in categories of follow-up

17%	57%	19%	6%	1%

■ Excellent practice ■ Not in follow-up ■ LA monitoring ■ Estyn monitoring ■ Focused improvement

[15] A setting placed in focused improvement is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and leaders do not demonstrate the capacity to secure the necessary improvements.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Non-school settings for children under five

Outcomes:
Non-school settings for children under five

Standards

Standards are good or better in 95% of settings where we reported on standards. This is similar to the findings last year.

Where standards are good or better, most children show pleasure in listening to stories and join in singing songs and reciting rhymes enthusiastically. Many respond sensitively to what others have to say and express their thoughts and ideas coherently, for example when discussing photographs of themselves when they were babies. Most children show good control and independence in using writing implements, such as using large chalks to create interesting butterfly pictures outdoors. Children's numeracy skills generally develop well. For example, many count coins accurately in role-play. In English-medium settings, many children are confident in using a suitable range of simple Welsh vocabulary and phrases with some adult support.

In addition, in the very few settings with excellent standards, nearly all children are confident learners who apply their early literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills well across the curriculum. For example, these children have a positive attitude to writing and are often busy making invitations, notes and sticky labels for their models using mark making. Numbers play an increasingly important part in their lives, such as finding their house number on a number line, or dividing seeds accurately between flowerpots.
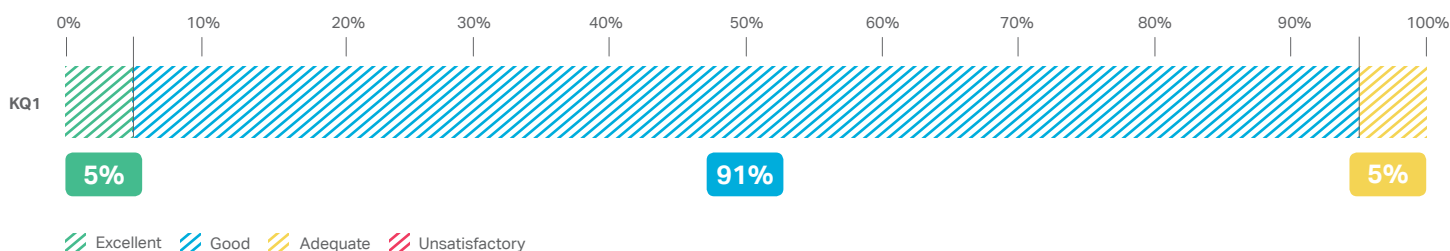
In the very few settings where standards are only adequate, many children make limited progress in improving and extending their vocabulary and children rely too heavily on adults for direction.

The need for settings to improve children's skills of ICT is a continuing theme even in good settings. This year, around half of all recommendations relating to standards refer to shortcomings in ICT.

Wellbeing

Almost all children behave well, are eager to participate in activities and persevere for a reasonable amount of time. They show respect and consideration for each other and treat resources with care. In the very few settings where children's wellbeing is excellent, children make sensible choices about what they would like to do and when to go outside or stay indoors. They manage their time responsibly and show increasing independence in self-help skills, such as dressing in outdoor clothing or preparing and eating their own snack.

Figure 2.31: Percentage of judgements awarded for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ1

5%   91%   5%

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Non-school settings for children under five

Provision:
Non-school settings for children under five

Provision is good or better in 94% of settings inspected this year. In these settings, practitioners promote children's literacy and numeracy skills well, both indoors and outside. For example, practitioners encourage children to play a counting game such as hopscotch to develop their number skills, or they hide letters in the sand to encourage children to begin to recognise initial letters and their sounds. In a very few settings where the quality of provision is excellent, planning is collaborative and innovative, and actively involves children in discussing what they will learn.

Overall, high-level planning is good in most settings, and it is better than we have seen in previous years. However, there are specific aspects of planning that require improvement even in good settings. Notably, practitioners do not identify appropriate opportunities in their planning to challenge and extend more able children, and planning for adult-directed activities does not always focus well enough on what children will learn.

Provision for Welsh language development in English-medium settings has improved and is now good in many settings. Although practitioners use their skills to develop children's understanding, they do not always encourage children to use their Welsh during role-play and other activities. Around half of settings now make sure that children have regular and appropriate opportunities to use ICT. In the best practice, practitioners are skilful in encouraging children to try new experiences, such as using a remote controlled toy to support directional work and recording themselves telling a story or singing a rhyme. However, in around half of settings, planning does not clearly identify enough opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills.

The quality of teaching has improved this year. Practitioners now use more open-ended questions such as 'why do you think the flower is growing?' and 'how can you make the car go faster down the slope?' to encourage children to think for themselves. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, they nearly all focus on issues relating to assessment. In a very few settings, practitioners do not assess children's learning regularly enough, assessment and planning do not link together, and practitioners are unclear about what skills the children need to learn next.

Most settings provide good care, keep children safe and free from harm and foster important values such as kindness, honesty, fairness and respect. In a very few settings, practitioners do not provide enough opportunities for children to learn about the world beyond their family and the setting or to care about the world in which they live.

Most settings are attractive, stimulating learning environments with sufficient qualified and experienced staff. With the exception of ICT, there are generally enough resources of a good quality. A very few settings do not make the most of outdoor spaces to enrich children's learning experiences.

Celebrating strengths to improve development

Tiny Beginnings Day Nursery works with parents to identify children's strengths and their priorities for development. Nursery staff use this information to set individual targets for children, plan teaching and learning, and to track children's progress.

The children benefit from knowing their strengths, parents have a clear understanding of their children's progress and practitioners are skilled at identifying the next steps for children's learning.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.32: Percentages of judgements awarded for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ 2

5% — 89% — 6% — 1%

Excellent · Good · Adequate · Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Non-school settings for children under five
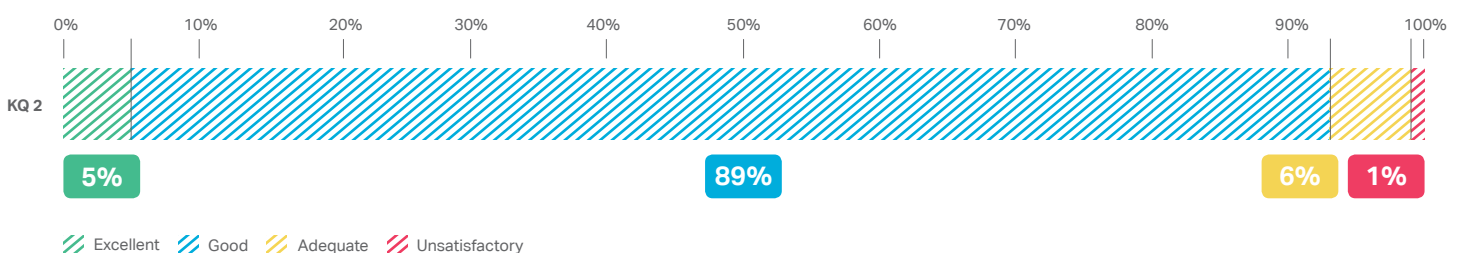
Leadership and management: Non-school settings for children under five

Leadership is good or better in 93% of settings inspected this year.

Nearly all settings have established appropriate quality assurance systems, often with considerable support from their local authority or consortia. A few settings use these systems to develop their confidence and understanding of self-evaluation and to identify areas for improvement. However, in a minority of settings, the purpose of self-evaluation is misunderstood and is a paper-driven exercise rather than a tool to drive improvement. In these settings, planning for improvement is also generally weak.

In the very few settings where leadership is excellent, self-evaluation has a strong focus on outcomes. Leaders ensure that the success of the setting's work is measured according to what children learn. There is a strong culture across these settings of asking 'will this make a difference?' in planning for improvement and reflecting 'has this made a difference?' when evaluating progress.

In the very few settings with only adequate or unsatisfactory leadership, practitioners are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Leaders do not supervise or appraise the work of practitioners effectively. In a very few settings, leaders do not keep the management committee well informed about developments. As a result, the management committee is unable to provide a suitable level of challenge for practitioners.

This year, there are more settings with excellent partnerships than there were last year. Almost all of these settings are making a real difference in their local community. For example, one setting has established a facility for children to attend speech and language therapy, which parents feel more comfortable going to instead of attending a clinic. In a very few settings, parents do not receive enough information to help their child at home.

Most settings provide good value for money. They have qualified and experienced staff. Leaders are increasingly using staff expertise to support areas such as Welsh or creative development. Most leaders and managers have good systems in place for keeping spending under review and match spending appropriately to the setting's objectives. A few settings do not have enough resources to develop children's ICT skills or opportunities for outdoor learning are limited.

Using evidence to refine self-evaluation

Fingers and Thumbs Day Care Centre has refined its self-evaluation processes. Practitioners monitor day-to-day learning and take ownership for individual areas. Findings are fed back and changes are implemented accordingly. Initiatives prompted by self-evaluation have led to valuable improvements in planning and, as a result, standards are improving.

For more information about this, please click on the case study

Figure 2.33: Percentages of judgements awarded for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 2

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
5%	89%	6%	1%
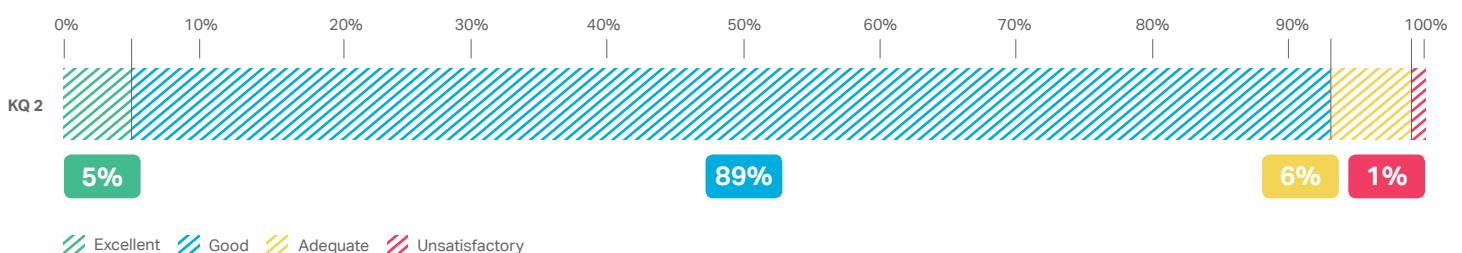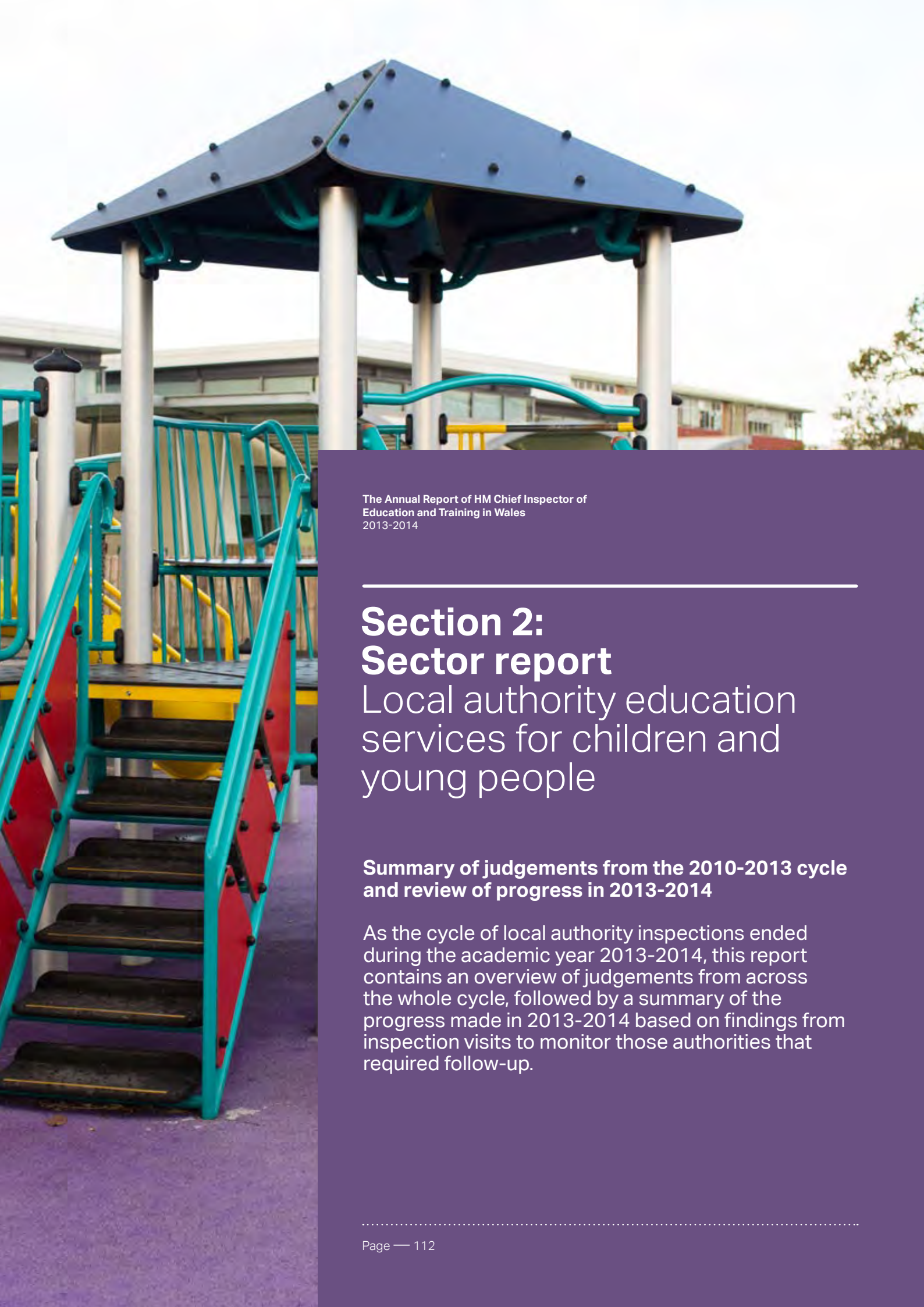
Section 2:
Sector report
Local authority education services for children and young people

Summary of judgements from the 2010-2013 cycle and review of progress in 2013-2014

As the cycle of local authority inspections ended during the academic year 2013-2014, this report contains an overview of judgements from across the whole cycle, followed by a summary of the progress made in 2013-2014 based on findings from inspection visits to monitor those authorities that required follow-up.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Local authority education services for children and young people

In only one authority inspected during the 2010-2013 cycle was overall performance judged as excellent. This was Ceredigion, inspected in autumn 2013.
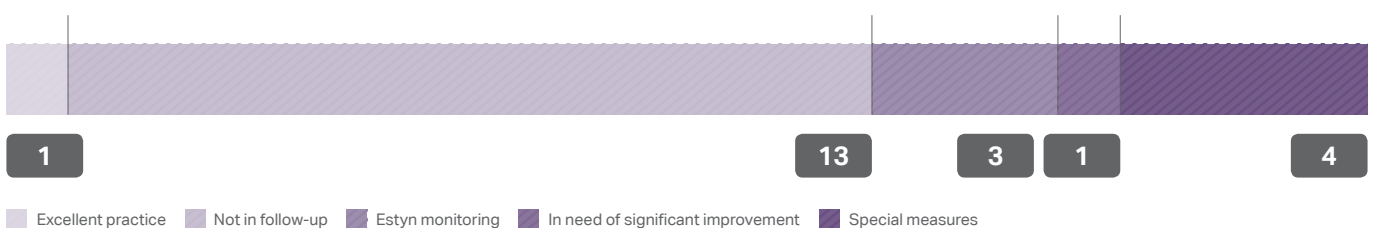
Over the whole cycle, more than two-thirds of local authority education services were identified as requiring follow-up monitoring. During 2013-2014 monitoring inspections, five local authorities were removed from follow-up categories.

