Evaluating outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs

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Estyn
Rhagoriaeth i bawb....Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ⅄ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- ⅄ primary schools;
- ⅄ secondary schools;
- ⅄ special schools;
- ⅄ pupil referral units;
- ⅄ independent schools;
- ⅄ further education;
- ⅄ adult community-based learning;
- ⅄ youth support services;
- ⅄ LEAs;
- ⅄ teacher education and training;
- ⅄ work-based learning;
- ⅄ careers companies; and
- ⅄ the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

Estyn also:

- ⅄ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ⅄ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Introduction

1   This report describes ways of evaluating outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs, in accordance with the request for advice in the remit from the Welsh Assembly Government to Estyn in 2005-06 and 2006-07. The report:

- discusses the development of valid and reliable measures of the educational outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs across Wales; and

- proposes a framework for evaluating these outcomes that is linked with school and local authority self-evaluation.

2   The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned this advice as part of its broader work to develop coherent policy and performance frameworks to support inclusive education that are based on clear evidence of effective practice.

3   This advice is designed to help the Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities, schools and other education providers to find out:

- whether learners with additional learning needs are doing as well as they can; and

- the extent to which their additional provision represents value for money.

4   The advice also aims to support providers' self-evaluation of the standards that learners with additional learning needs achieve, by providing a framework that is linked to Estyn's inspection framework.

5   The work in this report is closely linked with three other areas of inclusion policy and performance development in the Welsh Assembly Government that aim to:

- review the statutory framework for assessment and statements for pupils with special educational needs;

- review the funding arrangements for learners with special educational needs; and

- empower teachers and support staff to meet the needs of learners with additional learning needs.

6   The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned Wales Audit Office (WAO) to review the funding arrangements for learners with special educational needs. Estyn's work on evaluating outcomes for learners with additional learning needs is closely linked with WAO's work on the management of funding for special educational needs in Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in Wales.

7   This advice takes account of likely impact on learners with additional learning needs of:

- the key issues emerging from the ongoing review of the National Curriculum;

- the implementation of the Foundation Phase;

- developments in the assessment arrangements in Wales; and

- the new assessment materials for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, published in Routes for Learning: Welsh Assembly Government, 2006.

8   There are three phases to this work. Appendix 1 contains details of the structure, timing and evidence base of the work carried out to date.

9   This report represents the outcome of the first two of these phases, covering the period from April 2005 to March 2007. In the third phase, Estyn will provide further advice, if required to do so by the Welsh Assembly Government, to build on the findings of this report.

Additional learning needs

10   The term additional learning needs (ALN) covers a very broad range of needs. Estyn uses the term ALN in relation to learners whose needs are additional to those of the majority of their peers, for a number of different reasons, including learners who:

- have special educational needs (SEN), as defined within the SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2002);

- are disabled, as defined within the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;

- have medical needs;

- have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties;

- are more able and talented; and

- are learning English as an additional language.

11   The scope of this report is limited to learners with ALN who have special educational needs (SEN). Some of these learners are also disabled, have medical needs and/or have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

12   The report does not consider the needs of learners who are able and talented, or those for whom English is an additional language. However, the principles and framework outlined in the report may be helpful in developing an appropriate set of outcome measures for these learners in the future.

Special educational needs
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13   The term SEN applies to learners of all ability levels who have a diverse range of needs, broadly grouped into the four areas of:

- cognition and learning;

- communication and interaction;

- sensory and/or physical; and

- behavioural, emotional and social development.

14   The main characteristics of these areas of need are fully explained in Appendix 2.

Provision for learners with SEN in Wales

Early years provision

15   In the early years, children with disabilities and emerging SEN have access to a range of early education provision that includes:

- pre-school support from local authority and health services;

- nursery schools and early years centres;

- nursery and reception classes in mainstream primary schools;

- early years classes in special schools; and

- non-maintained early years settings.

Provision for pupils of statutory school age

16   Almost all children with SEN who are of statutory school age are educated in mainstream schools, including those in the independent sector. The overwhelming majority of these pupils receive additional provision and support through school (or early years) action and school (or early years) action plus as defined in the SEN Code of Practice.

17   A very small minority (3.2%) of all pupils has a statement of SEN. Local education authorities (LEAs) provide additional support and resources for pupils with statements of SEN, and for some pupils at school (or early years) action plus.

18   Almost three-quarters of pupils with statements of SEN are also educated in mainstream schools, either in mainstream classes or in special units. The remaining pupils with statements of SEN are educated in maintained special schools, in independent schools, pupil referral units and otherwise than at school.

(Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs, January 2006:
SDR 75/2006, National Assembly for Wales, June 2006)

19   The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) provides the key source of information about the number of pupils with SEN in maintained primary, secondary and special schools, the nature of their needs and the level of support as defined in the SEN Code of Practice.

20   In January 2006, the proportion of pupils with each type of need on the SEN registers in maintained schools in Wales was:

Type of need	Sub-type of need	Percentage of all pupils with SEN
Cognition and learning		**55%**
	Specific learning difficulties	12.5%
	Moderate learning difficulties	39.2%
	Severe learning difficulties	2.5%
	Profound and multiple learning difficulties	0.8%
Behaviour, emotional and social development		**11.6%**
Communication and interaction		**11%**
	Speech, language and communication difficulties	8.9%
	Autistic spectrum disorder	2.1%
Sensory and/or physical		**5%**
	Hearing impairment	1.3%
	Visual impairment	0.7%
	Multi-sensory impairment	0.1%
	Physical and medical difficulties	2.9%
Other (unclassified)		**17.4%**

(Local Government Data Unit for Wales, October 2006)

21   Some types of need occur much more frequently than others, and are known as high-incidence needs. High-incidence needs include:

- moderate learning difficulties;

- specific learning difficulties;

- behaviour, emotional and social development; and

- speech, language and communication difficulties.

22 Pupils with these kinds of needs are generally educated in mainstream schools, although special schools, including those in the independent sector, also make provision for pupils who have very high levels of need in these areas.

23 Other types of need occur relatively infrequently and are known as low-incidence needs. Mainstream schools often provide for pupils with the following types of low incidence needs:

- physical and medical difficulties;

- Asperger's Syndrome (a type of autistic spectrum disorder);

- hearing impairment; and

- visual impairment.

24 Special schools are more likely to cater for pupils with the most severe levels of these needs, and also for pupils with:

- autistic spectrum disorder (with additional learning/behaviour needs);

- severe learning difficulties;

- profound and multiple learning difficulties; and

- multi-sensory impairment.

Post-16 provision

25 Young people with special educational needs have access to the full range of post-16 provision in the same way as all other learners. Some choose to continue their education or training in a school sixth-form. Others transfer to general or special colleges of FE, to work-based learning or to care provision that does not include education or training at all.

26 The SEN Code of Practice continues to apply to learners aged 16 to 19 years who are educated in school sixth forms. However, it does not apply to learners in other types of post-16 education and training, such as colleges of further education and work-based learning. These providers normally use the terms 'additional learning needs' and/or 'learning difficulties and disabilities' instead of 'special educational needs'. Local education authorities are not required to maintain statements of SEN for learners aged 16 and over once they leave school.

Background

27   The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the seven core aims set out in 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action' in January 2004.   These are that all children and young people in Wales should:

- have a flying start in life;

- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

- enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse, victimization and exploitation;

- have access to play, leisure and sporting and cultural activities;

- be listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognized;

- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well-being; and

- not be disadvantaged by poverty.

28   The Learning Country: Vision into Action (Welsh Assembly Government, October 2006) outlines the strategy and priorities for delivery of these aims through the provision of high quality education and learning. This advice provides evidence in support of the commitment to promoting inclusion in education and learning, as expressed in this key policy document.

29   The Welsh Assembly Government intends to deliver an Inclusion Policy and Performance Framework that ensures all learners' needs (including those of disabled children) are met effectively, that teachers and school based support staff have the necessary skills to support a diverse range of needs, that there is equality of access to a range of support services, and there are robust outcome measures for learners with additional learning needs.

Main findings

30   The evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN is a highly complex process that, to be effective, needs to take account of information of many types and from many sources. Although this report identifies several examples of emerging good practice, much remains to be done to create a unified system to support the evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN across Wales.

Framework for evaluating outcomes

31   A coherent framework for the evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN requires the following elements:

- a common data set of agreed learning outcomes;

- valid and reliable measures of progress for all learning outcomes;

- effective and systematic procedures for analysing and interpreting information about learning outcomes for individual pupils, schools, local authorities and across Wales;

- detailed information about the nature of provision made to achieve each of the agreed outcomes; and

- accurate information about the costs of all types of special educational provision.

