

## News Release

### **Schools make good use of exclusions guidance**

12 June 2007

Many schools in Wales make good use of Welsh Assembly Government guidance to help improve pupils' behaviour and reduce exclusions, says a report published by Estyn today. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools closely follow the guidance and it has helped them to support pupils who might previously have been excluded.

Many schools exclude pupils only when they have tried all other options, but a few still exclude pupils too readily. Estyn recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government explores ways of discouraging schools from this, including the introduction of regulations to enable local education authorities to impose sanctions, including financial sanctions, on such schools.

Susan Lewis, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, says, "Reducing exclusions is a national issue. The number of permanent exclusions is low in the majority of LEAs across Wales. But between 1999-2000 and 2004-2005 fixed term exclusions<sup>1</sup> increased by nearly 150%. Underachievement is often accompanied by problems with behaviour and attendance, which can lead to exclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> When a learner is told not to come to school for a fixed period; not exceeding 45 days in any one school year.

“Each excluded pupil is likely to have developed a very negative attitude towards education that will affect them and their family for the rest of their life. Parents and communities have a big responsibility here to influence pupils and encourage them to understand the benefits of a good education.”

In one LEA, highly effective ‘nurture’ groups support and work with pupils and their families helping to develop better attitudes towards learning. Both pupils and parents use these sessions to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Estyn recommends that LEAs increase this type of support for those pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties.

Estyn reports that schools which are successful at reducing exclusions:

- have a clear policy for pupil behaviour that all staff support and implement;
- promote effective ways of managing behaviour;
- offer an alternative learning pathways to better meet individual needs; and
- use data to track pupils’ progress, identify potential problems and monitor trends.

Schools that have been most successful in reducing exclusions have done so by changing the attitudes of staff to how they manage pupils’ behaviour. Training for staff has often aided this. One school gained staff support for principles that emphasise that the interests of the child are of a high importance. These principles underpin the Welsh Assembly Government’s guidance on exclusions.

Last year Estyn published a good practice report about managing challenging behaviour. Schools, LEAs and the Welsh Assembly Government should implement its recommendations to help reduce the number of pupils who are excluded.

Estyn recommends that LEAs and schools urgently agree a protocol on transferring pupils who are at imminent risk from exclusion from their school to another school. Although some LEAs have started to do this, none of them has finalised their protocol.

Some schools have looked at alternatives to exclusion. A few of these schools have made good use of 'internal seclusion' where pupils are kept inside the school, but away from other pupils. Other schools have established 'time-out' rooms where pupils can cool down outside the classroom before their behaviour becomes unduly disruptive.

In instances where a pupil is excluded, he/she or their parents may appeal against this. Inspectors found very few instances where this occurred. The majority of schools ensure they send work home to pupils whom they have excluded. But many pupils fail to complete the work and, consequently, they fall behind with their work considerably.

ENDS

**Notes to Editors:**

- Estyn's report "Evaluation of the implementation by schools and LEAs of guidance on exclusions" was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and is published at [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk) .
- This work was undertaken as part of the remit Estyn received from the Welsh Assembly Government in March 2006. The report provides advice on how well schools and LEAs are implementing the guidance on exclusions (Welsh Assembly Government Circular 1/2004).
- For this report, inspectors analysed data on exclusions from schools in Wales; visited 9 LEAs, 13 secondary schools, 1 primary school and 1 pupil referral unit. The schools and LEAs chosen for visits were from rural and urban areas with varying levels of social deprivation across Wales.

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