Follow-up: Local authority education services for children and young people

The authorities that have been removed from follow-up in 2013 have improved in part because they have maximised opportunities to work collaboratively, whether that is within the authority itself, as in the partnership between education and social services in Pembrokeshire to improve safeguarding, or across authorities, as in the support that Ceredigion has provided to Powys in leadership and school improvement. In Anglesey, it is the collaboration between schools that has led to an improvement in standards of education.

Working in collaboration has required leaders to work within more than one system of governance and to be held to account to more than one organisation. The best leaders have managed these issues well and have found ways to work efficiently to add value through partnership.

Figure 2.34: Numbers of local authorities in categories of follow-up (July 2014)

| 1 | | 13 | 3 | 1 | 4 |

Excellent practice   Not in follow-up   Estyn monitoring   In need of significant improvement   Special measures

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Local authority education services for children and young people

Outcomes: Local authority education services for children and young people

Standards

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, standards were good in 10 local authorities but in no authority were standards excellent. Standards were adequate in seven and unsatisfactory in five authorities.

We monitored the progress of six local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about standards.

Only one of these authorities has made strong progress in improving standards. There is usually a delay between the improvement of leadership and services within an authority and the impact this has on outcomes. In all but one of the other authorities, we identified that improvements in leadership and services were beginning to have a positive impact on standards.

Wellbeing

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, wellbeing was excellent in one local authority and good in seven. Standards were adequate in 12 and unsatisfactory in two authorities.

We monitored the progress of four local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about wellbeing outcomes.

School attendance has improved in all but one of the authorities in follow-up, with a recommendation relating to this, although the pace of improvement is variable.

The percentage of pupils leaving Year 11 that are not engaged in education, employment or training has reduced further in authorities where this was a shortcoming. We did not monitor any authority during 2013-2014 with respect to school exclusions.

Provision: Local authority education services for children and young people

Support for school improvement

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, support for school improvement was excellent in two authorities and good in five. Support was adequate in 10 and unsatisfactory in five authorities.

School improvement services cover the authority's statutory responsibility for support, monitoring, challenge and intervention in its schools, as well as raising standards in priority areas and improving leadership and management.

Over the last three years, the arrangements for local authorities to provide school improvement services through regional consortia have been formalised in line with Welsh Government policy, although the statutory responsibility for school improvement remains with each local authority.

School improvement services were monitored in around a third of authorities during 2013-2014. The quality of information that authorities have about their schools has improved and authorities are more open and frank about the performance of, and shortcomings in, individual schools with elected members, headteachers and school governors.

Many of these authorities have engaged with their regional school improvement service to develop a shared understanding of the priorities for improvement for schools in their authority and appropriately challenging targets related to these priorities. All regional school improvement services link a system leader (now called challenge advisers) to every school to support and challenge the school to improve and monitor progress. The quality of the work of challenge advisers has been too inconsistent in many authorities, although these authorities are aware of the issue and are working with the regional service to improve consistency.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Local authority education services for children and young people

Provision: Local authority education services for children and young people

Support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion was excellent in two local authorities and good in 12. Support was adequate in six and unsatisfactory in two authorities.

Support in this service area helps schools to meet their statutory obligations to learners with a range of additional learning needs.

In 2013-2014, we monitored the progress of two local authorities that had recommendations from their inspections about support for additional learning needs.

One authority had a specific shortcoming in their work with parents, which they resolved successfully. The other authority made significant policy and strategic changes and improved its planning as a result, although it will take more time for the authority to demonstrate the impact these changes may have on outcomes for learners.

Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, this service was excellent in two local authorities and good in four. The service was adequate in 13 and unsatisfactory in three authorities.

Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing includes services that promote good attendance, prevent pupils from being excluded from school, support vulnerable groups of learners and provide all young people with access to appropriate guidance and advice. All local authorities provide or commission a range of youth support services that promote social inclusion and wellbeing.

We monitored the progress of seven local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about promoting social inclusion and wellbeing.

Local authorities have improved their support for school attendance, which has contributed to improved attendance rates. In the few authorities with a recommendation to reduce the percentage of pupils leaving Year 11 who are not engaged in education, employment or training, officers have worked with partners to improve their systems for identifying and tracking the young people most at risk. This has enabled them to target support more effectively and has resulted in a higher proportion of young people either continuing with their education or moving to employment or training after Year 11.

Most authorities with weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements have taken strong action to improve the arrangements, and these have been closely overseen by senior officers and elected members. In these authorities, unhelpful cultures and poor systems for holding staff to account for their responsibilities are being addressed. Two authorities made slower progress, however, as they concentrated too much on improvements at service level without addressing leadership at senior management level.

Access and school places

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, this service was good in 12 local authorities but in no authority were standards excellent. The service was adequate in nine and unsatisfactory in one authority.

This service area includes admissions to schools, planning school places and access to education for early years and youth support services.

We monitored the progress of five local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about access and school places.

Most authorities have made good progress in improving their plans for school places. Senior officers and elected members have worked well together to take difficult decisions, about the future of small schools in particular. However, planning for Welsh-medium education has not progressed so well in a few authorities.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Local authority education services for children and young people

Leadership and management: Local authority education services for children and young people

Leadership

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, leadership was excellent in two local authorities and good in five. Leadership was adequate in 10 and unsatisfactory in five authorities.

We monitored the progress of eight local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about leadership.

The majority of authorities have made good progress in improving the quality of leadership. These authorities understood how central a priority it is to improve leadership so that decisive action can be taken to address other specific shortcomings.

However, in some authorities, shortcomings have not been addressed quickly or robustly enough. These authorities have not fully accepted or understood the nature and extent of weaknesses in leadership and neither have they taken swift enough action to build capacity for improvement.

Improving quality

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, improving quality was excellent in one local authority and good in five. It was adequate in 11 and unsatisfactory in five authorities.

We monitored the progress of 10 local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about improving quality.

While half of these authorities have addressed shortcomings appropriately, progress has been limited in the other authorities and concerns remain about the quality of their self-evaluation and associated plans for improvement. This is often because self-evaluation has been seen as something extra that is prepared before an inspection rather than as an integral part of the annual cyclical process of the authority to analyse performance and plan for public service improvement at all levels. The scrutiny process is not mature or strong enough in those authorities where this function remains unsatisfactory.

Partnership working

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, partnership working was excellent in one local authority and good in seven. It was adequate in 13 and unsatisfactory in one authority.

We monitored the progress of three local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about partnership working.

The authorities that have shortcomings in partnership working have generally improved the way that they work with partners to evaluate outcomes, identify needs and plan together for better outcomes for learners.

Resource management

Over the 2010-2013 cycle, resource management was good in seven local authorities but in no authority was it excellent. It was adequate in 11 and unsatisfactory in four authorities.

We monitored the progress of two local authorities in 2013-2014 that had recommendations from their inspections about resource management.

Both authorities have made good progress in addressing shortcomings in their financial planning. In particular, they have planned more effectively to tackle schools with significant budget deficits.

Section 2:
Sector report
Further education colleges

Currently, there are 13 colleges of further education, with no mergers this year. There have been no core inspections of further education colleges in this reporting year. However, we have carried out inspection visits that have resulted in a published annual review of performance letter for each institution.

In 2013-2014, there were 182,460 enrolments on education and training courses at further education colleges. This is a decline from 191,040 enrolments in 2012-2013.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Further education colleges

Outcomes: Further education colleges

Standards

Overall, the success rates for learners in colleges of further education were at 84% in 2012-2013, the latest year for which data is available. The sector subject areas where learners successfully complete their courses and gain qualifications at the highest rate are hospitality and catering, retail and customer services, and education and training. The lowest performing subject sector areas are science and mathematics, and social sciences. Overall, there is an upward movement in standards across the sector, with a majority of learners saying that they achieved more, or at a higher level, than they expected.

Most learners make good progress in their learning and take an active role in setting their own targets and reviewing them at regular intervals. They monitor and track their own progress through individual learning plans well. Many learners achieve qualifications in essential skills. However, a smaller proportion of learners successfully complete essential skills qualifications in the application of number than those who reach the expected level in communication.

Across all learning areas, the proportion of learners who successfully complete entry level and level 1 courses improved slightly between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. There was a notable increase in the number of learners taking qualifications at level 3 over the same period.

In the Welsh Baccalaureate delivered in further education colleges, there has been a slight decrease in success rates over the past two years at foundation and intermediate levels, except for learners' performance in the advanced diploma where there was an increase in success rates.

Wellbeing

Most learners gain valuable life skills alongside their academic learning. They demonstrate an increase in maturity and present themselves with confidence. Nearly all learners enjoy their learning and participate well in sessions. Learners say that many courses exceed their expectations. Most learners feel safe and have a very good awareness of how to maintain healthy lifestyles.

Learners make the most of opportunities to make decisions that affect their learning. They participate well in student councils and learner parliaments, and they are often active in promoting the institution's charity work. The Welsh Government's Learner Voice Survey results show that learner satisfaction in further education colleges, while high overall, has declined slightly since 2013. Learners are most critical of information, advice and guidance services.

Provision:
Further education colleges

A majority of colleges have improved the levels of courses they offer, largely due to college mergers or new tertiary arrangements. However, colleges have not improved the curriculum offer for learners who are pre-level one well enough. Colleges have significantly increased the number of courses they offer in science and technology, but overall they do not pay enough attention to labour market information when planning the curriculum. Many colleges have good policies to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills. However, there are still shortcomings in the teaching of basic skills, and not all learners have suitable access to adequate learner support. Most colleges now have well-planned marking schemes for literacy, although these are rarely used consistently across subject sectors. Marking schemes for numeracy are in the very early stages of development in most colleges. Many colleges have improved aspects of their provision for the Welsh language, but the development of learners' Welsh language skills after 16 continues to be limited overall.

The quality of teaching observed during visits to colleges is generally good. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and provide learners with a suitable range of learning experiences.

Learners say that care, support and guidance are a strong feature of further education provision. Within colleges, many learners who had little educational success before joining the institution achieve qualifications for the first time because of the good support they receive. Institution staff identify their individual learning support needs at an early stage and arrange appropriate support. Many of these learners progress to higher levels of learning in the institution or to higher education. Many use their new skills to support their own children's learning.

Most colleges promote an ethos that respects the equality and diversity of its learners and staff. Promoting inclusion is a strong feature of further education. Newly-merged institutions are beginning to establish a shared ethos from their legacy institutions while allowing campuses to maintain and develop their own cultural characteristics. Nearly all colleges have up-to-date equipment and resources and they mostly maintain accommodation of a high standard.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries:
Further education colleges

Leadership and management: Further education colleges

Principals and senior managers generally provide clear and strategic leadership. They make good use of a wide range of information and data to set challenging targets. They have systems to monitor and track progress in learning and attainment regularly. There are clear policies and procedures for addressing underperformance identified by analysing the outcomes and standards that learners achieve.

Governance arrangements are mostly robust. Generally, governors hold principals and the senior leadership teams to account appropriately. They scrutinise data on learner progress, ensure that they are fully aware of any issues within the institution, and review these issues rigorously in governors' meetings. Governors provide appropriate challenge to the actions and decisions of leaders and managers.

Most colleges have thorough procedures for monitoring the standards of teaching and assessment. They have well-established systems to improve quality. Colleges make good use of learning area reviews to inform their self-assessment. Quality development plans are clear and concise and they focus well on improvement. Nearly all colleges pay good attention to Welsh Government priorities. They gather learners' views well throughout their quality assurance activities and use these to improve learners' experiences.

The annual review of performance reports identified that colleges have well established links with a wide range of partners at strategic and operational levels. Leaders can demonstrate evidence of how partnerships have improved opportunities and outcomes for learners.

Section 2:
Sector report
Work-based learning

In 2013-2014, there were 22 work-based learning providers. In this period, 65,935 learners were on work-based learning programmes. Of these learners, 20,890 were undertaking apprenticeships, 25,385 were undertaking foundation apprenticeships and 19,660 were undertaking other training. This year we inspected three providers, and re-inspected one provider.

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Work-based learning

Follow-up:
Work-based learning

This year, we judged one provider to have excellent practice and one provider to require monitoring by an Estyn team.

In the provider that had excellent practice, learners receive learning experiences of high quality that develop their practical competence and knowledge of theory in on-the-job and off-the-job settings. The provider has a comprehensive literacy and numeracy strategy set within a wider strategy to improve the skills of all learners. The provider has trained many tutors and assessors in the delivery of literacy and numeracy. Staff and learners use a comprehensive range of learning resources effectively.

The provider that requires monitoring has outcomes for learners that have been consistently below the sector national average over the past three years. Many learners make slow progress and the quality of teaching is not good enough across the provision. Learners do not improve their Welsh language skills well enough.

Figure 2.35: Numbers of providers in categories of follow-up

1	1	1

■ Excellent practice   ■ Not in follow-up   ■ Estyn monitoring

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Work-based learning

Outcomes:
Work-based learning

Standards

There is a marginal improvement in the judgements awarded to providers this year compared with last year. There are no judgements of unsatisfactory but neither has there been a judgement of excellent.

In two of the three providers inspected, the rates of completion of the apprenticeship framework are good and around the level of the national comparator. The third provider performs at rates just under the national comparator. Recent unpublished data for the three providers shows an upward trend in the rates that learners achieve their training. However, learners in two out of the three providers successfully complete their training and employability programmes at rates below the national comparator. In the third provider, learners perform at a rate that is close to the national average.

Learners generally complete qualifications in essential skills at the minimum level required, but they are not always encouraged enough to take the qualification at a higher level. In a few cases, learners develop their literacy skills well. However, overall, there are too many learners who do not improve because staff do not mark their written work effectively. As a result, learners continue to repeat errors in spelling and grammar. In most providers, strategies to develop learners' numeracy skills are underdeveloped and do not have a significant impact on developing learners' knowledge and understanding.

In spite of increased opportunities, only a limited number of learners choose to follow their courses through the medium of Welsh. Very few learners undertake examinations or written assessments in Welsh.

Wellbeing

In two of the providers, wellbeing is good, but it is only adequate in the other provider. Learners are generally supported well in their work places and when undertaking off-the-job training. Learners benefit from good induction to their training programmes where health and safety and wellbeing are covered in detail. However, providers do not always integrate coverage of wellbeing and healthy living into the training provision.

In all of the providers inspected, learners are engaged in a number of community activities such as raising money for charities or working with the Prince's Trust.