32   To be effective, a framework for evaluating outcomes should:

- aim to measure learning outcomes that are of value, rather than to value only those outcomes that are easy to measure;

- include accurate and reliable measures that recognise pupils' attainment, progress and achievement in a broad range of learning outcomes;

- take account of the longer-term outcomes of educational provision;

- take account of the diversity in the nature and severity of SEN; and

- link closely with Estyn's inspection frameworks for education providers and local authorities in order to support self-evaluation.

33   For pupils with SEN, it is particularly important to judge progress and achievement rather than crude attainment. Judgements of achievement recognise pupils' progress and development from a given starting point, relative to the context in which they learn. Attainment is the term used to describe assessed outcomes in terms of external measures, such as those leading to recognised qualifications or National Curriculum levels.

34   Judgements about learning outcomes for pupils with SEN should take account of their achievements in relation to:

- attaining agreed learning goals;

- making progress in learning; and

- developing personal, social and learning skills.

35   The relative importance of particular learning outcomes for pupils with SEN is likely to differ according to the nature and severity of their individual needs.

36   Some of the most valuable outcomes are difficult to measure precisely, and this makes it difficult even to compare the achievements of pupils in similar circumstances.

Data accuracy

37   The pupil level annual school census (PLASC) does not provide a complete or wholly accurate picture of all children and young people in Wales who have SEN. Schools do not always enter accurate information about pupils with SEN, and the annual census does not include some key groups of learners, such as those in pre-school and post-school provision, those educated otherwise than at school and those in the independent sector.

38   The problem of inaccurate PLASC data was identified early in phase 1 of this work and the Welsh Assembly Government has already taken action to tackle the issue by revising the PLASC data codes and preparing guidance for schools and LEAs.

Evaluating progress, achievement and attainment: schools

39   Nearly all pupils with SEN, including three-quarters of all pupils with statements, are in mainstream schools. These pupils generally have difficulties in learning the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and communication. Some have social, emotional and behavioural needs as well. Special schools, including those in the independent sector, generally cater for the pupils with SEN with more complex learning needs and challenging behaviour.

40   There are no national benchmarks against which authorities and schools can compare the attainment in relation to National Curriculum targets and external examinations of pupils with SEN with that of pupils with similar needs in similar schools. The ongoing work to establish 'value-added' measures of National Curriculum progress has the potential to help to address this key issue in relation to pupils with SEN in mainstream schools.

41   Information on learning outcomes for pupils with SEN is not summarised for the purpose of measuring the overall effectiveness of provision. Mainstream schools hold a very wide range of information about the progress and achievement of individual pupils with SEN in relation to important learning targets, such as improving literacy or behaviour. Special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos) and

specialist staff in authorities' SEN support services use this information well to plan and evaluate provision for individual pupils. However, this information is not often collated to evaluate the impact on learning outcomes for groups of pupils with SEN or across the whole school.

42   It is very difficult, and often not appropriate, to compare the outcomes for pupils with very low-incidence types of SEN in different schools. Nonetheless, many special schools and resourced mainstream units use information about pupils' progress well to support school self-evaluation.

43   The process of evaluating outcomes is almost always well-embedded into the day-to-day work of special schools, where the ongoing process of 'assessment for learning' builds up a very detailed picture of individual pupils' progress and achievements. At key points, such as annual reviews and transition to the next stage of learning, special schools bring this information together to provide a summary and evaluation of overall progress for individual pupils.

Transition

44   Much valuable information about learning outcomes is lost at points of transition between phases of education, for example between early years and school and between school and post-16 provision. This makes it very difficult to evaluate the impact of early and/or specialised intervention.

45   Schools, colleges and other providers do not always receive accurate and timely information about the prior achievements of learners with SEN. Sometimes they do not receive any information at all because schools and authorities lose track of the learner. This is more likely to happen where learners move about frequently, and particularly affects some of the most vulnerable learners with SEN, including excluded pupils, looked after children, young offenders and disabled learners moving from school to post-16 provision.

46   There is no link between the PLASC data and the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), and this makes it very difficult for the Welsh Assembly Government to track the longer-term outcomes for pupils with SEN following their transition from school into post-16 education or training.

Evaluating progress, achievement and attainment: LEAs

47   None of the ten authorities surveyed holds a unified database of all pupils with SEN for whom they make funded provision. Most of these authorities are making good progress in improving the quality and accessibility of basic information about individual pupils. However, the data currently held is incomplete and often inaccurate.

48   Authorities are well aware of the limited quality of data about outcomes for pupils with SEN and are developing their own ways of tackling this. The case studies in appendix 4 describe emerging good practice in a few authorities. Most other authorities have a lot more still to do.

49   Authorities usually have a reliable set of data about pupils' attainments in relation to core subjects of the National Curriculum, and about the progress they make in some important skills including literacy and numeracy. The lack of benchmarked information makes it very difficult for authorities to use this data to support the evaluation of the impact of provision.

50   Authorities rarely use key information about attendance and behaviour to find out how well groups of pupils with SEN are doing, relative to other pupils.

51   Schools and authorities do not involve pupils and parents enough in the evaluation of learning outcomes.

52   There is no coherent information to show whether the provision that schools and authorities make for pupils with SEN helps them to participate in wider community, social and learning activities, or whether they achieve longer-term success as young adults.

Mapping provision and identifying costs

53   Authorities do not have a comprehensive overview of the provision that they make, or of the costs of that provision, for all pupils with SEN. This means that schools, authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government are unable to link information about provision with information about learning outcomes and costs for purposes of evaluation. It also makes it difficult to compare the outcomes for learners in different schools and authorities.

54   Authorities usually have good records of the provision that they make for individual pupils in their own maintained schools. However, there are shortcomings in the way that authorities monitor and evaluate SEN provision for some of the most vulnerable pupils, including those educated otherwise than at school, in schools maintained by other authorities and in independent schools.

Links with school self-evaluation

55   Authorities provide schools with clear direction and general support for assessment, target-setting and self-evaluation. A few authorities are beginning to provide schools with guidance and training on using data to evaluate learning outcomes for targeted groups of pupils.

Recommendations

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

R1   in partnership with local education authorities, develop a unified record of all learners with special educational needs (SEN) that includes details of their special needs and the type of provision made to meet those needs;

R2   increase the scope of the pupil level annual school census (PLASC) so that it captures information about pupils in early years settings, those receiving education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) and those for whom authorities fund provision in the independent sector;

R3   establish a link between PLASC and the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) so that learners' progress can be tracked and evaluated as they move through post-16 provision;

R4   work with local education authorities to establish procedures for the sharing of information contained in PLASC and the National Pupil Database (NPD) about pupils with SEN who attend out-of-authority maintained schools;

R5   work closely with schools and local authorities to improve the quality and consistency of information about individual pupils with SEN;

R6   require local authorities and providers to provide annual information about the progress made by learners with SEN in achieving their individual learning targets, particularly those in communication, behaviour, literacy, numeracy, thinking skills, information and communications technology (ICT) and bilingualism, where appropriate;

R7   establish, in partnership with local authorities, benchmarks against which to judge attainment and progress in subjects and key skills for learners of different abilities and different needs;

R8   develop, in partnership with local authorities, reliable ways of measuring the impact of provision on learners' social and emotional development, behaviour, inclusion and participation in mainstream activities; and

R9   establish ways of evaluating the impact of SEN provision on longer-term outcomes, including achievements in further and higher education, training, employment and independent living, as appropriate.

Local Education Authorities should:

R10 work closely with schools to improve the quality and consistency of information about individual pupils with SEN that is provided in the annual census;

R11 make greater use of the data in the NPD to inform evaluation of outcomes for pupils with SEN in National Curriculum assessments and external examinations;

R12 work in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government to develop a unified record of provision and progress for all pupils with SEN, including those in early years settings, in independent schools and in EOTAS provision;

R13 work in partnership with schools to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils with SEN in achieving their individual learning targets, particularly those in communication, behaviour, literacy, numeracy, thinking skills, ICT and bilingualism, where appropriate;

R14 work in partnership with out-of-county schools and other LEAs to improve the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for pupils educated in schools outside the home authority;

R15 make sure that when pupils with SEN, and especially those who are looked-after children, move to a new authority or to an independent school, appropriate records are immediately transferred to the new authority or independent school;

R16 provide training for schools to help them to use data, including benchmark information where available, more effectively to evaluate learning outcomes for pupils with SEN;

R17 develop clear and specific local indicators to measure learning outcomes for specific groups of pupils with SEN, and use these indicators to evaluate provision made by schools and by central support services; and

R18 consult more widely with parents, carers and pupils when evaluating educational provision and additional support for pupils with SEN.

