

Debate pack: Debate on the standards and quality of Education and Training in light of the ESTYN report

Date of debate: **Tuesday 13 May 2008**

Motion for debate:

Carwyn Jones (Bridgend) - To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:
Welcomes the annual report for 2006-07 of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales.

Introduction

Estyn is Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales. The Annual Report presents the findings from inspections in almost every aspect of education and training in Wales. The short paper accompanying the annual report "*Estyn's headlines*" summarises the key issues, including:

- In 2006-2007, in most areas of education and training in Wales, standards have kept improving, particularly when we look at them over the longer term
- There is a growing inconsistency between providers within sectors across Wales
- The gap between the best and worst schools is getting larger with almost one in 10 schools having no outstanding features
- Compared with other countries in the UK with a similar education system, pupils in Wales have generally not done as well
- Overall, teaching is improving. In primary, secondary and special schools, teaching has improved a lot over the last six years. It is now good or better in over three-quarters of the lessons we observed.

Key documents / information (underlined text denotes hyperlink to the document)

Estyn

26/02/08 [Annual report](#)

The foreword to the report notes that although standards have improved, the rate of improvement is slowing down in many sectors of education. The report goes on to state that if Wales is to deal effectively with the problems of the slowing rate of improvement and inconsistency, the way it provides education and training must continue to change fundamentally (page iii)

- 26/02/08 [Annual report - Estyn's headlines](#)
- 26/02/08 [Annual report - press statement](#)
- [Recent Estyn Publications](#)
- 12/03/08 [Evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee for its inquiry into school funding](#)
- 12/03/08 [Transcript of Enterprise and Learning Committee meeting](#)

In evidence to the Committee, Estyn noted that:

- “Most schools are making effective use of the funding they receive. However, not all schools are concerned enough about getting value for money.
- Accommodation in secondary schools is often not as good as it should be. Almost half of secondary schools we inspected have some poor aspects of accommodation.
- In nearly all schools with new or refurbished buildings, we have seen improvements in the quality of teaching and standards of pupils’ work.
- To make all school buildings fit for purpose, the Welsh Assembly Government should continue to ensure local authorities have access to appropriate capital funding. Local authorities and schools should, in turn, make sure there is a clear link in their plans between the strategies for improving school buildings, reducing the number of empty school places and raising standards.
- Only about a third of local authorities in Wales have clear plans as to how they want to modernise their schools, and are acting on these plans, including removing unfilled school places and improving buildings or closing schools. This means that the problem of unfilled places and poorly maintained school buildings is getting worse.
- In primary and secondary schools, the majority of pupils continue to develop good key skills across the curriculum although standards in the core subject indicator (English/Welsh, mathematics and science) have plateaued. “

Assembly business

- 26/02/08 [Plenary statement on the School Effectiveness Framework](#)

The Minister stated:

“The Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales’s annual report for 2006-07, which was published today, concludes that there is much to celebrate: the amount of good work in primary schools has increased by 3 percentage points since last year, and 29 percentage points over the six-year period since the schools were last inspected, and, in secondary schools, standards have improved by 6 percentage points since last year and 20 percentage points over the six years. However, the rate of improvement has not been uniformly sustained in all parts of the service: attainment at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3 is levelling off

and the examination indicators at age 16 have not risen. I am pleased that an increasing number of schools show excellence, grade 1, across all areas of work inspected. However, Estyn concludes that, over a six-year period, schools that were identified as weak in 2000-01 have found it difficult to improve in many instances. We must continue to lift performance and narrow the gap between our best-performing and worst-performing schools, and improve consistency in standards across Wales.”

Statistics

2008 [Schools and teachers 2008](#)
[Post 16 Education and Training 2008](#)

Key Welsh Assembly Government documents

26/10/06 [The Learning Country: Vision into Action](#)
26/02/08 [School Effectiveness Framework](#)
16/01/08 [Proposed Learning and Skills Measure](#)
Jan '08 [A revised curriculum for 3 to 19 year olds](#)
Sep '04 [The Foundation Phase for 3 to 7 year olds](#)
07/05/08 [Written statement by the Welsh Assembly Government on the Foundation Phase – Annex A](#)
29/04/08 [Written statement by the Welsh Assembly Government on the Foundation Phase – Annex B](#)
Mar '08 [Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post 16 learning](#)
Dec '07 [Promise and Performance \(Webb Review\)](#)
27/06/07 [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#)
09/04/08 [One Wales Delivery Plan 2007:2011](#)

The Children's Commissioner

Oct '07 [Annual Report](#)
Oct '07 [Unofficial exclusions](#)

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MRS reference 08/1420

Annex A



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: The Foundation Phase

**By: Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning
and Skills**

Date: 7 May 2008

The Foundation Phase is one of the most significant reforms that the Welsh Assembly Government is introducing in the One Wales Programme. Its aim is to change the approach to the education of our 3 to 7-year-olds to provide the best possible start to their learning. Fully evaluated, the Foundation Phase reforms have been widely welcomed by local authorities, schools and parents.

In my written statement of 29 April I reported that additional funding would be required, over and above the £25 million grant secured in the 2008/09 Budget for the roll-out of the Foundation Phase from September.