Nearly all learners demonstrate good social and life skills. In particular, they show respect and have good communication with their employers, trainers and peers. Learners' attendance and behaviour on and off the job are good.

Figure 2.36: Numbers of providers and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ1

| 2 | | 1 |

/// Excellent   /// Good   /// Adequate   /// Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Work-based learning

Provision:
Work-based learning

The quality of training and assessment is good in two and adequate in one of the providers inspected. All providers deliver an appropriate range of training programmes that meet the needs of learners and employers well. Providers deliver programmes in a wide range of learning areas and at appropriate levels to meet recruitment demands from employers. Learners take advantage of good opportunities to progress to the next level of training in all learning areas. All of the providers inspected offer aspects of training and assessment through the medium of Welsh. However, they do not do enough to encourage bilingual learners to undertake training or assessment through the medium of Welsh.

One provider has an excellent literacy and numeracy strategy that staff apply consistently on all training programmes and this is having a positive impact on developing learners' skills. Two of the providers inspected do not integrate literacy, numeracy and education for sustainable development and global citizenship well enough into training programmes.

The majority of tutors and assessors have good subject knowledge and give their learners appropriate levels of personal support. However, a minority of assessors do not challenge learners well enough by setting clear targets for the completion of assessments and the collection of evidence for their assessment portfolios.

All providers have appropriate care, guidance and support arrangements, including safeguarding policies and procedures. Training staff promote health and wellbeing well with learners during training and progress reviews. Two of the providers inspected have staff who are appropriately trained to help identify and support learners with additional learning needs.

All three providers inspected have developed an ethos of equality, diversity and inclusivity in their training programmes. However, not all providers are effective in reinforcing and developing learners' understanding of these issues during progress reviews.

Many learners work in good workplaces and have off-the-job training facilities that are well resourced.

Figure 2.37: Numbers of providers and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?

KQ1

| 2 | | 1 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

Leadership and management: Work-based learning

Leadership and management are excellent in one provider, good in one and adequate in the third provider inspected.

The excellent provider was characterised by exceptional leadership throughout the provision, resulting in good outcomes for learners, who achieve well in their training frameworks at rates above national comparators. This provider has developed excellent working relationships with consortium partners, employers and local schools.

Overall, in all three providers, communication with training staff and partners is good. Providers have comprehensive and detailed procedures for reviewing and improving the performance of staff.

Quality assurance arrangements are good in two of the providers inspected and only adequate in one. Where quality assurance is less effective, managers do not use self-assessment processes to monitor and to report effectively on standards and the quality of provision. Staff in one provider do not use self-assessment processes as a tool to drive quality improvement. In two providers, quality processes do not involve all relevant staff and sub-contractors. At worst, reports are mostly descriptive and lack clear evaluation of performance and targets for improvement.

Most providers have developed and improved their partnerships and working relationships with local employers, schools and other training providers. As a result of sound partnership arrangements, learners take advantage of the improved progression rates to the next level of training.

Resource management is excellent in one provider, good in one and adequate in one provider. All providers support their staff well with appropriate professional development training. These arrangements usually involve staff from partners or sub-contractors. However, the take-up rate by these staff is often low.

Figure 2.38: Numbers of providers and judgements for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

KQ 3

| 1 | 1 | 1 |

Excellent Good Adequate Unsatisfactory
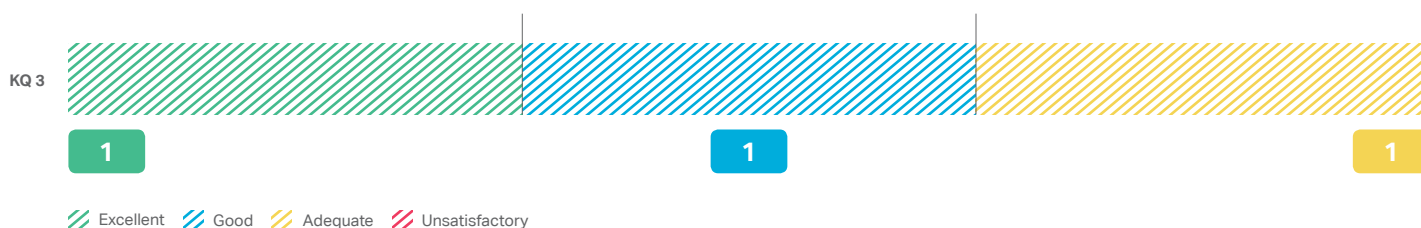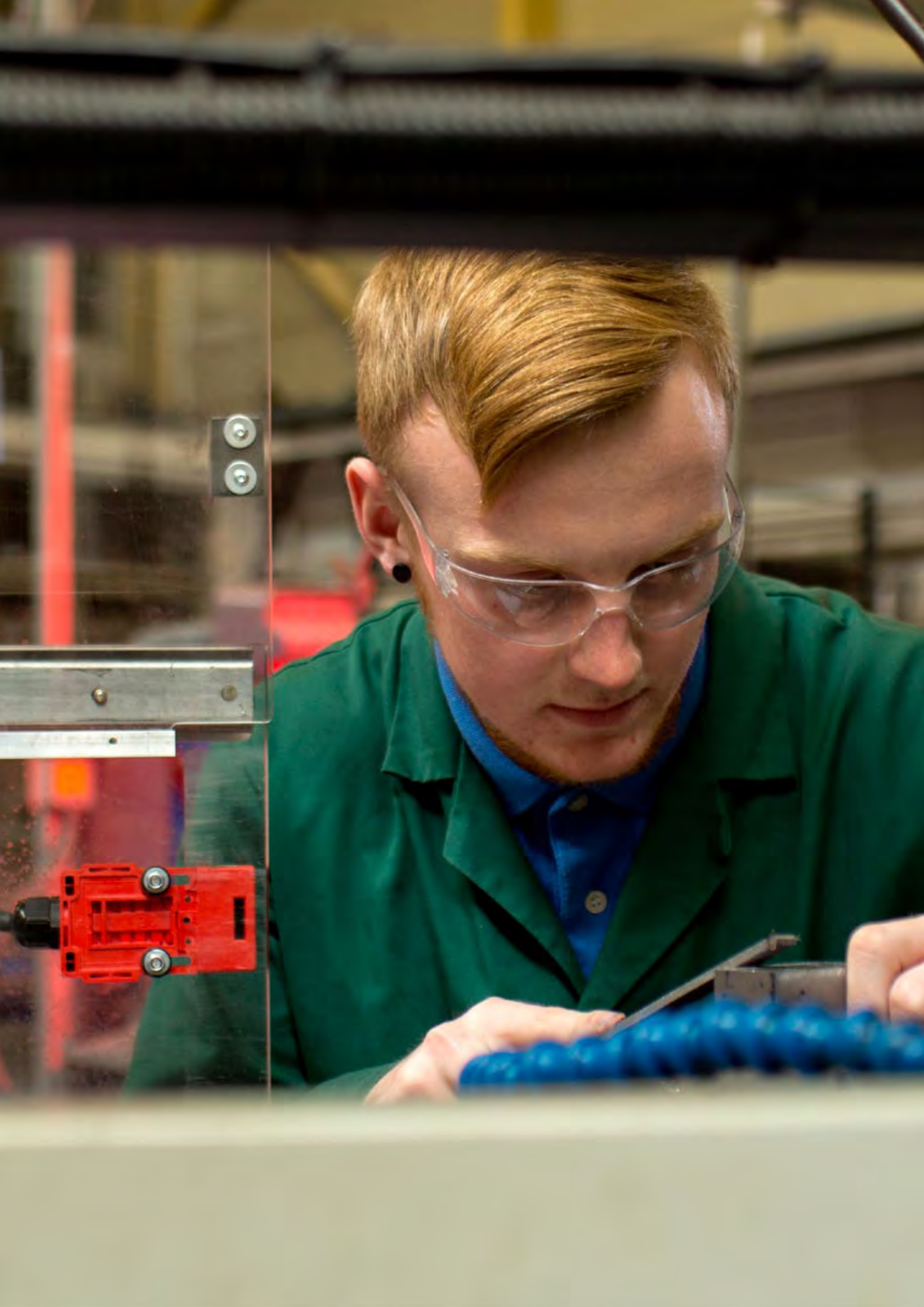
**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2:
Sector report
Adult community
learning

There are 15 adult community learning partnerships
in Wales. These partnerships, based largely on
local authority areas, involve a range of providers
that include further education institutions, local
authorities, Welsh language centres, the Workers'
Educational Association, County Voluntary Councils
and local voluntary organisations. The adult
community learning partnerships in Cardiff and the
Vale of Glamorgan officially merged in 2013-2014
to create the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan adult
community learning partnership.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Adult community learning

Two further education institutions are also mainstream providers of adult community learning. These are the Workers' Educational Association Cymru, and the YMCA Community College. WEA Cymru was officially launched in May 2014 as a result of the merger between WEA South Wales and Coleg Harlech WEA North Wales in January 2014.

There are three main types of delivery of adult community learning. Further education institutions are the main providers and directly deliver almost two-thirds of adult community learning provision in Wales. They deliver almost a further fifth of provision through franchise arrangements with 11 local authorities. In addition, 14 local authorities directly deliver a further fifth of provision. This represents an increase of about seven percentage points in the volume of provision delivered by further education institutions since 2011-2012. The volume of provision delivered directly by local authorities has declined by two percentage points since 2011-2012.

Follow-up:
Adult community learning

No partnerships were placed in a follow-up category in 2013-2014. However, this year we carried out a monitoring visit to the adult community learning partnership in Bridgend.

In Bridgend, the partnership has responded quickly to address the recommendations from the inspection in October 2013. It has worked well to redefine roles and responsibilities, to agree priorities and to implement more effective systems and processes. Overall, there has been an improvement across the partnership in the number of learners who successfully complete their course. Welsh Government statistics show that the partnership's success rate is near to the national comparator.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Adult community learning

Outcomes:
Adult community learning

Standards

We inspected two adult community-learning partnerships in 2013-2014, one in Merthyr Tydfil and the other in Ceredigion.

Learners' outcomes are among the best in the sector across the two partnerships. Different groups of learners achieve good outcomes overall. In both partnerships, learners from deprived areas achieve better outcomes than other learners. Both female and male learners achieve some of the best success rates in the sector. Where frequent opportunities exist, as in the Ceredigion partnership, Welsh-speaking learners make good use of Welsh to learn in their chosen subject area. However, across the partnership in Merthyr Tydfil, although learners in a few classes develop their understanding of Welsh language and aspects of Welsh life appropriately, they do not generally improve their understanding of the Welsh language or relate their learning to Wales well enough in sessions.

Overall, Welsh Government statistics show that local authorities improved success rates by six percentage points to 80% in 2012-2013. Overall, further education colleges improved success rates on their franchised programmes by five percentage points to 81% over the same period. The overall success rate for provision directly delivered by further education institutions is the highest in the sector at 86%. This is the same as it was in 2011-2012.
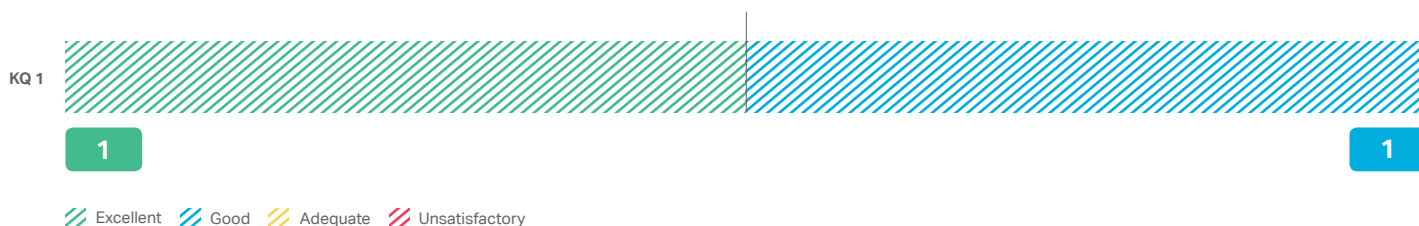
Wellbeing

Nearly all learners are motivated and enthusiastic in sessions. Many support each other well and this encourages learners to attend sessions regularly. Learners feel safe and valued in their classes and activities.

Most learners improve their understanding of healthy lifestyles and wellbeing appropriately. They gain in self-esteem and confidence through by applying the skills they learn in their family life and in the community. Many learners improve their life skills and become more confident and independent. A majority of learners on courses for employment obtain valuable volunteering opportunities in a wide range of community settings that make good use of the skills they have learnt.

Learners contribute effectively to curriculum planning through designated learner groups where the partnerships seek the views of learners and through learner questionnaires. A majority of learners appreciate the partnership response to the learner voice and the wide learning opportunities available to them. Many learners have developed a passion for learning and are gaining valuable personal, social and employability skills, leading to greater social inclusion. They improve their confidence, parenting skills and independent learning skills very effectively.

Figure 2.39: Numbers of providers and judgements for Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

KQ 1

| 1 | 1 |

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Adult community learning

Provision:
Adult community learning

Provision is good overall in both Merthyr Tydfil and Ceredigion. Both partnerships deliver a wide range of programmes that meet the needs of learners, employers and the community well. They support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and learners with additional needs well. The partnerships have increased the number of Welsh-medium and bilingual courses available for learners. Many courses in Ceredigion make good use of Welsh material in order to broaden learners' understanding of the context of Wales, and there are positive developments to improve Welsh provision within Merthyr. The impact of the provision on standards in Welsh is good in Ceredigion, but less so in Merthyr.

The quality of teaching is good in both areas. Tutors use a good range of teaching methods and resources to stimulate and interest learners, including good use of ICT. All tutors use a suitable range of assessment methods and provide useful feedback to learners to make sure that they understand the subject and can see the progress they have made. The learning environment is good in both areas. Both partnerships have a positive ethos of inclusion. As a result, learners from a wider range of backgrounds take part in courses. Generally, venues for learning are of a good standard and provide an appropriate learning environment.

Figure 2.40: Numbers of providers and judgements for Key Question 2: How good is provision?
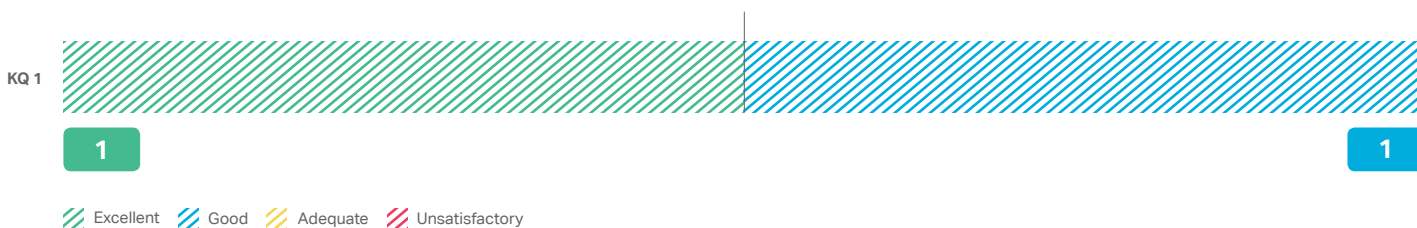
KQ2

2

Excellent   Good   Adequate   Unsatisfactory

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Adult community learning

Leadership and management:
Adult community learning

Leadership is good in one partnership and excellent in the other one. They both pay good attention to national and local priorities. They work well with a range of partners to organise and to deliver learning for adults. Both partnerships have good processes for reporting on performance and for monitoring progress and outcomes for learners. In the two areas, arrangements for improving the quality of adult community learning are generally robust. However, in Ceredigion, the partnership could do more to use management information to plan strategically and to help teachers evaluate and improve learners' outcomes. Both partnerships use their resources effectively to improve provision for learners.