Schools should:

R19 improve the accuracy of information about pupils with SEN that is provided to local authorities and to the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the annual census;

R20 take Estyn's Common Inspection Framework and the information in this report as a starting point for analysing learning outcomes for pupils with SEN as part of self-evaluation;

R21 use data, including benchmark information where available, more effectively to evaluate learning outcomes for pupils with SEN;

R22 bring together information about the progress made by individual pupils with SEN in achieving their individual learning targets to evaluate the impact of provision for groups of pupils, and across the school;

R23 include information about learning outcomes in key personal and social skills, attendance, behaviour, progression and participation in wider activities when evaluating outcomes for learners with SEN;

R24 consult more widely with parents, carers and pupils in order to evaluate the impact of provision and additional support for pupils with SEN; and

R25 make sure that when pupils with SEN transfer to a different maintained or independent school, to a pupil referral unit or to a college the appropriate records are immediately transferred to the new provider.

Evaluating outcomes for learners with SEN: A framework

56   Phase 1 of this work included consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from schools, local education authorities and members of the Wales Advisory Group for SEN, together with a review of relevant literature. This work identified the key features of an effective framework for evaluating outcomes for learners with SEN, together with the key principles that should underpin such a framework.

57   The evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN is a highly complex process that, to be effective, needs to take account of information of many types and from many sources. A coherent framework requires the following elements:

- a common data set of agreed learning outcomes;

- valid and reliable measures of progress for all learning outcomes;

- effective and systematic procedures for analysing and interpreting information about learning outcomes for individual pupils, schools and local authorities and across Wales;

- detailed information about the nature of provision made to achieve each of the agreed outcomes; and

- accurate information about the costs of all special educational provision.

(Framework for Inclusive Education - Data Profiling Project: London SEN Regional Partnership, 2004)

58   Stakeholders agreed that the framework should:

- aim to measure learning outcomes that are of value, rather than to value only those outcomes that are easy to measure;

- include accurate and reliable measures that recognise pupils' attainment, progress and achievement in a broad range of learning outcomes;

- take account of the longer-term outcomes of educational provision;

- take account of the diversity in the nature and severity of SEN;

- support self-evaluation in schools and local authorities; and

- link closely with Estyn's inspection frameworks for schools and local authorities.

How good is our current data on learners with SEN?

59   In order to evaluate outcomes for learners with SEN, it is essential to start with an accurate identification of the nature and severity of individual pupils' needs, and to know the type of provision that is made for them. Only then will it be possible to track the progress made by each learner and to compare the progress made by learners in different settings, schools and areas of Wales.

60   Phase 1 of the work included investigation of the extent to which schools and LEAs provide the Welsh Assembly Government with accurate information about learners with SEN, through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) that feeds into the National Pupil Database.

PLASC

61   PLASC is the annual census that is completed by all maintained schools in Wales each January. PLASC contains basic information about individual pupils, including their gender, year group, SEN status and ethnicity. PLASC data forms part of the pupil-level information in the National Pupil Database.

National Pupil Database

62   The National Pupil Database (NPD) brings together information from PLASC with National Curriculum Assessment data and the results of external examinations. The NPD enables key stakeholders, including providers, authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government, to analyse information about the attainment of pupils in Wales. It is the key source of pupil-level information and, potentially, a very powerful tool to support data analysis and evaluation of outcomes for learners of school-age.

63   Schools, local authorities and other authorised users can access the NPD electronically at www.npd-wales.gov.uk.

Quality of SEN data in PLASC

64   In the annual PLASC return schools are required to provide information, for every pupil with SEN, on the type of special need and whether the pupil is supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of SEN.

65   Although the PLASC data provides a useful starting point for the identification of learners with SEN in Wales, it does not provide a complete or wholly accurate picture of all these learners. This is because:

- schools do not enter accurate information about pupils with SEN; and

- the annual census does not include information for pupils with SEN who are educated outside the maintained school system.

Data accuracy

66   During phase 1 of this work, stakeholders in the Welsh Assembly Government and Local Government Data Unit expressed concern about the high levels of inaccuracy in schools' PLASC returns generally and in particular about the poor-quality information about pupils with SEN. This inaccuracy presents a key barrier to evaluating outcomes for these learners, because it can impede the later matching of outcomes in National Curriculum assessments and external examinations for these pupils within the NPD. This in turn means that the NPD has no record of the attainment of these pupils, and there is no possibility of measuring or comparing the progress that pupils make as they move through the key stages of the National Curriculum.

67   There are a number of inaccuracies in the data that schools enter into the PLASC record. In relation to pupils with SEN, schools do not always provide accurate information about the type of need or about the level at which pupils are supported, in line with the SEN Code of Practice. This is usually because schools do not check that the data they enter into the annual census matches the information in pupils' individual SEN records.

68   For example, in the last two years, almost one-fifth of all SEN entries (about 16,000 pupils each year) are recorded as having 'other' needs, making it impossible to identify the nature of their needs. In PLASC returns for 2006, the category 'other' included 424 pupils with statements of SEN, on which the main type(s) of need would have been clearly indicated. In the same year, returns included 1,743 pupils receiving SEN provision even though schools said that the category SEN did not apply to these pupils.

(Local Government Data Unit for Wales: PLASC summary data, 2005 and 2006)

Data coverage

69   PLASC does not provide a complete record of all learners with SEN. It does not capture information about learners who are:

- of pre-school age (other than those who attend maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools);

- in independent schools (including independent special schools);

- educated otherwise than at school, including for example those educated in pupil referral units, educated at home by their parents or 'lost' from the system; or

- in post-16 provision other than in school sixth-forms.

70   Also, the information in PLASC for pupils with SEN who are educated in out-of-county maintained schools is included in the aggregated figures for the authority that maintains their school, but not for their home authority. This limits the value of the PLASC and NPD data for analysis at LEA level, and for analysis at an all-Wales level where out-of-county placements are outside Wales.

71   The current PLASC data codes capture information about the number of pupils receiving support at school action, school action plus and with a statement of SEN.[1] However, these codes no longer provide a reliable indication of the severity of pupils' needs, since pupils at school action plus in one authority may have needs that are of a similar level to those of pupils with statements in another authority.

(Best practice in the development of statements of special educational needs and delivery by schools of the action agreed: Estyn, 2004)

Improving the accuracy of SEN data in PLASC

72   The Welsh Assembly Government has drawn the attention of schools and local education authorities to the need to improve the accuracy of the record for all pupils, and in particular for those with SEN.

73   During phase 1, Estyn worked with a small group of local authority officers to develop and pilot guidance for schools and LEAs that is designed to help them to improve the accuracy and value of data entries into PLASC.

74   To complement this guidance, the Assembly has revised the PLASC data codes and is about to consult schools and local education authorities on the new guidance document. The revised PLASC SEN codes and guidance:

- clarify the different types of SEN;

- remove the option of 'other' from the data field;

- extend the recording of SEN Code of Practice category to include early years action and action plus;

- introduce new data fields to capture information about the level of provision made, in relation to curriculum and teaching methods, grouping and support, specialised resources and advice and assessment; and

- provide schools with 'real life' worked examples to illustrate and support decision-making and data entry.

75   Appendix 2 clarifies the main characteristics of different types of SEN and is taken from the revised PLASC/SEN guidance document for schools and LEAs.

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[1] The SEN Code of Practice defines support at school action as intervention that is additional to, or different from, that provided as part of a school's usual differentiated curriculum offer and strategies. At school action plus, external support services will provide more specialised advice to the school and, in some cases, may provide direct support to the pupil. Pupils with statements of SEN receive a combination of support from schools, LEAs and sometimes also from other agencies.

Learners in post-16 provision

76   The Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) provides the key source of information about learners in colleges of further education, work-based learning and community learning settings. LLWR contains details of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, many of whom would previously have been receiving SEN support in schools.

77   There is currently no link between the PLASC and LLWR records, and this makes it very difficult to track the longer-term outcomes for pupils with special educational needs following their transition from school into post-16 education or training. The Welsh Assembly Government is working with the Information Commissioner to find a way of transferring data from PLASC to LLWR that will meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

What are the most valuable learning outcomes, and how can these be measured?

