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Schools benefit from teachers' professional development

Funding from the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) to help teachers develop their knowledge and skills has had a positive impact in the classroom, according to Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales. In most cases, teachers' professional development projects have helped raise pupils' achievements and have contributed to the wider development of schools.

Estyn's report evaluates the impact of GTCW-funded professional development projects for teachers in primary and secondary schools. Teachers can apply for different amounts of funding, from £650 for a professional development activity of their choice, to £5,250 for a teacher sabbatical. Most development activities are closely related to teachers' everyday work, covering areas such as early years, ICT, management skills, science, special educational needs, thinking skills and teaching and learning methodologies.

Ann Keane, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, said, *"These findings are very encouraging in supporting the improvement in standards of education and training in Wales. It clearly demonstrates the positive impact that professional development in teachers can make. Most teachers plan their continuing professional development projects well. However, teachers do need to spend more time planning how they will measure the impact of these projects, including asking colleagues and pupils for feedback, so work can be more clearly linked to raising pupil achievement."*

Inspectors found that many teachers do not effectively monitor their own professional development at planned milestones, leaving them open to not grasping the more

subtle stages in pupils' learning. As a result, teachers do not discover as much as they could about pupils' learning or their own abilities.

Also, the findings suggest that teachers' professional development projects have the most impact on school performance where the headteacher or senior management values the importance of professional development for their staff. Teachers often refresh their levels of enthusiasm for teaching through professional development and this impacts positively on school development and effectiveness.

The report includes a case study from Aberdare High School, where teachers successfully used the GTCW funding to support ways of developing pupils' critical thinking skills. Teachers attended a conference on innovative learning, sharing their new skills and knowledge with other colleagues on their return to school. As a result, a pilot programme was introduced to Year 7 focusing on improving pupils' speaking and listening, collaborative and problem-solving skills. Since developing and implementing this approach, evidence has shown a measurable increase in pupil confidence and enjoyment of lessons, with a corresponding rise in GCSE results.

Inspectors have made only one recommendation as a result of their findings: that the Welsh Assembly Government should fund the development of materials to help teachers better evaluate the impact of their continuing professional development on their teaching and on raising pupils standards of achievement.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

About the report

- Estyn's report 'How teachers evaluate the impact of GTCW-funded continuing professional development projects' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is available in full at <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports.asp>

The report includes evidence from a sample of teacher' continuing professional development projects across a range of funding categories October-December 2009. Inspectors reviewed teachers' application forms and reports and interviewed headteacher, senior staff and teachers who had received funding in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 in a range of primary and secondary schools.

- The report includes case studies from:
 - Aberdare High School, Rhondda Cynon Taff
 - Greenway Primary School, Cardiff
 - Ogmore High School, Bridgend

About Estyn

Estyn is the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales. Our aim is to achieve excellence for all in learning in Wales. We do this by providing an independent, high-quality inspection and advice service.

Our vision is to be recognised through the expertise of our staff as an authoritative voice on learning in Wales.

We are independent from, but funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998).

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