**Figure 2.41: Numbers of providers and judgements
for Key Question 3: How good are leadership and
management?**

KQ 1

| 1 | | 1 |

Excellent Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Section 2:
Sector report
Learning in the justice system

The youth justice system in Wales is made up of 18 youth offending teams, a young persons' unit situated in an adult prison and one secure children's home. A few children and young people serve their sentences in secure settings in England. This year, Estyn worked with our partner inspectorates to inspect and report on the education that children and young people in the youth justice system receive. We worked with HMI Probation to inspect two of the youth offending teams (YOTs), with HMI Prisons to inspect the young persons' unit and with CSSIW to inspect the secure children's home.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Learning in the justice sector

Outcomes:
Learning in the justice sector

Standards

In the youth offending teams inspected, only a few children and young people achieve good outcomes in their education. Too many of them either do not attend their classes regularly enough or fail to complete the education or training that they start. However, a few young people supervised by the YOT do progress from a further education institution into employment.

Children and young people in secure settings have better outcomes. In the secure children's home, many children gain qualifications up to GCSE level in the core subjects.

In the young persons' unit in the prison, most boys attain a range of qualifications at entry level and level 1 in subjects, such as art, citizenship and carpentry. However, about half of all boys in the young persons' unit do not attain well enough in the core skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Wellbeing

In the secure children's home, most children and young people attend well and on time. They take pride in their work and achievements. They enjoy setting their own targets for improving their education and behaviour.

In the young persons' unit in the prison, most boys enjoy their learning, participate well and make good progress. They arrive on time and engage quickly in sessions. They develop their social and personal skills well in many sessions. They enjoy expressing themselves through language, music and art.

In one YOT, children and young people attend 'Review and Congratulate Panels' to celebrate the progress they make. The panel includes staff, parents or carers and the local magistrate. These provide positive feedback to children and young people and help to improve their level of engagement in their learning.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 2: Sector summaries: Learning in the justice sector

Provision:
Learning in the justice sector

Many children and young people of statutory school age under the supervision of YOTs do not receive enough education each week. In a few cases, they receive only a few hours. In one YOT inspected, the local authority's panel on managed moves works well in finding suitable education for children and young people with behavioural and attendance problems. In the other YOT, the local authority is too slow in finding alternative provision for a few children and young people.

Many children and young people attending YOTs have limited access to support services, such as speech and language therapy, educational psychology and behaviour support services. Those with poor skills in literacy and numeracy do not always get the help they need.

There are not enough education or training options to meet the needs of young people above statutory school age supervised by YOTs.

In the secure children's home, the curriculum takes good account of the academic and vocational needs and interests of the children and young people. The majority of teaching is good and uses a suitably broad range of teaching styles to meet the needs of learners.

In the prison setting, boys attend a good range of practical activities that encourage them to engage in education. Teachers explain things clearly and make good use of demonstrations. However, opportunities to improve the core skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are too limited.

Leadership and management:
Learning in the youth justice sector

YOT management boards do not always provide effective enough leadership to improve education outcomes for children and young people who offend.

None of the local authorities in the YOTs monitors the standards and wellbeing of children and young people well enough, or takes good enough account of these aspects when planning services.

In the secure children's home, a new senior education management team works effectively with senior care staff to ensure that the provision meets the learning and care needs of children and young people. Teachers who have recently joined the new leadership team are enthusiastic about their roles and play an active role in improving the work of the centre.

In the prison, the senior management team provides good leadership to develop and maintain education provision of good quality.

Self-assessment arrangements are sound. Managers collect and analyse data on learners' progress and achievement well. They have systems to assess the quality of teaching and to support tutors who need to improve. They work well with their partners to enrich the curriculum and to help learners to prepare for employment or further training. Development plans are good and managers monitor these regularly.
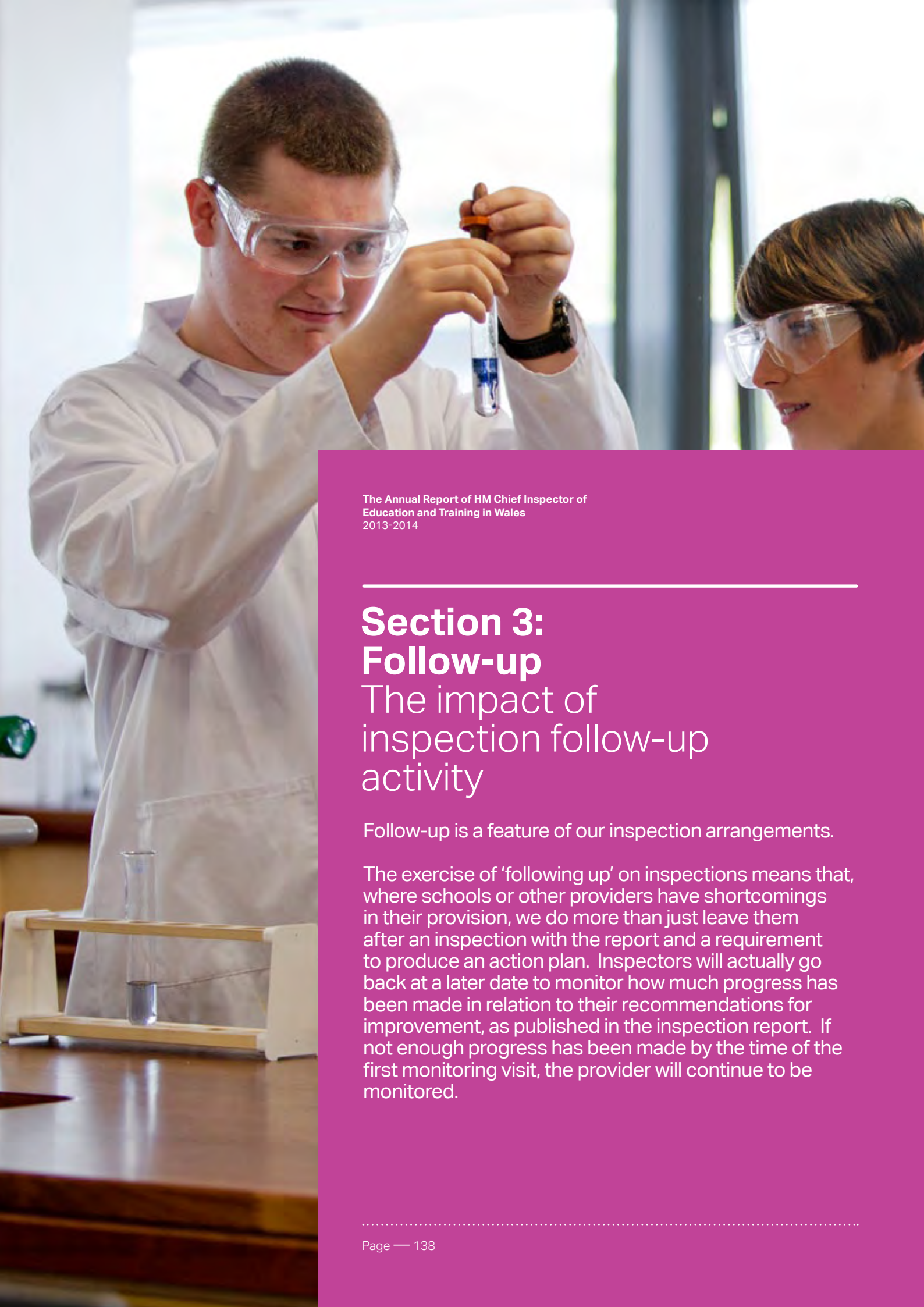
Section 3:
Follow-up
The impact of inspection follow-up activity

Follow-up is a feature of our inspection arrangements.

The exercise of 'following up' on inspections means that, where schools or other providers have shortcomings in their provision, we do more than just leave them after an inspection with the report and a requirement to produce an action plan. Inspectors will actually go back at a later date to monitor how much progress has been made in relation to their recommendations for improvement, as published in the inspection report. If not enough progress has been made by the time of the first monitoring visit, the provider will continue to be monitored.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

On being identified as 'no longer needing to be monitored', the school or other provider receives a published report indicating the progress that they have made. These reports are evidence of the impact of Estyn inspections in helping individual schools and providers to make progress.

Schools

Other than 'excellent practice', there are four categories of follow-up for maintained schools (primary, secondary, and special schools and pupil referral units). The most serious are those schools that require special measures or that are in need of significant improvement. These are statutory categories set out in legislation. We introduced two new categories of follow-up in 2010. They are 'Estyn monitoring' and 'local authority monitoring'.

Below is a chart that shows the number of schools that have needed different categories of follow-up monitoring over the past four years.

The number of schools needing follow-up

Figure 3.1: Number of maintained schools that went into follow-up at the time of their core inspection

Year	Special measures	In need of significant improvement	Estyn monitoring	Local authority monitoring	Total in follow-up	Number of inspections
2010-2011	4	10	51	40	105	279
2011-2012	7	14	75	37	133	266
2012-2013	11	14	75	34	134	265
2013-2014	8	14	98	62	182	279

This year (2013-2014), nearly two-thirds (182 schools) of the schools we inspected were identified as requiring follow-up. This is a higher proportion than last year (2012-2013), when just over half (134 schools) of the schools we inspected needed follow-up. This increase is largely because more primary schools require monitoring by Estyn or by the local authority. The proportion of schools requiring significant improvement has remained the same as last year at 5% (14 schools) and those requiring special measures has decreased slightly from 4% to 3% (reduced from 11 schools to eight schools).

The time taken for schools to come out of follow-up

The time taken for a school to have made enough progress to be removed from follow-up depends on the number and seriousness of the shortcomings identified at the time of the core inspection. Schools with a number of important shortcomings will be in a more serious category of follow-up and are likely to take longer to address inspection recommendations.

The chart below shows the number and proportion of schools that have been removed from follow-up for each year since 2010.

Figure 3.2: Numbers of maintained schools requiring follow-up activity at the time of their core inspection, and numbers removed from follow-up

Year	Number of maintained schools into follow-up 2010-2013	Number of these maintained schools out of follow-up (by 1 September 2014)	
	Number	Number	Percentage
2010-2011	105	104	99%
2011-2012	133	125	94%
2012-2013	134	83	62%

In most cases, schools make good progress in relation to the recommendations published in inspection reports. Around two-thirds of schools are removed from follow-up after a year. After two or three years, the number of schools remaining in a follow-up category is very few. The schools that remain in follow-up are mainly those that were originally placed in special measures or significant improvement, or were moved into either of these categories as a result of subsequent follow-up monitoring.

There are similarities between the schools in this small group. Their leaders have often failed to plan and/or deliver the necessary improvements to learners' achievements because they have not monitored specific aspects of progress well enough and have not undertaken self-evaluation in a rigorous way. Leaders have not identified and/or improved inadequate teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching remains too variable and teachers continue with poor assessment practices so that too few pupils make the progress they should. This means that standards are unacceptably low. In many of these schools, the senior management team is not aware of its own shortcomings even though inspectors identify a need to strengthen leadership, for example through re-defining roles and responsibilities, clarifying lines of accountability or stabilising staffing turbulence.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

Primary schools

Fourteen of the schools requiring monitoring either by Estyn or their local authority in 2012-2013 have remained in follow-up because they have not made enough progress in addressing the core inspection recommendations. In these schools, leaders have not developed rigorous enough procedures for identifying what needs to improve. They do not set challenging targets for improvement. There remains too much inconsistency in teaching, and teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low. Teachers do not use assessment well enough to match learning to pupils' needs. As a result, standards do not rise quickly enough.

Almost all primary schools requiring special measures in 2012-2013 and in 2011-2012 have made the necessary improvements and no longer need follow-up.

Seven schools were identified as needing significant improvement as a result of their core inspection in 2012-2013. Five have made good progress in addressing the inspection recommendations and, as a result, inspectors have removed them from follow-up. Leaders in these schools now have a clear focus on school improvement through better systems for monitoring and self-evaluation. As a result, standards have begun to improve.

Ysgol Aberporth is a Welsh-medium primary school in the village of Aberporth in Ceredigion. There were 122 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection. The school was found to require Estyn monitoring as a result of the core inspection in May 2013. The current headteacher took up post in September 2013. The school has fully addressed each of the inspection recommendations and no longer requires monitoring.

A key factor in the school's progress has been the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of actions taken on the standards of pupils' work. This has involved all staff, helping to develop a strong sense of ownership by staff and a shared drive to succeed. The headteacher provides teachers with detailed feedback on their short-term planning on a regular basis. This includes evaluations of how well planning meets the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. There is also a strong focus on progression in the development of numeracy and literacy skills. The school uses a robust pupil progress tracking system to assess the progress of individual pupils and groups.

A monitoring file includes evidence of actions and their impact. This helps not only to keep all stakeholders informed of the progress made, but also to sustain momentum and ownership of developments amongst staff.

The school's detailed post-inspection action plan also usefully includes other priorities for improvement that the head has identified. Working from one document that incorporated inspection recommendations and other school development priorities has made it easier for leaders to monitor progress.

The school has benefited considerably from its links with another school during the time it was in follow-up. This has helped the headteacher to monitor progress. It has also provided staff with worthwhile opportunities to learn from good practice.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

Secondary schools

In 2013-2014, one school made enough progress to be removed from monitoring by the local authority. However, two schools have not made enough progress in improving standards, particularly in English and mathematics, and performance since the inspection has declined. These schools will now be monitored by Estyn as a result of this lack of progress.

In 2013-2014, eight schools were removed from follow-up following Estyn monitoring visits. Most of these schools have improved the consistency and accuracy of their self-evaluation and improvement planning. They now set more challenging targets and have improved tracking and monitoring processes so that they focus more incisively on raising standards. In these schools, staff are held to account for standards and the quality of teaching and assessment. A few of these schools have improved attendance significantly and strengthened the role of the governing body in challenging school improvement.

In addition, three schools remained in 'Estyn monitoring' following monitoring visits. These schools have shown sound progress against a minority of inspection report recommendations but have made insufficient progress overall. This is because progress in improving performance in the core subjects at key stage 4 has generally been too slow and there is still too much inconsistency in teaching, marking and assessment and/or the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

During 2013-2014, four schools requiring significant improvement made enough progress to be removed from this level of follow-up. These schools have made steady progress in improving their performance in key stage 4 as well as raising levels of attendance. Leaders have worked well to address shortcomings in teaching and assessment as well as improving the consistency of middle leadership. Three schools remain in need of significant improvement.