78   During phase 1 of this work, stakeholders agreed that the framework should:

- aim to measure learning outcomes that are of value, rather than to value only those outcomes that are easy to measure;

- include accurate and reliable measures that recognise pupils' attainment, progress and achievement in a broad range of learning outcomes;

- take account of the longer-term outcomes of educational provision;

- take account of the diversity in the nature and severity of SEN;

- support self-evaluation in schools and local authorities; and

- link closely with Estyn's inspection frameworks for schools and local authorities.

Inspection and self-evaluation of learning outcomes

79   Estyn's Common Inspection Framework applies to the inspection of all providers of education and training in Wales. Increasingly, schools and post-16 providers use this framework as a basis for self-evaluation.

80   Key Question 1 of the inspection framework - 'How well do learners achieve?' requires inspectors to evaluate and report on the standards that learners achieve in relation to a wide range of outcomes. Further detail is contained in Appendix 3.

Attainment, achievement and progress

81   Estyn judges learning outcomes in relation to achievement rather than in terms of crude attainment. Judgements of achievement take account of the level of attainment and rate of progress of pupils, relative to their age, ability, the context in which they learn and their individual starting point for learning. Attainment is the term used to describe assessed outcomes in terms of external measures, such as those leading to recognised qualifications or National Curriculum levels.

82   Estyn's Guidance on the Inspection of Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units (2004) makes it clear that, when judging the achievements and progress of learners with SEN:

- inspectors must take account of the criteria used to identify and select pupils for their special provision; and that

- it is not generally appropriate to compare results and retention rates with national averages and local and national benchmarks.

83   In reaching judgements about overall standards of achievement, Estyn considers
      how well learners:

   • succeed in attaining agreed learning goals;

   • make progress in learning; and

   • develop personal, social and learning skills.

84   Measures of success in **attaining agreed learning goals** include standards of
      achievement in:

   • different subjects and areas of learning;

   • meeting individual learning targets;

   • communication skills;

   • mathematical or application of number skills;

   • information technology skills; and

   • where appropriate, bilingual competence.

85   Measures of success in **progress in learning** include achievements in:

   • acquiring new knowledge, understanding and skills and applying these to new
     and unfamiliar situations;

   • learners' awareness and understanding of their own progress; and

   • moving on to the next stage in learning.

86   Measures of success in **key personal, social and learning skills** include
      achievements in:

   • independence, developing social skills, forming effective relationships and
     showing a positive attitude to learning;

   • behaving responsibly and showing respect for others;

   • attendance and punctuality;

   • personal, social and problem-solving skills, including independent learning and
     participation in the life and work of the school, college or other learning provider;

   • aspects of personal, moral, social and wider development, such as working with
     others, showing respect, care and concern for others, taking personal
     responsibility and showing honesty and fairness;

- awareness of, and respect for, diversity in society; and

- skills required for effective participation in the workplace and in the community.

Valuable outcomes for pupils with SEN

87   It is important that pupils with SEN have the same opportunities as other pupils to achieve success in relation to all three key types of learning outcome identified in Estyn's framework for KQ1. However, the relative importance of particular learning outcomes for pupils with SEN is likely to differ according to the nature and severity of their individual needs, as illustrated in the following examples.

- Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who make progress in behaviour, attendance, punctuality and key personal and social skills are more likely to improve their chances of access to, and participation in, mainstream education or training, and to make a success of life as an adult.

- Good achievement in basic and key skills enables pupils with specific and moderate learning difficulties to achieve success in other areas of learning, to participate more fully in school life and to progress on to the next stage of learning.

- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder who improve their social and communication skills also improve their chances of living a happy life and of participating fully in education, training and employment.

- For pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the most important achievements are usually those of communication, independence, social responsiveness and emotional stability.

Measuring achievement and attainment

88   In order to measure a pupil's achievement in relation to each learning outcome it is necessary to measure attainment accurately and to track progress carefully. It is essential to have a reliable description or measure of the level of skill when provision begins (baseline measure), and at key points such as the annual review, the end of a key stage and transition to the next stage of learning.

89   Although there are many learning outcomes that are very valuable for pupils with SEN, many of these cannot be measured in a way that provides numerical data of the type that is useful for comparative purposes. The learning outcomes that can more easily be quantified include:

- level of attainment in National Curriculum subjects;

- for pupils in early years provision, achievement of the Desirable Outcomes for learning;

- attainment and progress in understanding and using language;

- attainment and progress in reading, spelling, writing and numeracy;

- participation, as measured by rate of attendance;

- behaviour, as measured by rate of exclusion from school; and

- number and level of accredited qualifications and awards.

90 There are many other learning outcomes that are far more difficult to quantify. These include:

- improvements in behaviour and social skills;

- improvements in self-confidence and emotional stability;

- the very small steps towards early communication, independence, and social interaction made by pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties; and

- increasing participation in mainstream social and learning activities.

91 Records of achievement for these outcomes will usually be descriptive rather than numerical. This makes it more difficult to compare pupils' achievements and progress in different settings.

Evaluating achievement

92 To evaluate achievement effectively, it is necessary to know what constitutes good progress for pupils of different abilities and with different types of SEN. This is a very challenging question, and one that schools and local education authorities are currently unable to answer. This is chiefly because, even when there are reliable measures of progress, there are no benchmarks against which to compare the measured progress with the expected progress for pupils with similar types of SEN and ability, or with pupils in similar schools. We discuss the development of benchmarks in the next section of this report.

93 In this respect, the position in Wales is very similar to that in England, where Ofsted reported that there was no agreement about what constituted good progress for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). This prevented vital analysis of data at all levels. Schools rarely questioned themselves as rigorously about the rate of progress for LDD pupils as they did for pupils who did not have LDD; local authorities were unable to make secure judgements about the effectiveness of different schools; and national trends were difficult to determine.

(Inclusion: Does it matter where pupils are taught? Ofsted, July 2006)

How well do schools evaluate learning outcomes for pupils with SEN?

94 Phase 2 of this work investigated current practice in schools in Wales in evaluating learning outcomes for pupils with SEN. The findings are drawn from evidence of inspections over the period from 2001-2006, and from a survey of ten LEAs in Wales carried out during the autumn term 2006.

Self-evaluation of learning outcomes

95 In the past three years, schools of all types have improved in the way that they use the outcomes of self-evaluation to inform school improvement planning. However, where self-evaluation is weak, it is often because schools do not use enough first-hand information about pupils' progress and achievements in relation to key learning outcomes to judge the school's performance.

(Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2004-2005: Estyn, January 2006)

(Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2005-2006: Estyn, January 2007)

Mainstream schools

96 Mainstream schools hold a very wide range of information about the progress and achievement of individual pupils with SEN. However, this information is only rarely brought together to evaluate the impact on learning outcomes for groups of pupils with SEN or across the whole school.

97 The records for individual pupils contain a wealth of information that is, potentially, of great value to the process of evaluating the impact of provision on learning outcomes. Special educational needs co-ordinators hold good records of individual pupils' assessments, including any that have been carried by external agencies.

98 Typically, mainstream nursery, primary and secondary schools hold comprehensive information about all pupils' attainments in National Curriculum subjects or in achieving Desirable Outcomes, progress in language, reading, spelling, writing and numeracy and, in secondary schools, grades awarded in external examinations and achievement of other accredited qualifications. Schools keep good records of attendance and behaviour, though these are not generally well-linked with data on learning outcomes for individual pupils and groups of pupils.

99 Special educational needs co-ordinators play a key role in assessment, target-setting and monitoring progress for pupils with high-incidence needs in mainstream schools. They are often supported in this work by specialist staff from local education authorities' SEN and inclusion support services, such as learning and behaviour support teachers and educational psychologists.

100 There are usually very good records of achievement and progress for pupils with lower-incidence needs who are educated in ordinary classes or resourced provision in mainstream schools. These records are normally compiled by specialist teachers, and often contain very detailed assessment information that provides a good basis for evaluating pupils' progress.

101 Typically, individual pupils' school records include accurate and comprehensive details of pupils' progress in:

- achieving targets in individual education plans;

- social and communication skills;

- literacy and numeracy;

- behaviour and attitudes to learning;

- participation in wider activities;

- the pupil's view of his/her own progress; and

- the views of parents and carers.