I would like to make it clear that local authorities were asked to undertake an audit in 2006 in preparation for the roll-out of the Foundation Phase – there was a disappointing response. On the evidence of the information provided to date, some authorities have a clear picture of how they will move forward already – others do not. However, I pay tribute to those authorities which already have the information and have built a clear Foundation Phase strategy as a result.

I am committed to rolling out the 1:8 adult to child ratio for 3 to 5-year-olds from September 2008. The information local authorities have now provided demonstrates that a very significant amount of progress can be made towards achieving the 1:8 ratio in the 2008/09 school year.

In order to safeguard the successful pilots and their continuity during roll-out, I am able to announce today an additional £5m for this financial year, which will be found from within my existing departmental budget. It will be ring-fenced to provide full support for the pilot and early start schools across Wales. Provision will be made in

finalising my budget for 2009-10 for this transitional support to continue for the summer term 2009.

This additional funding will do two things. It will ensure the pilot and early start schools can maintain their staffing for the Foundation Phase, to provide high quality learning for their children and act as champions of good practice for other schools and settings in their authority. It also means that during the 2008/09 transition school year, local authorities will not have to support these schools for the Autumn and Spring terms from the £25m already secured for this financial year.

My expectation is that as a result of this additional funding, local authorities will use more of the £25m to fund additional staff for the roll-out in their other schools. How many additional staff compared to their current calculations will vary from authority to authority depending on the costs involved in each pilot and early start school.

As a condition of the foundation phase grant, I am requiring all local authorities to provide the Welsh Assembly Government with their final plans for use of the grant by 30th May. Authorities will be expected to notify schools of their allocations by the end of May to enable them to recruit staff for September. My officials will be assisting authorities in finalising their plans. It is essential that in turn, local authorities involve their schools. Our tri-level approach is based on a commitment to partnership working. Schools are clearly at the forefront and pupils at the heart of all that we do.

I can also report that yesterday I chaired the first meeting of the Foundation Phase Implementation Task and Finish Group which includes representatives of the key stakeholders – WLGA, ADEW, the teacher unions, early years experts and Estyn. The meeting was very positive with all around the table committed to seeking the successful roll out of the Foundation Phase and welcoming the partnership approach to achieving that.

I am also requiring authorities to collect data by the end of June regarding the current position in their schools. This will confirm the workforce currently available to deliver the Foundation Phase and give an estimate of the total number of 3 to 5-year-olds projected to be in each school in September. The Welsh Assembly Government will work with local authorities to conduct an audit of this data in order to provide a baseline against which to judge progress made in September. The £5 million I am making available this year will be assessed against this information in reaching conclusions about future resource levels. Close monitoring will be maintained throughout the roll-out, working alongside WLGA and ADEW.

The Assembly Government will also review with local authorities the January 2008 Pupil Level Annual School Census data together with the PLASC requirements for 2009 so as to secure improved information and to achieve an educationally and financially sustainable roll-out in future years.

I want to conclude with a brief mention of the expectations on schools and the part Estyn has to play. We are supporting the 1:8 ratio because we believe that delivery of

the new statutory curriculum for 3-5 year olds will be better as a result. But the ratio itself is not statutory; it is the quality of teaching and learning that is key to success. Estyn has confirmed to me that the advice to inspectors will be to base their judgements on the effective use by the school of the available resources and on the quality of teaching and learning – not on whether or not the ratio has been achieved. The advice will also reflect the fact that it will take time, in any event, for the Foundation Phase to bed down. I have spoken with the Chief Inspector of Estyn. The Chief Inspector will be writing to Local Education Authorities to set out Estyn's position in relation to the inspection of the Foundation Phase from September 2008.

I am grateful for support across this chamber for the Foundation Phase. There is much still to be done but I believe that if the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities, schools and their representatives continue to work together in the ways I have indicated – we will see significant progress in rolling out the Foundation Phase in September, progress that we will build on in future years to secure this fundamental and far-reaching change in early years education.

Check against delivery

Embargoed until after JANE HUTT has delivered the statement.

Annex B



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: **Foundation Phase**

Date: **29 April 2008**

By: **Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong
Learning and Skills**

I wish to report on progress in relation to implementation of the Foundation Phase.

Over the last three weeks meetings have taken place between my officials and every local education authority in Wales. We now have, for the first time, information from every authority as to what it expects to be able to achieve with its share of the £25 million funding already announced for 2008-09.

In light of the information from authorities, and taking account of the fact that since the budget planning round for 2008-09 was completed new population data has become available showing a significant upward trend in the birth rate, we are undertaking further financial modelling to better understand what authorities are telling us about funding requirements and to consider how these can be addressed.

At the same time, representations have been made by local authorities in relation to the treatment, within the roll out programme, of Pilot and Early Start schools. I have agreed that this issue should also be included within the further modelling work referred to above.

In the light of these discussions I am satisfied that additional funding will be required. I am meeting representatives of local government, the teacher unions, Estyn and early years specialists on Tuesday 6 May to share the analysis with them and to seek their views. This group will form an Implementation Task and Finish Group to advise me on the further practical roll out of the programme.

I will make an oral statement in Plenary on the following day setting out my detailed proposals, including funding arrangements, taking account of views expressed at the meeting.

The action we are taking confirms the importance we attach to successful roll out of the Foundation Phase; and its significance for the future of education provision in Wales.