In 2013-2014, one school was removed from special measures. Five schools remained in special measures and two schools were placed in special measures from needing significant improvement. These schools have made insufficient progress in securing improvements in many indicators in key stage 4 and have not improved the quality of teaching and assessment sufficiently. There is still too much inconsistency in the quality of middle and senior leadership and, although leaders have implemented a range of self-evaluation activities, the information they gather is not used well enough to influence practice and bring about sustained improvements.
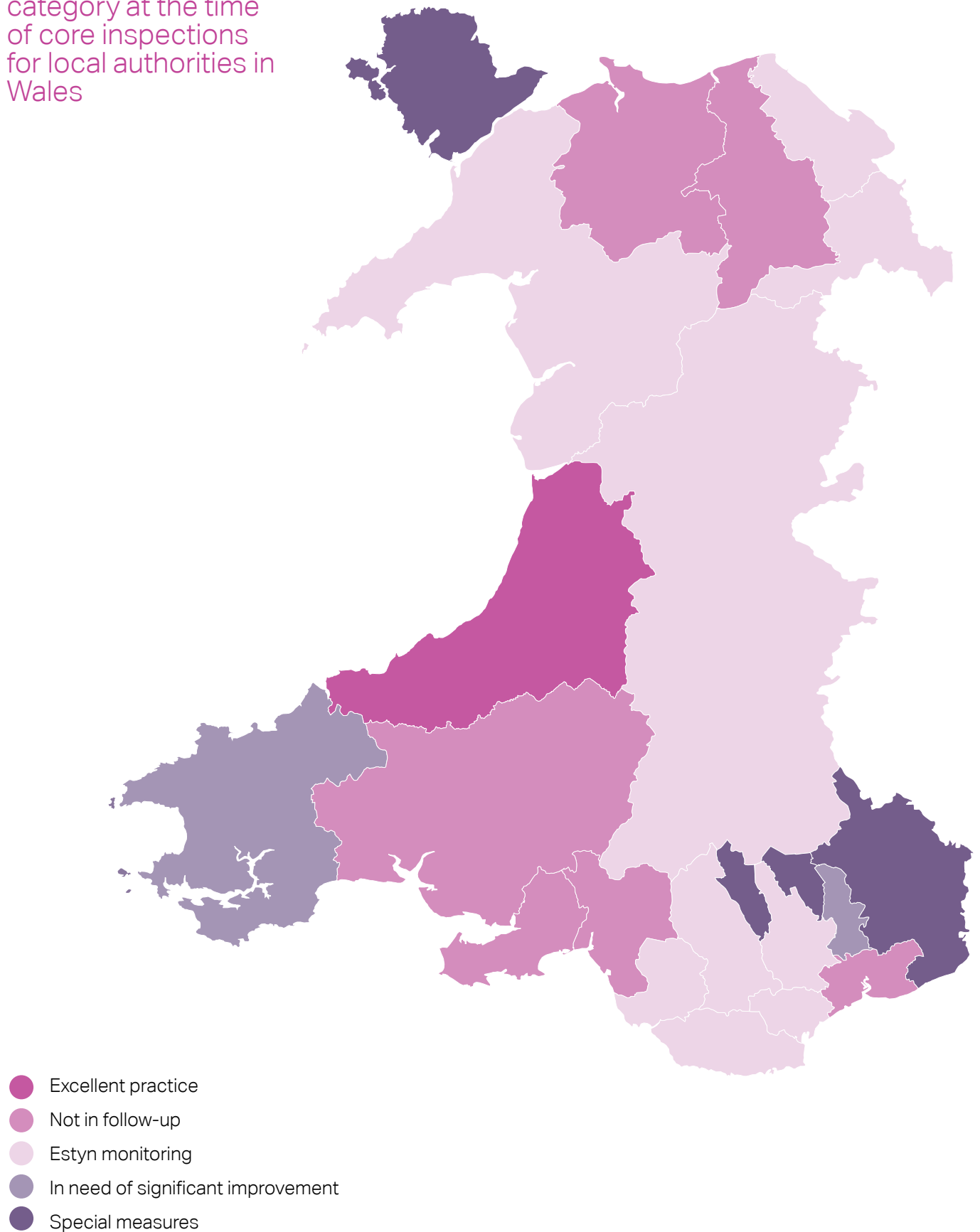
Local authority education services for children and young people

The following maps (pages 144 & 145) show the level of follow up for all 22 local authorities at the time of their inspection, and as of July 2014.
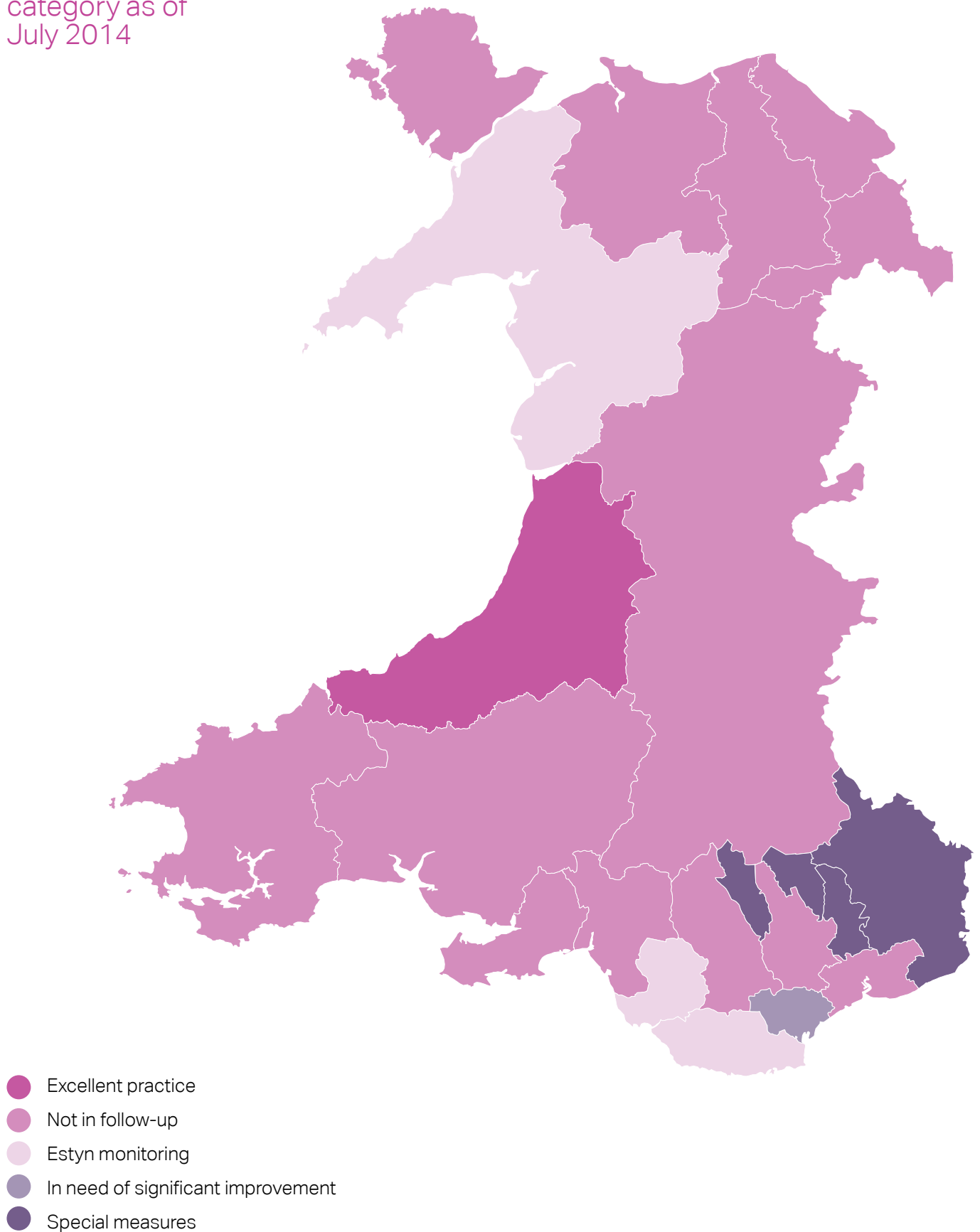
The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

Figure 3.3: Follow-up category at the time of core inspections for local authorities in Wales

- ● Excellent practice
- ● Not in follow-up
- ● Estyn monitoring
- ● In need of significant improvement
- ● Special measures

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

Figure 3.4: Follow-up category as of July 2014

- Excellent practice
- Not in follow-up
- Estyn monitoring
- In need of significant improvement
- Special measures

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 3: Follow-up: The impact of inspection
follow-up activity

The majority of local authorities required follow-up following their initial inspection.

Estyn has a bespoke approach to monitoring local authorities requiring follow-up. Estyn link inspectors work with authorities to agree a timetable for follow-up activity that allows enough time for the authority to demonstrate good progress. This may involve between one and three monitoring visits, although two authorities had full re-inspections because of the nature or scope of their shortcomings. At the final monitoring visit or re-inspection, inspectors evaluate progress against all the recommendations and determine whether or not the authority still requires follow-up.

The map on page 145 shows that seven authorities that required follow-up at the time of inspection have made good progress and no longer require follow-up activity. In these authorities, leaders have taken appropriate and timely action to address the recommendations, resulting in some improvements in services and in outcomes for children and young people.

However, eight authorities remain in follow-up. The common factor in all these authorities is weakness in leadership and management. In these authorities, some senior leaders have not fully grasped or accepted the nature and extent of the shortcomings. These authorities have tended to focus their action plans on service-level tasks rather than addressing the cultural and systemic reasons why the organisation was not supporting improvement well enough, including failures in senior leadership and management. Having failed to make good progress during the monitoring period, some authorities usually take swift and decisive action once Estyn increases the level of follow-up activity.

Pembrokeshire local authority failed to address shortcomings in its first inspection in June 2011 and had its level of follow up increased from 'in need of significant improvement' to 'requiring special measures' after a re-inspection. At the re-inspection in October 2012, inspectors found that 'corporate leaders and senior elected members have been too slow to recognise key issues in safeguarding and to change the culture in, and improve, education services' and 'leadership at directorate and service level is weak'. Inspectors also highlighted weaknesses in performance management, self-evaluation, planning and scrutiny that were barriers to improvement. However, in June 2014, when Estyn visited the authority, inspectors found that enough progress had been made to remove the need for follow-up activity. The chief executive, leader and senior officers had taken 'difficult and sensitive decisions', which were 'implemented carefully' and resulted in a complete restructure. The new management team is now 'working closely together as a cohesive group to embed change' and 'joint working arrangements with regional partners have strengthened the authority's capacity to challenge and support its schools'. The 2014 monitoring report highlights the 'significant change in culture within the authority, demonstrated through greater openness and transparency', as a key to successful progress.
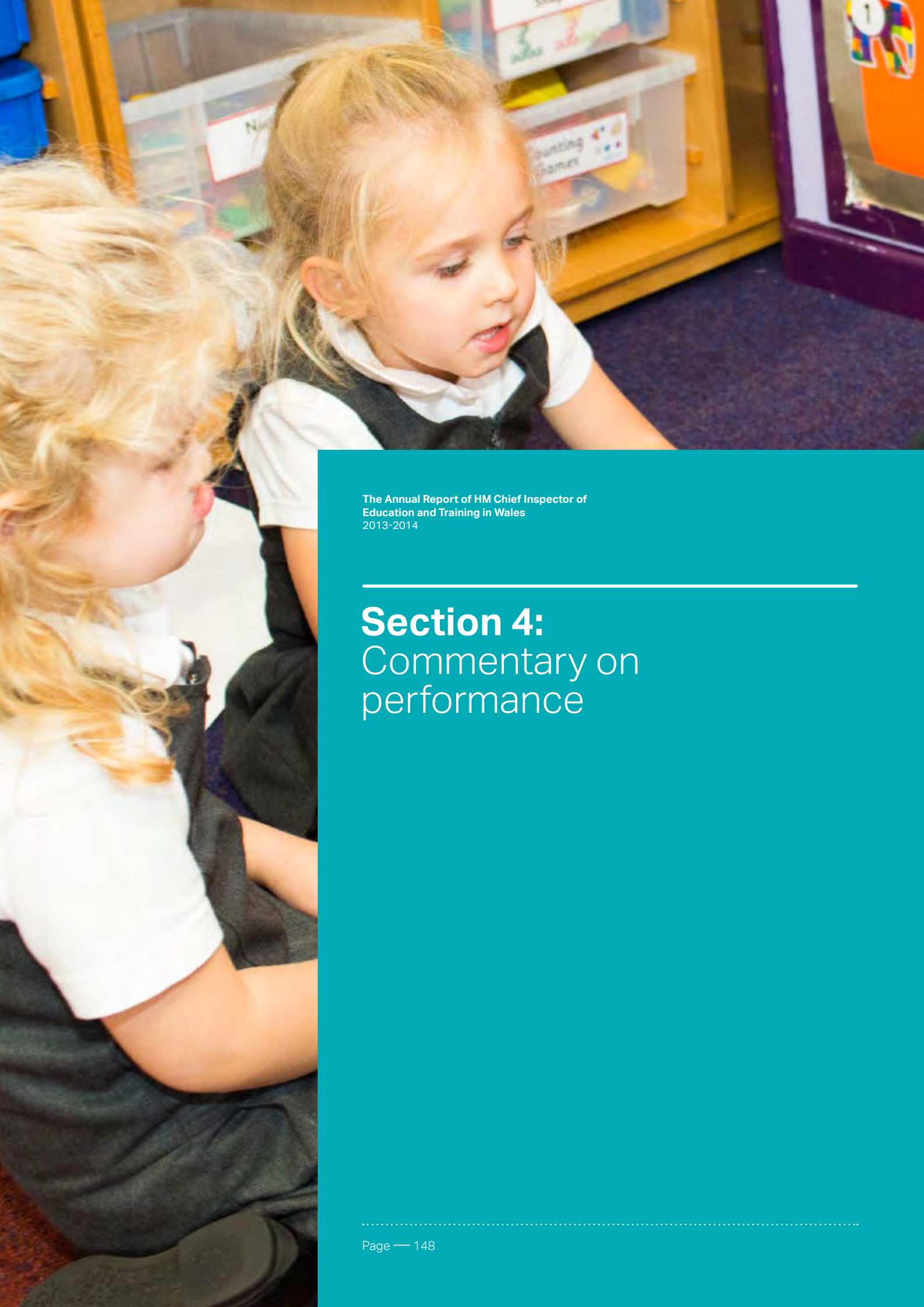
Section 4:
Commentary on performance