102 Schools use this type of information very well to plan provision and support for individual pupils with SEN. However, schools generally miss opportunities to use the same information as part of a systematic process of evaluation of the impact of SEN provision and support across the school, and for different groups of pupils.

103 Even when schools do bring together a good range of information about learning outcomes for individual pupils, they are not always able to use it effectively to support self-evaluation, because they do not have reliable benchmarks against which to compare progress for these pupils.

104 The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) to provide primary and secondary schools and local education authorities with data to support the evaluation of 'value-added' measures of progress in core subjects of the National Curriculum as pupils move between the key stages.

105 Currently, the NPD contains measures of National Curriculum attainment, at or above level 1, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science for over 90% of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. This means that, for these pupils, schools and authorities have a good baseline measure against which to chart further progress. In the longer-term, analysis of the NPD such as that currently being developed by FFT has the potential to provide benchmarks for the expected progress of most pupils with SEN in mainstream schools.

Special schools

106 Special schools, including independent special schools, face a unique set of challenges in relation to evaluating learning outcomes. This is because:

- most special schools cater for a small and highly diverse group of pupils with very complex needs;

- pupils are often working at or below level 1 of the National Curriculum;

- schools use a wide range of assessment approaches that suit their needs but differ from school to school; and

- there are no reliable benchmarks against which to compare progress of pupils with similar types of low-incidence SEN or of pupils in similar schools.

107 These issues also arise in some resourced provision in mainstream schools, for example in units for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.

108 Despite these challenges, many special schools and resourced mainstream units use information about pupils' progress well to support school self-evaluation.

109 The best schools are very good at collecting first-hand information about the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. These schools also use this information well to plan school improvements.

110 The process of evaluating outcomes is almost always well-embedded into the day-to-day work of special schools. Teachers normally maintain good records of pupils' individual progress as part of the everyday planning and evaluation of teaching. This ongoing process of 'assessment for learning' builds up a very detailed picture of individual pupils' progress and achievements and enables schools to adapt teaching and support to meet pupils' changing needs.

111 At key points, such as annual reviews and transition to the next stage of learning, special schools bring this information together to provide a summary and evaluation of overall progress for individual pupils.

112 Typically, pupils' records include good-quality descriptive information about:

- the very small steps towards early communication, independence, and social interaction made by pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties;

- improvements in behaviour, self-confidence and emotional stability;

- increasing participation in mainstream social and learning activities;

- progress in literacy and numeracy;

- the views of parents and carers; and

- when possible, the pupil's view of his/her own progress.

113 In special schools that cater for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or moderate learning difficulties, records normally also include details of levels of attainment in National Curriculum subjects, achievement of Desirable Outcomes, measures of progress in language, reading, spelling and number and achievements in gaining accredited qualifications and awards.

114 Special schools for pupils with highly complex needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), have well-established systems for assessing and monitoring the progress of pupils working below level 1 of the National Curriculum. These schools use one or more systems that are based on the National Curriculum P-scales[2] to track pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and aspects of personal and social education and set targets for further progress. These systems include PACE (www.equals.co.uk) and the INSTEP system, developed by a special school in Wales.

115 However, special school practitioners and independent researchers have identified a number of shortcomings in P-scales and related systems that limit their value as tools for the evaluation of learning outcomes for some individual pupils, and at whole-school level. These approaches are particularly problematic for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and others with complex developmental profiles who are working at levels P1 to P3. The shortcomings of these approaches include that:

- assessment is often based on 'best fit' judgements that are subjective, imprecise and lead to unreliable comparisons in the short-term; and

- they are not usually appropriate for assessing the needs of pupils with highly complex individual needs, whose profiles of development are often very uneven.

(Assessment using the P-scales: Best fit – fit for the purpose? Andrew Martin, British Journal of Special Education, Volume 33, Number 2, 2006)

116 As an alternative to approaches based on P-scales, special schools in Wales have strongly supported the introduction of the new assessment materials for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties: 'Routes for Learning' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

117 Routes for Learning recognises that learners with PMLD have unique abilities and ways of learning and provides schools with an appropriate framework for assessment of the related areas of communication, social interaction and cognitive development. Many special schools are already using these materials well to set developmentally appropriate targets for progress in basic learning skills and essential cross-curricular skills, such as communication, early cognitive development and personal and social development.

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[2] The P-scales are assessment criteria for identifying progress below Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

PRUs and other EOTAS provision

118 Pupils educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS) in pupil referral units (PRUs) and unregistered units are often those who face significant educational and social disadvantages. Some have been permanently excluded from schools; many of the rest are at risk of exclusion. Four-fifths of pupils in units are boys, most of whom are disaffected. A high proportion of pupils have a poor level of attainment in basic skills. One-fifth of pupils in PRUs have a statement of special educational needs.

(Thematic Survey of Pupil Referral Units and Similar Provision: Estyn, 2004)

119 This year Estyn inspected twelve pupil referral units. Eight of these units used information about pupils' learning outcomes well to support self-evaluation. The remaining four units did not collect reliable information about pupils' progress and achievements.

(Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2005-2006: Estyn, January 2007)

What happens to information about learning outcomes at key transition points?

120 When learners with SEN move on from a setting or school to the next stage of their education, it is vitally important that the record of their achievements should transfer to the next provider. Efficient transfer of appropriate information enables the new provider to plan appropriately to meet the learner's individual needs and also to establish a clear baseline against which further progress can be judged.

121 Unless providers keep, and pass on, accurate records it is not possible to evaluate important learning outcomes that may only become evident in the longer-term, such as successful progression into post-16 education, training, employment and independent living. For example, the impact of much of the good work that takes place in the pre-school or early years phases of education may not be evident until learners reach school-leaving age, or even in young adulthood. Similarly, judgements of the 'value-added' by special schools, including those in the independent sector, depend on the existence of reliable information about learners' achievements, attainments and behaviour before they transferred to these schools, and also on knowing what happens once these learners leave school.

122 However, evidence of inspection of schools, colleges and other providers shows that they do not always receive accurate and timely information about the prior achievements of learners with SEN. Sometimes they do not receive any information at all because schools and authorities lose track of the learner. This is more likely to happen where learners move about frequently, and particularly affects some of the most vulnerable learners with SEN, including excluded pupils, looked after children, young offenders and disabled learners moving from school to post-16 provision.

From pre-school to school

123 The Welsh Assembly Government is strongly and appropriately committed to the early identification of special educational needs, and to making early and effective provision to meet those needs. Early education makes a vital contribution to achieving this aim for babies and very young children who have, or are likely to have, special educational needs.

124 Children with low-incidence needs (as defined in chapter 3) are likely to be identified as in need of assessment and SEN provision before they enter early education and to receive a high level of multi-agency support from education, health and social care services, as illustrated in the following examples.

- A baby born with Down's Syndrome is identified as needing additional support at, or soon after, birth. The baby is likely to have cognitive and communication problems, but there is no way of knowing how severe these will be. This baby will need early help from health professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists. He/she is likely to have priority for early education provision, including pre-school home teaching where this is available.

- A boy who is healthy at birth suffers meningitis at the age of 22 months. As a result, he becomes severely hearing and visually impaired, with profound physical and learning difficulties. He will have special needs for expert care, medical and educational intervention all his life. He is highly likely to receive early education in a special school.

- A baby's profound hearing impairment is identified shortly after birth by a neonatal screening programme. The baby is provided with hearing aids and her parents receive weekly support from a teacher of the deaf. In due course, she has a cochlear implant and by seven years of age can understand and use speech nearly as well as other children of a similar age. She will probably attend a mainstream nursery school or class, and then progress to a mainstream primary school.

125 Early years practitioners play a key role in early identification and intervention for children whose high incidence needs (as defined in the chapter 3) emerge after they enter early education. For example:

- a little boy who is healthy and happy during his early years enjoys going to playgroup, but does not always seem to understand what people say to him, is somewhat clumsy for his age, has poorly developed speech and is sometimes aggressive towards the other children. Early years practitioners arrange to provide him with individual help and work closely with his parents to arrange a full assessment of his special needs before he starts school.

126 There is little doubt that early education and multi-agency support is of benefit to very young children with special educational needs and to their families.

(Support for Children with Special Educational Needs: An Estyn Overview: Estyn, October 2003)

127 Inspection findings show that practitioners in all types of early years provision pay close attention to meeting children's individual needs, and generally keep good records of progress in relation to the Desirable Outcomes for learning.

128 However, it is not always easy to obtain reliable evidence of the impact of early identification and intervention on longer-term educational outcomes mainly because there are barriers that prevent the transfer of detailed information about individual pupils between early years providers, support agencies and schools. As a result, too much information about learning outcomes in the early years is lost when children transfer to school.

129 The main barriers to information transfer are that:

- some agencies, notably health services, are unable to share information because they are bound by rules of confidentiality; and

- parents are not always willing to give permission for information about their child's special needs to be shared.

130 In authorities where there are well-established pre-school support services, specialist teachers and advisers work closely with parents, support agencies and schools, and, as a result, are usually able to overcome these barriers.

School to school transfers

131 When pupils move from one school to another, there is a clear procedure for the electronic transfer of information between schools that is explained in the guidance document: *Educational Records, School Reports and the Common Transfer System – the keeping, disposal, disclosure and transfer of pupil information: National Assembly for Wales, Circular No. 18/2006, May 2006.*

132 Even so, schools and authorities sometimes encounter difficulties in obtaining timely information about pupils who transfer from one school to another, particularly if the pupil moves to a different LEA as well. This is because schools and authorities do not always use the procedures for the transfer of pupil information as well as they should, and also because the personal circumstances of some of the most vulnerable learners make it very difficult to trace them as they move to a new location.

Transfers to out-of-county maintained schools

133 A small number of pupils with SEN are educated in out-of-county schools that are maintained by an LEA other than the one in which the pupil lives. In these cases, the pupil's home authority is responsible for forwarding any statutory assessment information, including the pupil's statement (where applicable) to the out-of-county school. However, such pupils will subsequently appear on the PLASC and NPD records for the out-of-county school and the LEA that maintains that school, but not on the records for the home LEA that may be providing the funds for additional support. This makes it more difficult for the home authority to evaluate the learning outcomes for these pupils.

From school to EOTAS provision

134 The group of pupils who are educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS) includes some of the most vulnerable learners with SEN. These pupils include those who have been excluded from school, often permanently, and who often have significant emotional, behavioural and learning needs. However, when these pupils transfer to EOTAS provision, schools and authorities do not always make sure that the right information goes with them.

135 In particular, in 2004, Estyn reported that schools do not do enough to follow up the progress of pupils on their rolls that are educated otherwise than at school for any reason. The attainments and achievements of these vulnerable pupils are rarely included when schools evaluate their own provision. The findings of inspections and survey work in the past year indicate that there has been little change in this situation since 2004.

(Thematic Survey of Pupil Referral Units and Similar Provision: Estyn, 2004)

136 There is no record of pupils receiving EOTAS in PLASC or in the NPD, and so local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government cannot evaluate the outcomes for these pupils.

Transfers to independent special schools

137 A small number of pupils with SEN are educated in independent schools, sometimes at their parents' expense but often funded by local authorities because they have statements of SEN and/or are looked-after children.

138 Pupils with SEN who are funded by local authorities include some of the most vulnerable learners in Wales. Many of these pupils require exceptionally high levels of specialist support, and are educated in provision that is extremely expensive, especially when it combines residential care for 52 weeks a year with special educational provision.

139 Pupils come to independent special schools in Wales from all parts of the United Kingdom, though predominantly from England. Inspection evidence shows that where pupils with SEN are also looked-after children, they are often admitted to the care and education provision quite suddenly and with a history of many previous care and education placements, some of which have been in secure accommodation. There are rarely any previous school records for these pupils and it is usual to find that, where pupils have statements of SEN, these have not been properly maintained, assessment information is often outdated and there is no record of annual reviews. Placing authorities are often very slow to respond to requests from independent schools for up-to-date information about these pupils; occasionally they do not respond at all.

From school to post-16 provision

140 When young people with special educational needs reach the age of 16, they may choose to continue their education or training in a school sixth-form, at college or in work-based learning.

141 The following information is drawn from two recent Estyn reports on the provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in the post-16 sector:

- *Choosing the next steps: preparing learners in Independent Living Skills in further education colleges for transition into employment, training or further education: Estyn, April 2004*; and

- *Success for all: Support in further education colleges and work based learning companies for 16-19 year olds with additional learning needs: Estyn, 2005.*

142 Where learners choose to stay at school, possibly until 19 years of age, the SEN Code of Practice still applies, and schools and LEAs retain the responsibility for meeting their needs, in accordance with the statutory framework for SEN. In contrast, post-16 providers other than schools do not have to adhere to the SEN Code of Practice, and LEAs cease to maintain statements of SEN when pupils leave school.

143 Learners with statements who transfer from school to college or work-based learning have the benefit of a thorough and written assessment of their training needs by a careers adviser. However, this is not the case for the majority of learners with SEN whose needs were met at school action or action plus.

144 Although colleges and work-based learning providers generally make good provision for learners who, at school, were identified as having SEN, they are not as well placed as they might be to evaluate learning outcomes for these learners. This is because:

- these providers receive very little information from schools about learners' individual needs, abilities, achievements or attainments;

- providers do not collect and make enough use of data on learners' destinations and outcomes in employment and training;

- the Data Protection Act is often cited as a barrier to effective information-sharing;

- providers are sometimes reluctant to exchange information with one another because they see themselves as competitors, for example schools with colleges and colleges with work-based learning providers; and

- learners and their parents are not always willing to disclose important but personally sensitive information, for example about emotional and behavioural needs and mental health issues.

How well do local education authorities measure and evaluate learning outcomes for learners with SEN?

145 Phase 2 of this work investigated current practice in LEAs in Wales in evaluating learning outcomes for pupils with SEN. The findings are drawn from evidence of inspection and from a survey of a ten LEAs in Wales where good practice in provision of SEN support had previously been identified.

Inspection findings

146 The inspection and self-evaluation framework for local authority services (Estyn, 2006) includes evaluation of the key question: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

147 In relation to the services provided for children and young people with additional learning needs, the inspection criteria include the following typical good features.

- The Council monitors and evaluates the impact of its policies and provision on the achievements of children and young people with ALN, and takes timely action to address any under-performance.

- The work of the Council is effective in helping children and young people with ALN to make good educational progress in relation to their individual learning targets, preventing the exclusion of pupils with ALN and achieving high standards of attendance by pupils with ALN.

- The progress of individual children and young people with ALN is regularly reviewed and communicated between agencies, and targets revised accordingly.

148 Between 2001 and 2006, Estyn has inspected the SEN services in all authorities in Wales. Overall, the services in two-thirds of authorities were judged either good or excellent. However, despite this positive picture, there were some shortcomings in service monitoring and evaluation in 20 of the 22 authorities. Typically, authorities did not measure the effectiveness of the service in terms of pupils' achievements and attainments. The two exceptions were:

- Denbighshire, where the authority had made a good start in using performance data to track the progress of pupils with special educational needs (October 2003); and

- Caerphilly, where inspectors identified a strength in developing the effective use of benchmark and other comparative data (March 2004).

Survey findings

149 The authorities included in the survey demonstrated a number of aspects of good practice in the evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN. Appendix 4 contains seven case studies that illustrate different aspects of this work.

Accuracy and consistency of SEN data

150 Most of the authorities visited are making good progress in improving the quality and accessibility of basic information about individual pupils. However, the data currently held is incomplete and often inaccurate. No authority holds a unified record of all pupils with SEN for whom it makes funded provision, although a few authorities are close to achieving this.

151 Case study 1 in Appendix 4 describes how the CRIS2 data management system is helping mainstream schools and LEA officers in Caerphilly to gather accurate information about pupils with SEN and about the funding allocated to meet their needs.

152 Authorities hold comprehensive information about the identity and level of SEN of individual pupils for whom they make provision in their own maintained primary, secondary and special schools. This information is usually held electronically, in databases that link to, or are derived from, the Schools Information Management System (SIMS) and/or the PLASC database.

153 However, authorities find it difficult to use this information as a secure basis for monitoring and evaluation. Barriers to this work include that:

- the information that schools provide, through the PLASC system, does not always give an accurate picture of pupils' SEN;

- the records of pupils with SEN who are receiving pre-school provision, are educated out of county or otherwise than at school, are normally held separately and in ways that are not compatible with the authority's normal electronic management systems;

- although there is good information about pupils' attainment in core subjects of the National Curriculum, authorities and schools find it much harder to quantify and summarise pupils' achievements and progress in a wider range of learning outcomes;

- some of the most important information about learning outcomes, such as progress in literacy and improvements in behaviour and attendance, is held separately, for example by SENCos, educational psychologists and specialist teachers within central support services;

- the use of different, and sometimes incompatible, databases leads to inefficient management of information; and

- some authorities do not have the capacity in central teams to invest the time required to bring together, for purposes of evaluation, all the information that they hold, or to develop a more coherent electronic system.