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

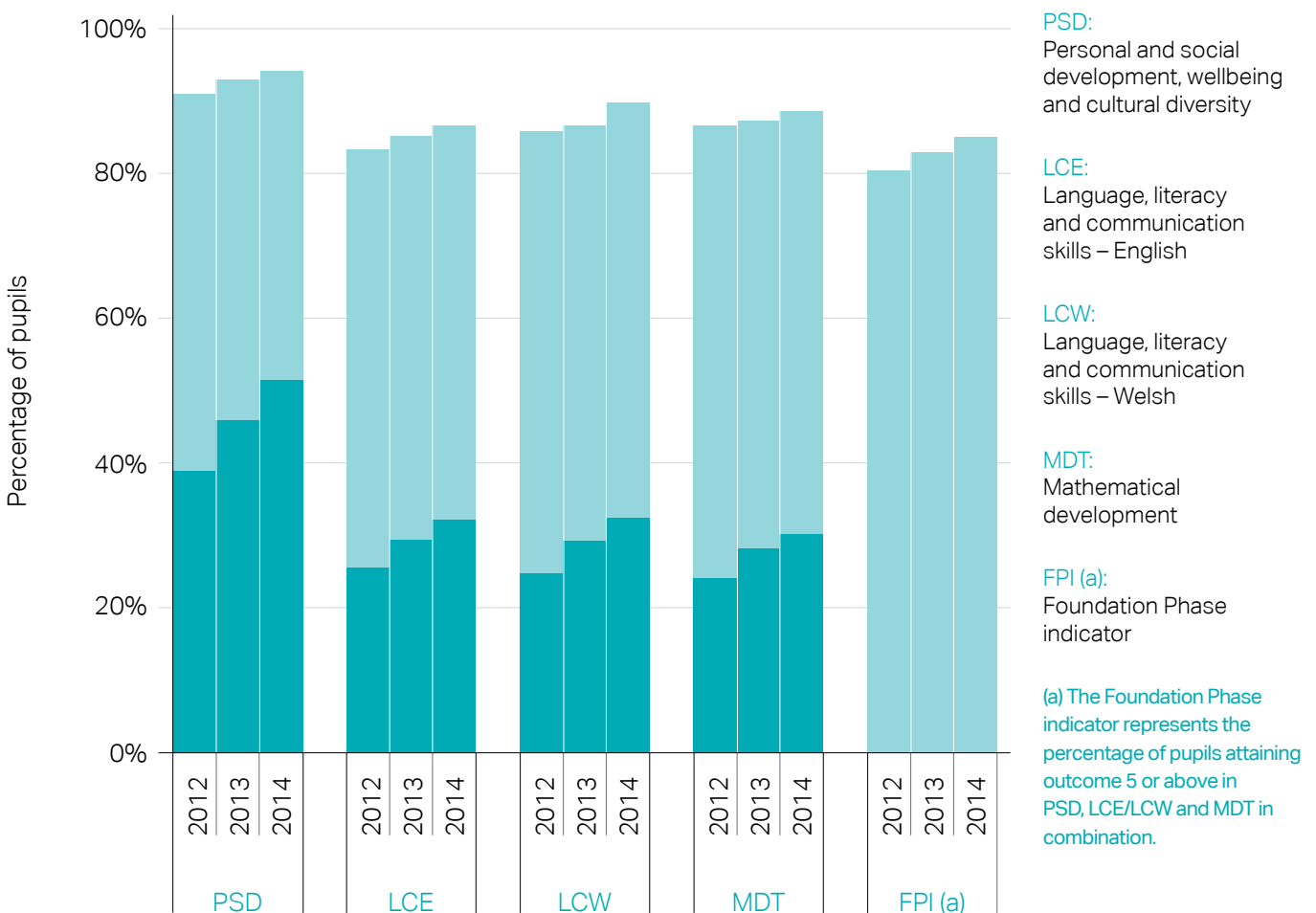Section 4: Commentary on performance

The performance of pupils in the Foundation Phase[16]

2014 is the third year for all seven-year-olds in Wales to be assessed by their teachers against the Foundation Phase outcomes instead of the National Curriculum levels. Pupils are expected to attain Foundation Phase outcome 5 by this age, with the most able reaching outcome 6 or higher.

The chart below compares the results over the last three years to 2014.

Figure 4.1: Foundation Phase – percentage of pupils achieving the expected outcome (outcome 5 or above) or the expected outcome plus one (outcome 6 or above), 2012 to 2014

Achieving outcome 5+
Achieving outcome 6+

PSD:
Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity

LCE:
Language, literacy and communication skills – English

LCW:
Language, literacy and communication skills – Welsh

MDT:
Mathematical development

FPI (a):
Foundation Phase indicator

(a) The Foundation Phase indicator represents the percentage of pupils attaining outcome 5 or above in PSD, LCE/LCW and MDT in combination.

In 2014, the percentage of pupils gaining at least outcome 5 in each of the areas of learning improved. Since 2012, the Foundation Phase indicator has increased by nearly five percentage points to 85%. Language, literacy and communication skills – English (LCE) has been the lowest performing area of learning for outcome 5 or above for the last three years. In 2014, this measure is eight percentage points below the personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity (PSD) area of learning.

The percentage of pupils reaching the higher outcomes in all areas of learning continues to improve. Mathematical development (MDT) has been the lowest performing area of learning for higher outcomes over the last three years.

[16] End of foundation phase outcomes and National Curriculum teacher assessment of core subjects at Key Stages 2 and 3, Welsh Government http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/end-foundation-phase-outcomes-national-curriculum-teacher-assessment-core-subjects-key-stages-2-3/?lang=en

# Performance of pupils at key stage 2 and key stage 3[17]

When assessed by their teachers in the National Curriculum core subjects (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science) pupils are expected to achieve level 4 by the end of key stage 2 when they are 11 years old and the most able are expected to achieve level 5.

In key stage 2 in 2014, results improved in all subjects. Science remains the best performing subject at this key stage. However, the gap between the outcomes in the different subjects is minimal. The percentage of pupils who gain the expected level in all three core subjects (known as the core subject indicator or CSI) has improved by almost eight percentage points over the last five years. In 2014, 86.1% of pupils achieved the core subject indicator, an increase of 1.8 percentage points since 2013.

In 2014, the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 also improved in all subjects. Over a third of all pupils now reach this level in each subject. Since 2010, performance at this higher level has increased in each subject by around nine percentage points.

Figure 4.2: Key stage 2 – percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (level 4 or above) and the expected level plus one (level 5 or above), 2010 to 2014

Legend: Achieving L4+ / Achieving L5+
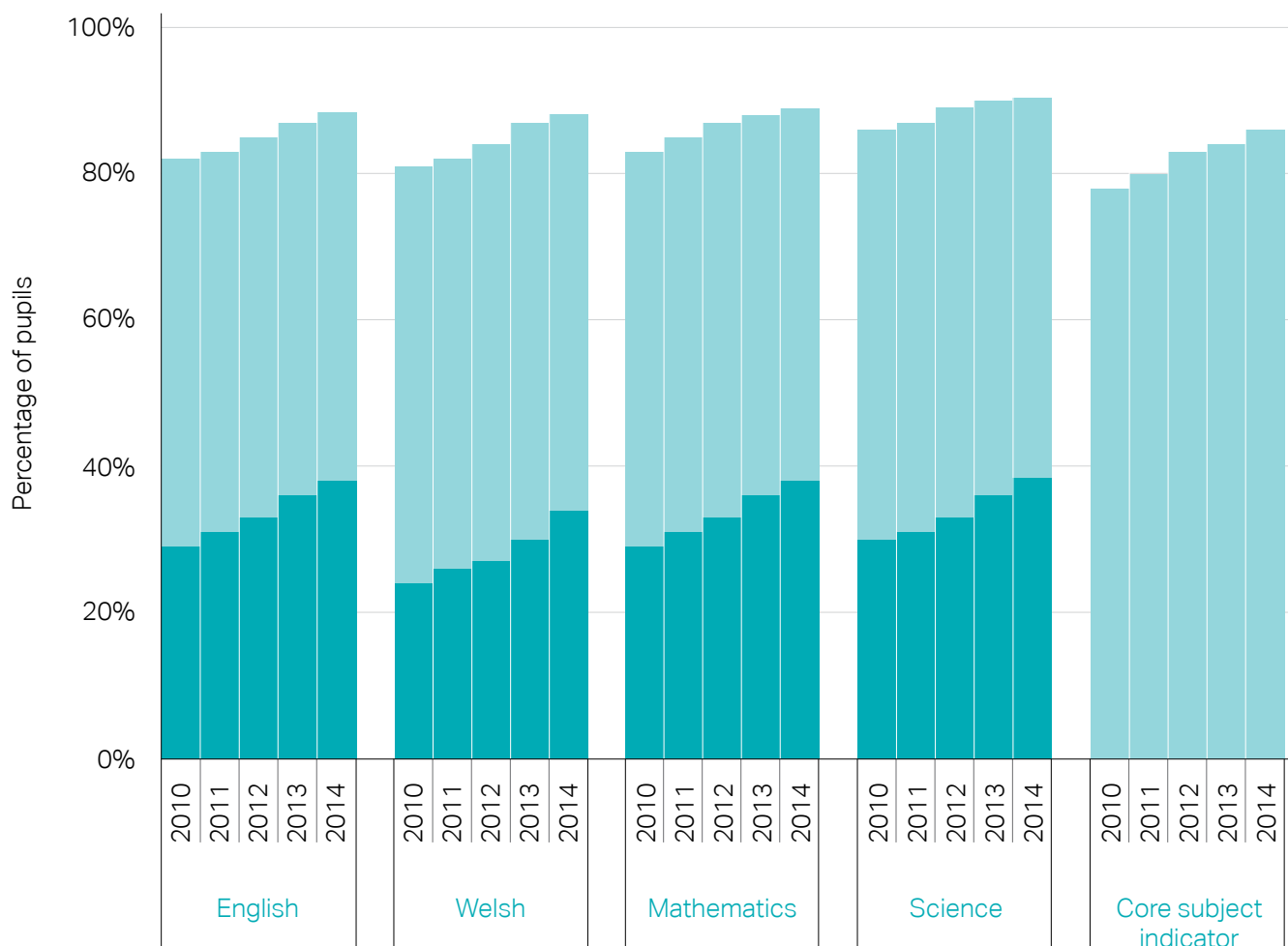
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[17] End of foundation phase outcomes and National Curriculum teacher assessment of core subjects at Key Stages 2 and 3, Welsh Government http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/end-foundation-phase-outcomes-national-curriculum-teacher-assessment-core-subjects-key-stages-2-3/?lang=en

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
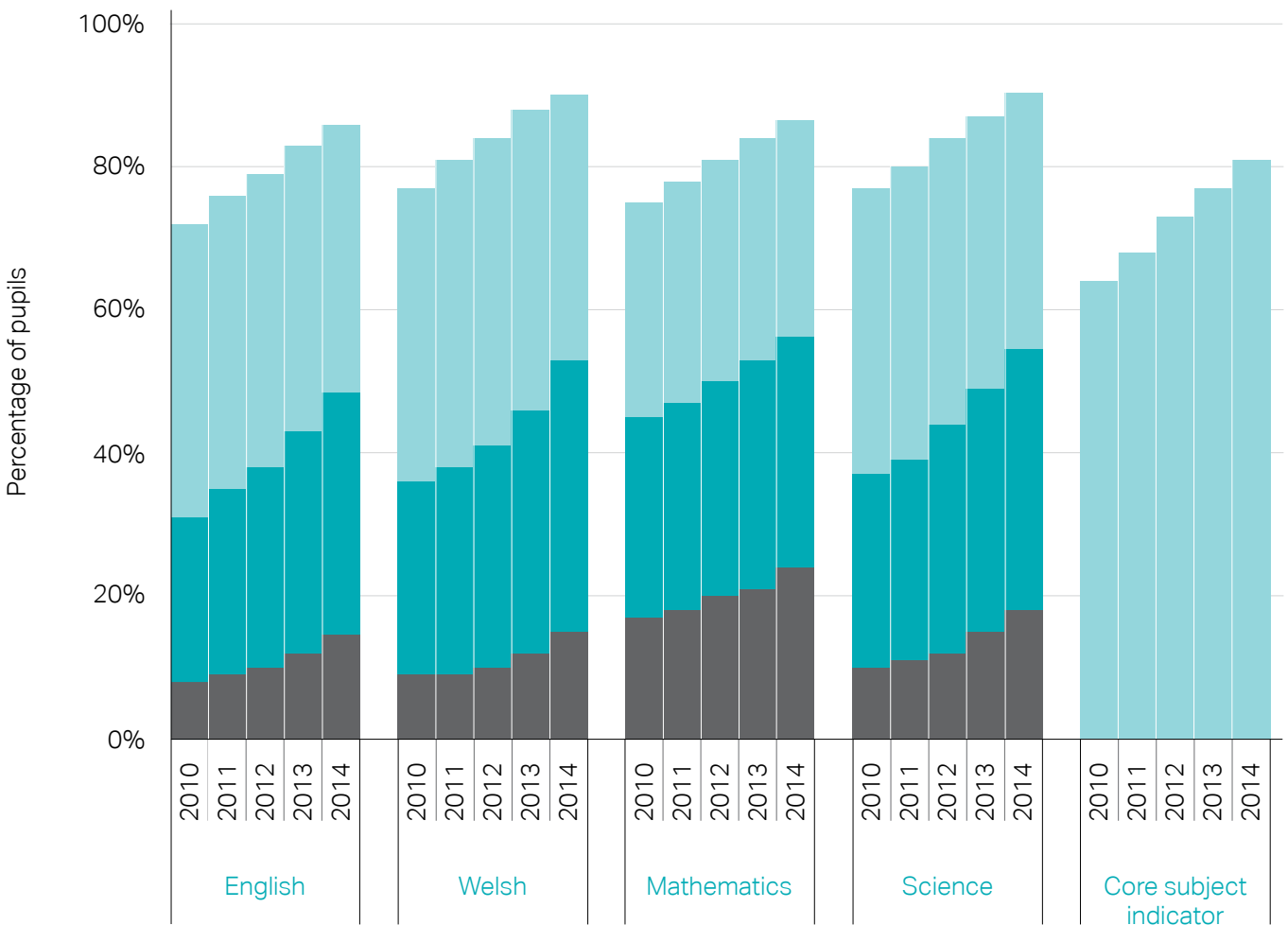2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Pupils at the end of key stage 3, when they are 14 years old, are expected to reach level 5, with the most able reaching level 6 or 7.

In 2014, in key stage 3, results improved in each of the core subjects by over two percentage points or more at the expected level. This is the fourth consecutive year that results in all four core subjects improved by at least this amount. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level in all three core subjects (the core subject indicator) improved by four percentage points in 2014. Since 2010, performance in the key stage 3 core subject indicator has improved by over 17 percentage points.

The percentage gaining the higher levels also improved in 2014. Close to a half of pupils in each subject area now reach at least level 6. The subject with the highest proportion of pupils gaining at least level 6 is mathematics, with almost a quarter of pupils also achieving level 7 or above.

The increases in performance in both key stage 2 and 3 have been consistently strong over recent years. The continual increase in outcomes across all subjects, at expected levels of attainment and higher levels of attainment, has raised concerns about the accuracy and reliability of teacher assessments.

Figure 4.3: Key stage 3 – percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (level 5 or above), the expected level plus one (level 6 or above) and expected level plus two (level 7 or above), 2010 to 2014

Achieving L5+
Achieving L6+
Achieving L7+

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Examinations at key stage 4[18]

Figure 4.4: Examination results for 15-year-olds[19] in schools in Wales

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Percentage achieving the level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	49.4%	50.1%	51.1%	52.7%	55.4%
Percentage achieving the level 2 threshold	63.8%	67.3%	72.6%	77.8%	82.3%
Percentage point difference between these two indicators	14.4	17.2	21.5	25.1	26.9
Key stage 4 capped points score	305.1	311.6	323.5	333.1	340.8

At the end of key stage 4, most 15-year-old pupils[18] take external examinations. In 2014, the percentage of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics increased by nearly three percentage points. This is the largest increase in this measure since it was introduced in 2007. Performance in this key indicator has increased by six percentage points since 2010.

The percentage of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold continues to increase at a much faster rate than the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics. It is now 82.3% compared to 63.8% five years ago. This is an increase of over 18 percentage points. There remain concerns therefore about this gap in performance between the level 2 threshold and the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics. The large and increasing difference between the two indicators suggests that schools find it easier to enable pupils to gain a range of wider qualifications, including those that are not GCSE but are equivalent to GCSE, rather than to help pupils to attain grade C or above in GCSE language and mathematics in combination.

The key stage 4 capped points score, a measure of the average of the best eight GCSE or equivalent results, has improved by almost 36 points in five years. This increase means that pupils in 2014, on average, achieve the equivalent of an extra GCSE at around the value of a grade D (a grade D has a value of 34 points) compared to pupils five years ago.

[18] Examination results in Wales, Welsh Government http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/examination-results/?lang=en
[19] Pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Figure 4.5: Examination results for 15-year-olds[18] in schools in Wales in the core subjects (a)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Percentage achieving A*-C in					
English/Welsh		63.7%	63.5%	64.0%	67.2%
English	62.7%	62.8%	62.2%	62.9%	66.2%
Welsh (b)	73.4%	74.6%	73.8%	73.5%	73.7%
Mathematics	55.7%	56.5%	58.4%	60.3%	61.7%
Science	63.6%	65.9%	70.6%	74.8%	82.3%

(a) For each pupil the best grade of English language, English literature and/or Welsh first language and Welsh literature is taken.
(b) This represents the percentage achieving A*-C of the number of 15-year-olds who entered Welsh first language, rather than the total number of 15-year-olds.

Science is the highest performing core subject in Wales. In 2014, more than four in every five pupils achieved an A*-C (or equivalent) in science. Since 2010 the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C (or equivalent) in science has increased by nearly 19 percentage points. The notable rise in outcomes in science has largely been due to increasing numbers of pupils following vocational science qualifications that are not GCSEs but are equivalent to GCSE. During the same period of time, improvements in English, Welsh and mathematics have been more modest, increasing by over three, less than one and six percentage points respectively.

[19] Pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales**
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Post-16 learners in school[20]

Figure 4.6: Examination results for 17-year-olds[21] in schools in Wales

	2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Percentage achieving the level 3 threshold	94.9%	96.3%	96.9%	96.5%	97.1%
Wider points score for post-16 learners in school	747.9	798.9	772.9	806.6	804.1

In 2014, the percentage of post-16 learners in school who achieved the level 3 threshold increased to 97.1%. Over the last five years this measure has increased modestly. During this period it has increased by 2.2 percentage points. The average wider points score attained by these learners decreased by 2.5 points between 2013 and 2014. However, performance in this measure had increased by nearly 34 points between 2012 and 2013.

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[20] Examination results in Wales, Welsh Government http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/examination-results/?lang=en[6 5]
[21] Pupils aged 17 at the start of the academic year

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Differences in performance between boys and girls[22]

Figure 4.7: Performance of boys and girls across the Foundation Phase and key stages

	Girls 2014	Boys 2014	Percentage point difference 2014	Percentage point difference 2013
Percentage achieving the Foundation Phase indicator	89.5%	81.0%	8.5	8.4
Percentage achieving the key stage 2 core subject indicator	89.4%	83.1%	6.3	6.1
Percentage achieving the key stage 3 core subject indicator	85.5%	76.8%	8.7	9.5
Percentage achieving the level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	59.7%	51.4%	8.3	8.3

In 2014, girls continue to outperform boys at all key stages. The biggest difference continues to be in key stage 3.

Girls continue to outperform boys in each area of learning in the Foundation Phase. The difference between the performance of boys and girls in the Foundation Phase indicator is similar to last year, whereby girls outperform the boys by around eight and a half percentage points.

In key stage 2, the difference in attainment of girls and boys has decreased for English and Welsh. It has increased for mathematics and science. In the core subject indicator, girls continue to outperform boys. However, at the higher levels in mathematics, boys outperform girls. This is the only area within any of the core subjects across each of the key stages where boys outperform girls.

In key stage 3, girls continue to outperform boys in the core subject indicator, but the gap has decreased slightly over recent years. In 2014, the difference between the performance of girls and boys is around eight and half percentage points. Five years ago, the difference was over 10 percentage points.

In key stage 4, in the level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics, girls outperform boys by over eight percentage points. This difference was the same as in 2013 but has increased from five years ago, when the difference was around seven percentage points.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

[22] Examination results in Wales, Welsh Government http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/examination-results/?lang=en

Performance of pupils eligible for free school meals[23]

	Pupils not eligible for FSM, 2013	Pupils eligible for FSM, 2013	Percentage point difference 2013	Percentage point difference 2012
Percentage achieving the Foundation Phase indicator	86.9%	69.2%	17.7	18.3
Percentage achieving the key stage 2 core subject indicator	88.1%	69.8%	18.3	20.0
Percentage achieving the key stage 3 core subject indicator	82.3%	53.8%	28.5	29.6
Percentage achieving the level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	58.5%	25.8%	32.7	33.2

Pupils eligible for free school meals perform considerably less well than pupils not eligible for free school meals. This is the case from Foundation Phase through to key stage 4. However, the difference between the performance of pupils eligible and not eligible for free school meals widens as pupils go through school. At key stage 4, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics is less than half the proportion of pupils not eligible for free school meals who achieve the same.

The difference in performance of pupils eligible and not eligible for free school meals has narrowed slightly between 2012 and 2013 in all key stages and the Foundation Phase.

[23] Achievement and entitlement to free school meals in Wales, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/academic-achievement-free-school-meals/?lang=en

**The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014**

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Attendance[24]

**Figure 4.8: Attendance in Wales by pupils of
compulsory school age, 2010 to 2014**

School phase	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Primary (a)	93.1%	93.3%	93.8%	93.7%	94.8%
Secondary (b)	91.1%	91.4%	92.2%	92.6%	93.6%
Percentage point difference (c)	2	1.9	1.6	1.1	1.2

(a) Primary attendance also includes data for special and independent schools where provided.
(b) Secondary attendance also includes data for special and independent schools where provided.
(c) Difference between primary and secondary school attendance

Attendance rates in secondary schools have increased more quickly than for primary schools over the last five years. As a result, the difference between attendance rates in primary and secondary schools has reduced.

Persistent absenteeism is the term given to pupils whose attendance rates are 80% or lower. During the academic year ending 2014, 5% of pupils in secondary schools were classified as persistent absentees. This is around three times the rate of persistent absenteeism in primary schools. In secondary schools, these pupils account for a quarter of all absences in 2014. In primary schools, they account for around 9% of absences. In secondary schools, the proportion of pupils classified as persistent absentees has halved since 2008, and it has also declined in primary schools.

Since 2010, girls have had a higher rate of overall absence than boys in maintained secondary, special and independent schools. This is the case in 2014, and the difference between boys' and girls' attendance rates is 0.4%.

Unauthorised absenteeism in primary schools has remained steady at around 1% over recent years. In secondary schools the rate has declined by three tenths of a percentage point over the last five years to 1.3% in 2014. There is no difference between the rates of unauthorised absenteeism of girls and boys in either primary or secondary schools.

Analysis of primary and secondary school attendance rates compared to the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals indicates that schools with a higher proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals generally have higher rates of absenteeism.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Exclusions[25]

Figure 4.9: Number of permanent exclusions from maintained primary and secondary schools in Wales, 2009 to 2013
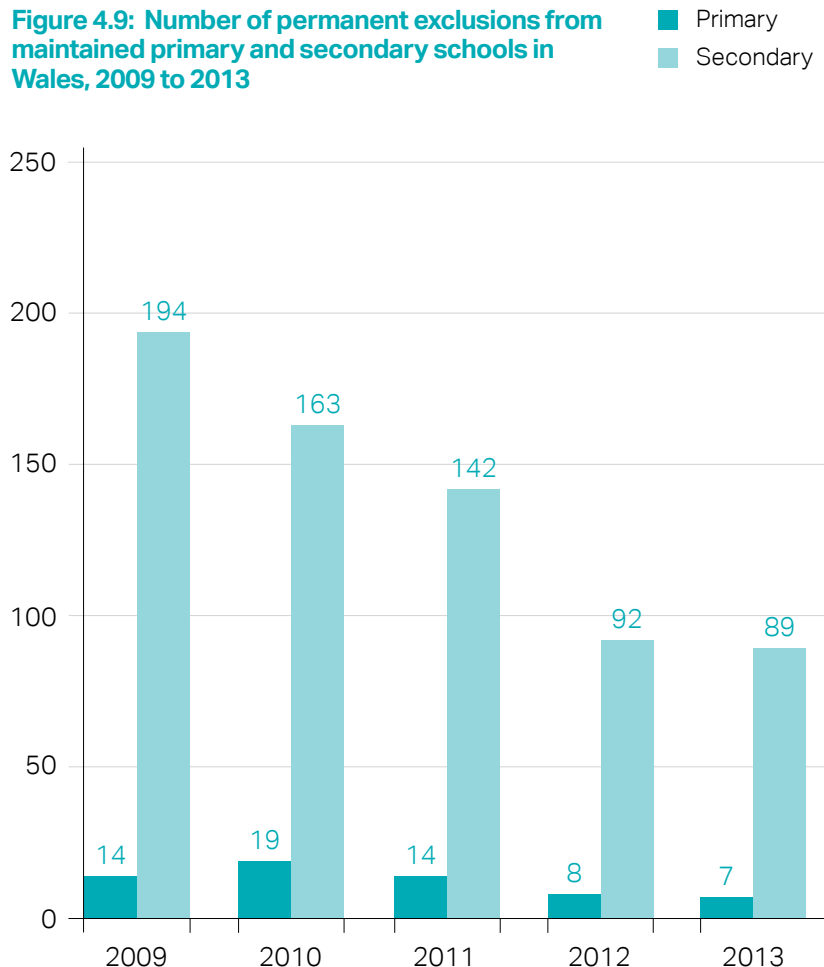
■ Primary
■ Secondary

The number of permanent exclusions has reduced in Wales over the last five years. In the academic year ending 2013, there were 99 permanent exclusions from maintained primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units in Wales. Boys account for around three-quarters of all permanent exclusions. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 account for over half of all permanent exclusions across schools. Just under one-third of permanently excluded pupils continued their education in pupil referral units. This is an increase on the figures for 2012, which show that around a quarter of these pupils continued their education in pupil referral units. In 2013, around one-in-eight pupils who are permanently excluded receive no provision. This is an improvement from 2012 when the rate was around one-in-five pupils.

In 2013, the total number of fixed-term exclusions fell again, with the number of fixed term exclusions of six days or more falling noticeably compared to figures over recent years. The number of shorter exclusions of five days or fewer also fell. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 account for a large proportion of the fixed-term exclusions, making up around 44% of the total exclusions across schools.

Pupils with special educational needs accounted for a little over 60% of all exclusions in 2013.

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[25] Exclusions from schools in Wales, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/exclusions-schools/?lang=en

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)[26]

Figure 4.10: **The percentage of young people not in education, employment or training, 2009 to 2013**

Age	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
16-18	12.4%	11.5%	12.2%	10.8%	10.5% (p)
19-24	21.8%	23.0%	22.2%	22.9%	21.2% (p)

(p) Data for the year ending 2013 is provisional.

At the end of 2013, 10.5% of 16 to 18-year-olds were not in education, employment or training. This equates to 11,800 teenagers. This is a reduction from 2012 when 10.8% of 16 to 18-year-olds were not in education, employment or training. However, the proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training is higher than in England, where provisional figures indicate that the rate is around 7.6%, the lowest it has ever been.

In 2013, 3.7% of Year 11 leavers were known to be not in education, employment or training. This compares to 4.2% in 2012. Over the last five years, the proportion of Year 11 leavers known to be not in education, employment or training has decreased by around two percentage points.

At the end 2013, 21.2% of 19 to 24-year-olds were not in education, employment or training. This equates to 55,300 young people. This is a reduction from 2012 when 22.9% of 19 to 24-year-olds were not in education, employment or training. Over the last five years, the proportion of 19 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training has been consistently just over one in five young people.
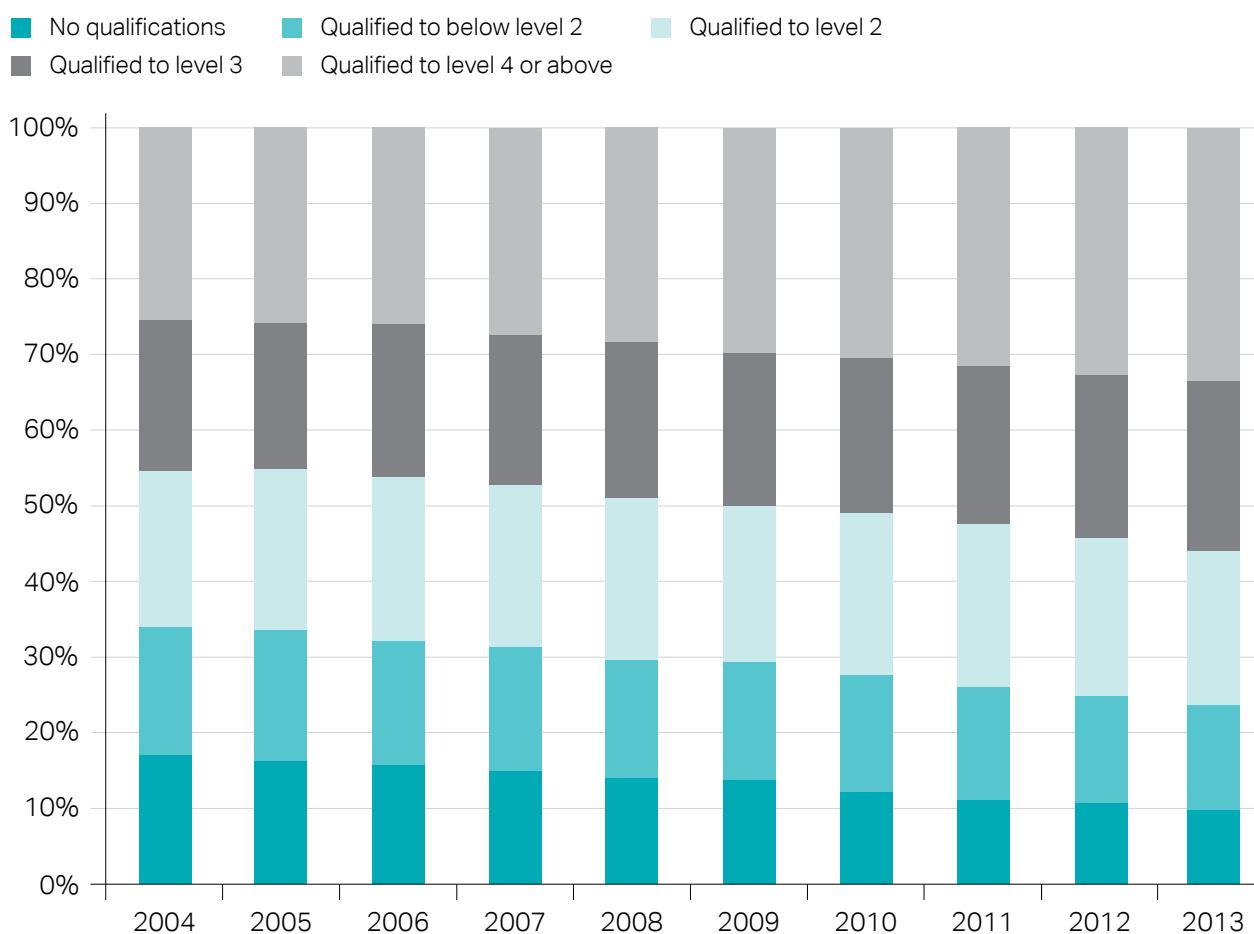
The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Skills, further education and lifelong learning[27]

Qualification levels have increased in Wales in 2013, continuing the pattern over recent years. The proportion of working age adults estimated to have no qualifications in Wales has fallen to just below 10% for the first time. In 2013, over three quarters of working age adults in Wales held at least level 2 qualifications and just over a third held degree-level qualifications (level 4 or above). However, qualification levels in Wales remain lower than in England, Scotland and the UK as a whole, but higher than in Northern Ireland.