154 Authorities are beginning to address these issues, by challenging schools to improve the range and accuracy of data, and by developing their own systems of tracking and recording pupils' achievements and attainments in a broader range of learning outcomes.

155 Case study 2 in Appendix 4 describes how, in Blaenau Gwent, effective partnership between the authority and its mainstream schools is leading to improvements in the quality of data entered into PLASC. In the same authority, special educational needs co-ordinators are developing a consistent method of evaluating and recording progress for pupils with SEN.

Information on outcomes for pupils with SEN

156 All the authorities surveyed aim to improve the monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes for pupils with SEN, and are working in partnership with their schools to establish systems to support this work. This is complex and challenging work that, in most authorities, is at an early stage of development.

157 There are many examples of good practice in aspects of the work. However, authorities are unable to evaluate the impact of all the provision that they and schools make for pupils with SEN. This is largely because:

- authorities use only a small proportion of the total available information about learning outcomes;

- there are no established benchmarks to guide judgements about the progress made by pupils with SEN in relation to prior achievement and attainment;

- the diversity of type and degree of SEN within schools means that it is not always possible to find similar schools for purposes of comparison and benchmarking;

- authorities do not ask schools to collect, use or pass on information about some key learning outcomes, such as progression to further learning and participation in wider activities;

- where information about wider learning outcomes is available, some authorities lack the management capacity to use it effectively to support evaluation; and

- data collection systems within authorities focus well on learning outcomes for pupils in LEA-maintained schools but do not usually include those for pupils in early years, independent or EOTAS provision.

158 Case study 3 in Appendix 4 describes the way in which inclusion and school improvement officers in Flintshire are working with schools to establish a common data set of performance indicators that will help schools and the authority to monitor and evaluate the achievement of pupils with SEN in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Attaining agreed learning goals

Achievement and attainment in the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum

159 As part of their school improvement work, authorities collect information from mainstream schools about the levels attained by pupils in the core subjects of the National Curriculum, in external examinations, such as GCSE and equivalent vocational qualifications and, sometimes, about rates of attendance and exclusion. Authorities generally use this information very well to compare the progress of pupils in different schools, to help schools to set improvement targets and to challenge under-performance.

160 Where the work of evaluating outcomes for pupils with SEN is more advanced, for example in Ceredigion, Conwy and Flintshire, authorities are beginning to use National Curriculum attainment information to analyse the outcomes for specific groups of pupils, including those with SEN in mainstream schools.

161 The best authorities maintain accurate records of the attainments of pupils with SEN, often in a sophisticated electronic database, and can therefore track their progress very well. However, authorities are not able to make secure judgements about the relative outcomes for pupils with SEN in different mainstream schools in relation to attainment in core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, because they do not have reliable benchmarks for this group of pupils.

Achievements in basic and key skills

162 Authorities usually keep detailed records of the progress that pupils with learning difficulties in communication, literacy and numeracy make in response to specialist support for learning, speech and language and sensory difficulties. These records are normally held by officers in central support services. Occasionally they are used as a basis for service evaluation, but this is not normally the case.

163 Authorities do not generally monitor or evaluate learning outcomes in information and communication technology (ICT), in bilingual competence or in the wider key skills such as working with others, in any systematic way, whether or not pupils have SEN.

Meeting individual learning targets

164 Authorities generally work well in partnership with mainstream school staff to monitor the progress that pupils with SEN make in achieving targets set in their individual education or behaviour plans. Typically, specialist learning or behaviour support staff and educational psychologists discuss the progress of pupils on special needs registers with SENCos at least once a year, and sometimes more frequently than this.

165 The surveyed authorities meet the statutory requirement to conduct annual reviews for pupils with statements of SEN, and this process includes discussion of the pupil's progress in relation to the key learning outcomes identified on the statement.

166 Authorities use information from annual reviews well to evaluate the impact of the provision made for individual pupils. However, this kind of information is not normally used for wider evaluation, for example at school or authority level.

Progress in learning

167 A key measure of success for pupils with SEN is that both they, and their parents, should be satisfied that the provision is making a positive difference to their learning. It is also crucial to know whether provision helps pupils to meet their personal goals, both immediately and in the longer-term. However, there are widespread shortcomings in the way that authorities monitor and evaluate these learning outcomes. In particular, they do not find out from schools and other providers:

- what pupils think about their own progress;

- what parents think about their children's progress;

- whether pupils successfully move on to the next stage in learning; and

- whether, over time, pupils increase their participation in mainstream educational activities.

Pupils' and parents' views

168 Authorities and schools sometimes ask pupils with SEN, and their parents or carers, to comment on their progress and achievements. However, this information is usually confined to the small minority of pupils who have statements of SEN, and even then, it is not used systematically for purposes of evaluation.

Progression

169 There are widespread weaknesses in the way that information about pupils with SEN is passed on between different schools and providers. The record of progress too often becomes fragmented when pupils move:

- from early years settings to school;

- between schools;

- to out of authority provision, especially in the independent sector;

- from school to EOTAS provision; or

- to post-16 provision such as college or work-based learning.

170 The survey identified examples, in a few authorities, of effective partnership working with Careers Wales to track progression for pupils with behavioural difficulties and/or for those with sensory impairment. In general, however, authorities do not find out what happens after pupils leave schools, and so are unable to evaluate important achievements in further education, training or employment.

Participation and inclusion

171 Occasionally, support services keep good records of, for example, pupils' return to mainstream education from EOTAS provision. Overall, however, authorities do not do enough to monitor pupils' participation in mainstream education or to use this information to evaluate the impact of SEN support.

Key personal, social and learning skills

172 Almost all the available information about pupils' achievements in key personal, social and learning skills is held by schools and early years settings. Where authorities hold this information, it is usually gathered as part of the day-to-day work of central support services in helping the authority's mainstream and special schools to make appropriate provision for pupils with SEN. It is rarely used, however, to evaluate learning outcomes for pupils with SEN in early years settings, independent schools or EOTAS provision.

Attendance and behaviour

173 Authorities hold accurate information about the rate of attendance of pupils in different schools, and use this well to help schools to improve overall attendance. However, very few schools and authorities use pupil-level information about attendance to evaluate the impact of specific interventions for individual pupils, or groups of pupils, with SEN.

174 Authorities usually have detailed records of the progress that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make in response to the specific work of specialist staff, such as behaviour support teachers and educational psychologists. Central support services hold good records of key learning outcomes in behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning. However, authorities very rarely link this information to other learning outcomes, such as attainment of recognised qualifications, or successful progression into post-16 provision, or to school self-evaluation.

175 Case study 4 in Appendix 4 illustrates how pilot work in Wrexham and Caerphilly is helping schools and LEA officers in these authorities to measure pupils' attitudes to self and school using a commercially available tool, PASS.

Evaluating the outcomes of targeted provision

176 There are many examples of good practice in the way that authorities' specialist services provide targeted support for specific groups of pupils with SEN in mainstream and special schools. These include:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (and similar) programmes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD);

- specialist support in mobility, ICT skills and Braille for visually impaired pupils;

- language teaching and support for pupils with hearing impairment;

- speech and language therapy;

- pre-school interventions, including home teaching;

- support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, including any joint working with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS);

- individual and small group support for pupils with learning difficulties in basic skills; and

- whole authority and/or whole school initiatives to improve outcomes for pupils with dyslexia or behavioural difficulties.

177 Authorities generally evaluate the impact of these programmes in terms of the provision that schools make for pupils with SEN. However, most evaluation studies fail to identify what difference the intervention makes to learning outcomes. For example, one authority had evaluated the impact of the use of assertive discipline as a behaviour management strategy. The authority's evaluation established that the programme helped teachers to manage challenging behaviour with more confidence and consistency, but did not say whether the behaviour and learning of pupils had improved as a result.

178 Good examples of evaluation of the impact of specific provision on learning outcomes include those in case studies 5 and 6 in Appendix 4. Case study 5 describes how the Gwent Regional service uses the Oregon Project materials to monitor and evaluate the progress made by visually impaired pre-school children. Case study 6 describes the way in which specialist staff from different agencies in Denbighshire work as a team to evaluate the impact of an early intervention programme for very young autistic children.