In Wales, in general, qualification levels were highest in Monmouthshire, The Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, and lowest in the South Wales valleys authorities.

Figure 4.11: Level of highest qualification held by working age adults, 2004 to 2013 (a)

(a) Working age adults includes males aged 18-64 and females aged 18-59.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Further education[28]

Attainment rates improved in 2012-2013 with an overall attainment rate of 93%, up two percentage points from the previous year. Attainment rates varied between different subject areas, ranging from 86% in Science and Mathematics to 96% for Hospitality and Catering.

Figure 4.12: Overall learning activity success rates in further education colleges, 2010-2011 to 2012-2013
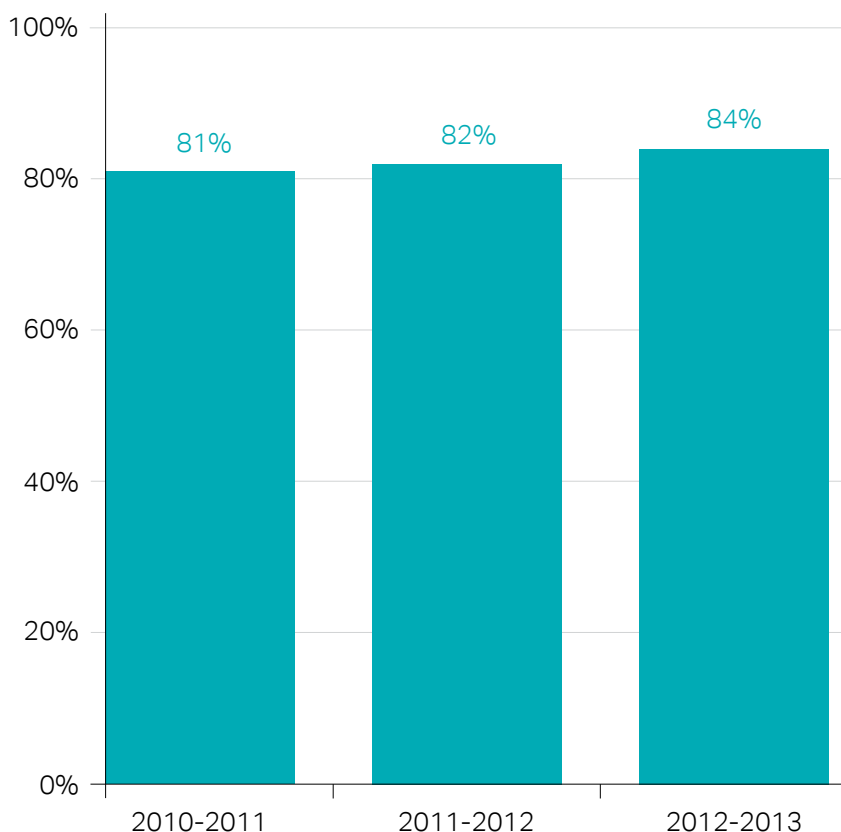

The overall success rate for all courses at further education colleges improved in 2012-2013. Success rates were highest at entry level at 90%, up three percentage points from the previous year. Success rates were lowest at level 3 at 81%, although this was a one percentage point increase from the previous year. Success rates at level 2 also increased from 82% in 2011-2012 to 84% in 2012-2013.

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

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28 Learner outcome measures for further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and adult community learning (ACL), Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/learner-outcome-measures-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en

Work-based learning[29]

In 2012-2013, work-based learning framework success rates in Foundation Apprenticeships and in Apprenticeships were up by one percentage point from the previous year to 85% and 87% respectively. However, an increase in the number of Apprenticeship programmes ending within eight weeks without completion occurred in 2012-2013. This was largely due to an increase in 'early drop-outs', which doubled from the previous year.

Figure 4.13: Framework success rates in Foundation Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships, 2010-2011 to 2012-2013
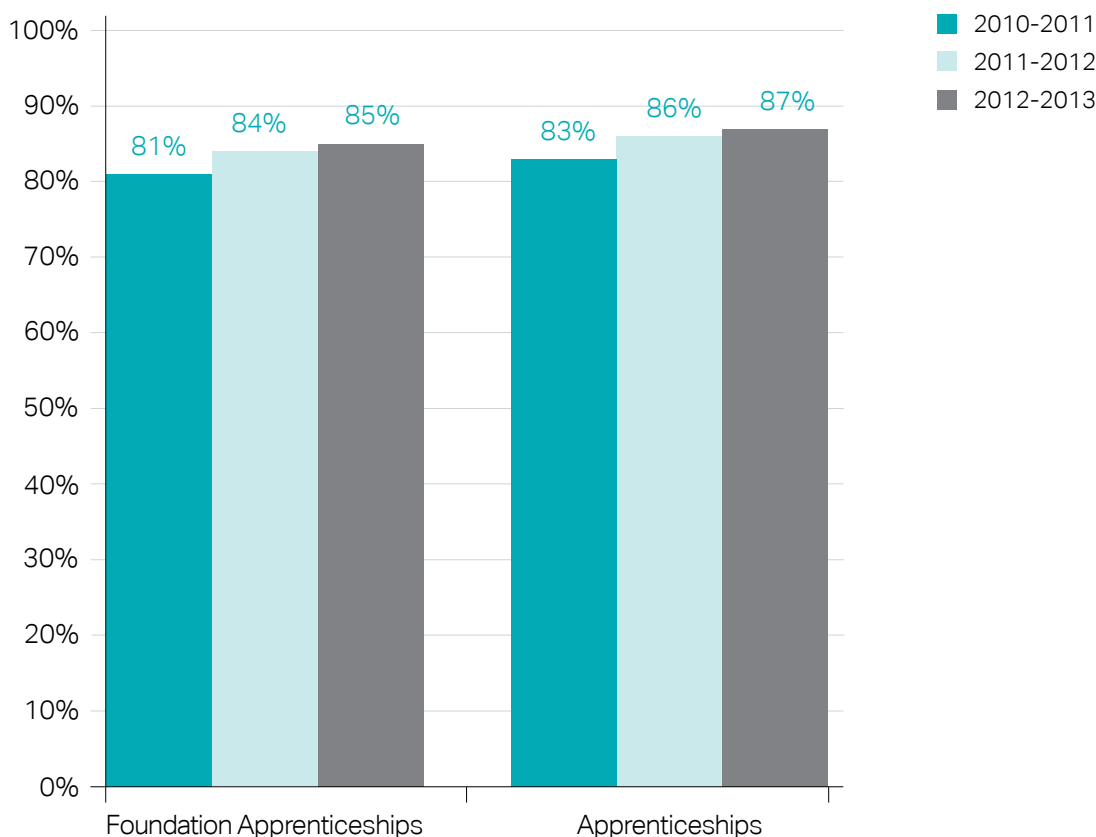
In the second year of published data for Traineeships and Steps to Employment programmes, learning activity success rates increased for both Traineeship (Engagement) and Traineeship (level 1). Traineeship (Engagement) increased by eight percentage points to 82% and Traineeship (level 1) increased by nine percentage points to 77%. In Steps to Employment programmes, learning activity success rates were 77% for Work Focused Learning programmes and 93% for Routeways to Work, up five and 11 percentage points respectively on the previous year.

Within three months of completing their Traineeship programme, 41% of trainees had progressed to learning at a higher level, 17% had entered new employment or were changing employment and 22% were seeking work or unemployed. Six per cent of learners on Steps to Employment programmes progressed to learning at a higher level, 35% entered new employment or changed employment and 39% were seeking work or unemployed. For both the Traineeship and Steps to Employment programmes the proportion of trainees and learners who were seeking work or unemployed reduced from the previous year by two and five percentage points respectively.
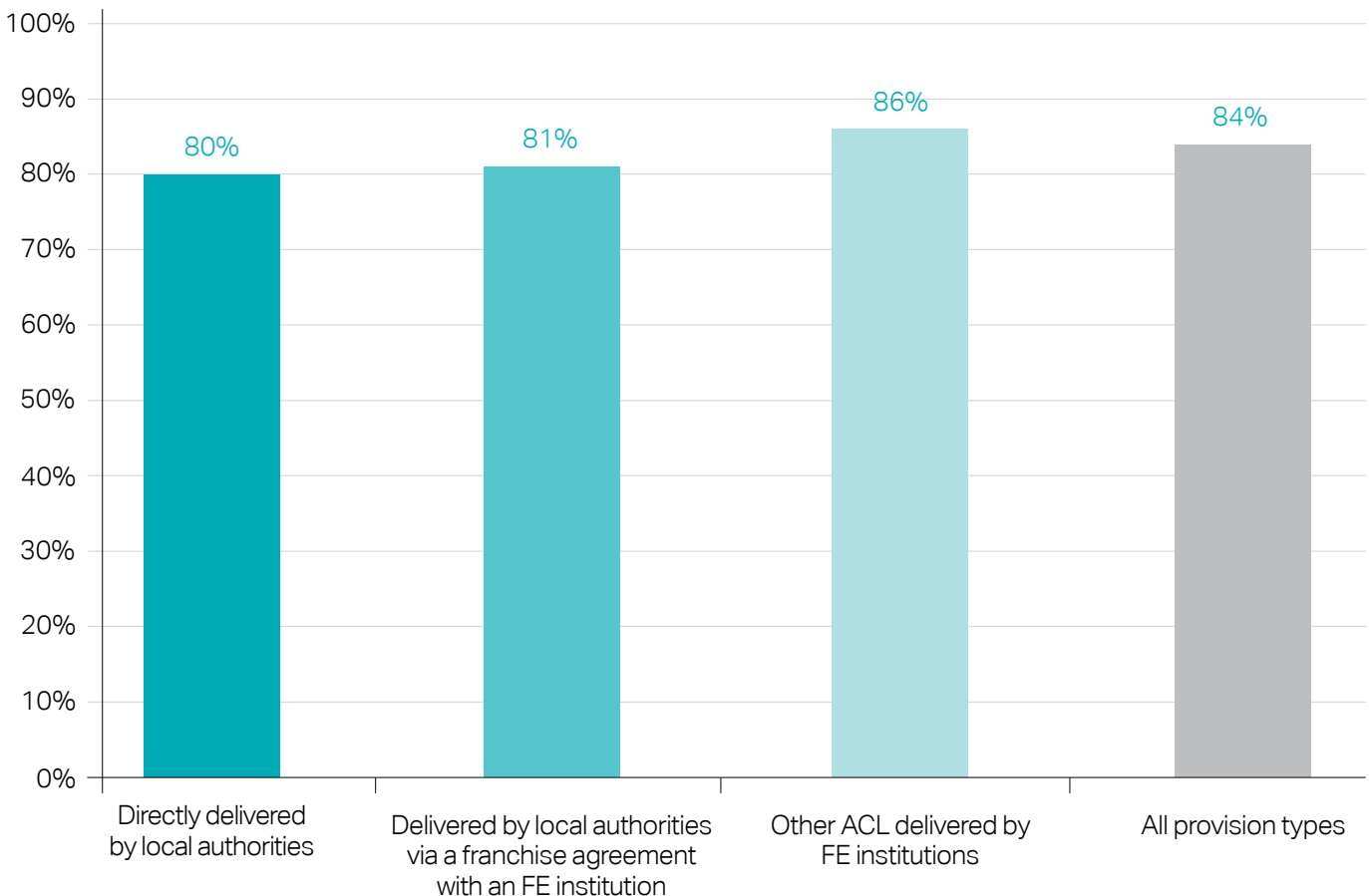
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[29] Learner outcome measures for further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and adult community learning (ACL), Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/learner-outcome-measures-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en

The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales
2013-2014

Section 4: Commentary on performance

Adult community learning[30]

There are three main types of delivery of adult community learning. Further education institutions are the main providers and directly deliver almost two-thirds of adult community learning provision in Wales. They deliver almost a further fifth of provision through franchise arrangements with 11 local authorities. In addition, 14 local authorities directly deliver a further fifth of provision. This represents an increase of about seven percentage points in the volume of provision delivered by further education institutions since 2011-2012. The volume of provision delivered directly by local authorities has declined by two percentage points since 2011-2012.

Overall, Welsh Government statistics show that local authorities improved success rates by six percentage points to 80% in 2012-2013. Further education institutions improved success rates on their franchised programmes by five percentage points to 81% over the same period. The overall success rate for provision directly delivered by further education institutions is the highest in the sector at 86%. This is the same success rate as in 2011-2012.

**Figure 4.14: Success rates in adult community learning,
by type of provision, 2012-2013**

[30] Learner outcome measures for further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and adult community learning (ACL), Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/learner-outcome-measures-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en

Figure 4.14 shows that there was variation across the different types of adult community learning provision for all three learner outcome measures in 2012-2013. Further analysis of the underlying data suggests that at least some of this variation can be attributed to inconsistent approaches to the recording of Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) data. However, this variation was less than in previous years, indicating improvements in data quality.

Success rates for provision directly delivered by local authorities were highest for entry level and level 2 learning aims and lowest for level 1 learning aims. Success rates for provision delivered via a further education institution franchise or other adult community learning provision delivered by further education institutions were highest for level 2 and level 1 learning aims respectively.

Success rates varied across subject areas. Aside from the 'Other' subject area, the highest success rates were in Arts, Media and Publishing; Languages, Literature and Culture; and Adult Basic Education.

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