Mapping specialist provision in authorities and schools

179 Authorities provide and fund a wide range of specialist provision for pupils with SEN that includes:

- additional teaching and support provided by maintained mainstream schools using their delegated budgets;

- provision in special schools, pupil referral units and in other EOTAS provision;

- specialised assessment, advice, teaching, support and special equipment, including services for pre-school children, that is directly funded by the LEA from a centrally-retained budget;

- services provided by external agencies or services shared with another authority, for example for speech and language therapy or specialist teaching for pupils with low incidence needs; and

- fees paid for specialised placements, often in the independent sector, for statemented pupils and looked after children with highly complex emotional, social, behavioural and learning needs.

180 Authorities usually have good records of the provision that they make for individual pupils in their own maintained schools. However, there are shortcomings in the way that authorities monitor and evaluate SEN provision for some of the most vulnerable pupils, including those educated otherwise than at school, in schools maintained by other authorities and in independent schools.

181 There is very rarely a single record of the provision for all pupils in a form that would enable authorities to make a comprehensive or detailed analysis of the overall provision that they make for pupils with similar types of SEN, or for pupils in similar schools.

182 The absence of such an overview means that schools, authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government are unable to link information about provision with information about learning outcomes and costs for purposes of evaluation. It also makes it difficult to compare the outcomes for learners in different schools and authorities.

183 The planned revision of PLASC information for pupils with SEN is designed to help to address this issue in the longer-term. From January 2008, schools will be required to provide information about the degree to which special provision is made for each pupil with SEN, in relation to:

- curriculum and teaching;

- grouping and support;

- specialised resources; and

- advice and assessment.

184 Early in 2006, officers and special educational needs co-ordinators in Blaenau Gwent carried out a pilot study that helped to develop the guidance on recording provision in PLASC for these new categories. The authority has continued to use these categories to good effect to record details of its SEN provision for pupils in mainstream schools, as illustrated in case study 2 in Appendix 4.

Identifying the costs of SEN provision

185   The inspection and self-evaluation framework for local authority services (Estyn and Wales Audit Office, 2006) includes, in relation to the services provided for children and young people with additional learning needs, the following typical good features:

The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities and can demonstrate that children and young people with ALN achieve good outcomes in relation to costs of the services that it provides.

Where the Council commissions support for pupils with ALN from external agencies, it can show that outcomes are good and that it is achieving value for money.

Costs of SEN provision

186   The National Assembly for Wales Statistical Directorate estimates that, for 2006/07, councils in Wales have set budgets of almost £288 million for SEN provision in schools, an increase of 10.4% on 2005/2006. SEN budgets are growing much more quickly than budgets for other aspects of school provision.

(Budgeted expenditure on SEN provision: SDR 80/2006, National Assembly for Wales, July 2006)

187   Councils spend this money in a wide range of ways, but information about the types of action and provision that represent the best value-for-money in different circumstances is limited.

(Wales Audit Office, October 2006)

Findings of survey

188   Five of the ten authorities surveyed have accurate and comprehensive information about the costs of SEN provision, at whole authority and at school level. These authorities are working to improve the transparency of SEN funding systems, but do not yet know the costs of all types of provision. Typically, these authorities know the overall costs of SEN provision, are clear about how much funding is allocated to each school and know the costs of much of the provision that the authority makes directly from central budgets. However, they do not always calculate the total cost of each pupil's special provision, and are therefore unable to make secure judgements about the cost-effectiveness of different types of provision in relation to learning outcomes.

189   Case study 1 in Appendix 4 illustrates how effective use of the CRIS2 data management system enables SEN expenditure in Caerphilly to be highly transparent. Through detailed monitoring and evaluation, officers and head teachers know the precise amount of money allocated to support each pupil with SEN. Officers monitor the spending on pupils with different types of SEN, and use this information to improve service efficiency. The authority has rigorous procedures for allocating, monitoring and analysing the deployment of SEN funding to its schools and to its central support teams. It holds schools and central services to account for all

expenditure, expects to see evidence that SEN funding is effectively used and that it will be recycled as pupils improve enough for support levels to decrease.

190   The ongoing study by Wales Audit Office will provide more detail about this area of local authorities' work.

Links to school improvement and self-evaluation

191   Authorities have established effective links between the work of school improvement officers and that of staff in central inclusion and SEN support services. Authorities provide schools with clear direction and support for assessment, target-setting and self-evaluation. In the best authorities, this includes guidance on using data to evaluate learning outcomes for targeted groups of pupils and is well-linked to Estyn's Common Inspection Framework.

192   Case study 1 in Appendix 4 includes detail of the way in which the CRIS2 profile enables primary and secondary schools to evaluate the quality and impact of their SEN provision.

193   In Flintshire, the authority has established a common data set of local performance indicators that enable it to link evaluation of the work of the central inclusion support services with evaluation of the learning outcomes for pupils with SEN across its mainstream secondary schools, as described in case study 3 in Appendix 4.

194   Authorities provide schools with good, and sometimes outstanding, training and support to help to improve outcomes for pupils with SEN. However, the emphasis of much of this training and support is on provision, rather than on evaluating learning outcomes.

195   A few authorities are beginning to provide schools with specific advice and training on how to monitor and evaluate the learning outcomes for pupils with SEN. This training sometimes includes information on how to interpret data in relation to National Curriculum levels and progress in literacy and numeracy. Case study 7 in Appendix 4 shows how, in Blaenau Gwent, the authority is training schools in the use of PLASC and FFT data to support school self-evaluation.

Conclusion

196 The evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN is a complex and challenging task. Although this report identifies several examples of emerging good practice, much remains to be done to create a unified system to support the evaluation of outcomes for learners with SEN across Wales.

197 In the next phase of this work, Estyn and the Welsh Assembly Government intend to work together to develop guidance for schools and other providers on how to implement the recommendations in this report.

Appendix 1: Structure, timing and evidence base of the work

Phase 1: April 2005 to March 2006

The first phase of the work:

- clarified the scope of the project;

- consulted key stakeholders;

- reviewed relevant literature, including inspection reports;

- identified examples of emerging good practice; and

- identified priorities for further work.

Key stakeholders

Estyn consulted a wide range of key stakeholders as part of this work. These stakeholders included:

- representatives of schools, LEAs, the voluntary sector and Careers Wales;

- officers in the Department of Lifelong Learning and Skills and in the Local Government Data Unit for Wales; and

- the Fischer Family Trust.

In addition, Estyn consulted inspectors in Ofsted and in Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMiE), Scotland.

Literature review

The report draws on a wide range of published information that includes:

- Estyn's Common Inspection Framework, Guidance on Listening to Learners and Guidance on Self-Evaluation;

- Estyn's Framework and Guidance for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (LEAs);

- inspections of SEN services in all LEAs in Wales in the period 2002-2006;

- inspections of mainstream, special and independent schools in Wales in the period 2004-2006;

- Estyn's publications on support for children and young people with SEN; and

- further background information, as listed in the bibliography.

Phase 2: April 2006 to March 2007

The second phase of the work:

- continued the consultation with a group of stakeholders;

- continued the review of literature;

- provided the Welsh Assembly Government with draft guidance for schools and LEAs on how to record information about pupils with SEN in the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC); and

- investigated current practice in schools and LEAs in Wales.

This phase of the work included a survey of ten LEAs in Wales where good practice in provision of SEN support had previously been identified. During October and November 2006, inspectors from Estyn visited six of these authorities, and read documentation for the remaining four authorities.

The key question for the survey was:

- How well do local authorities monitor and evaluate the educational outcomes for pupils with SEN for whom they make funded provision?

The survey included the following aspects of authorities' work.

(a) The extent to which authorities and their schools have an accurate and easily accessible record of the identity and needs of pupils with SEN, the provision that they make, either directly or through schools, and the costs of that provision.

(b) Whether authorities collect and analyse data on outcomes for individual pupils with SEN.

(c) The extent to which authorities and schools use appropriate outcome measures to evaluate the impact of specific interventions.

(d) The extent to which the authority links the evaluation of outcomes for pupils with SEN with school improvement generally, including the provision of leadership, support and training for schools in using data effectively.

Phase 3: April 2007 onwards

During phase 3, Estyn will provide further advice, if required to do so by the Welsh Assembly Government, to build on the findings of phases 1 and 2 of this work.

Appendix 2: Characteristics of types of SEN

The information in this appendix is also contained in: Guidance to support the recording of pupils' special educational needs on the PLASC database. (In draft, Welsh Assembly Government, 2006)

A1 COGNITION AND LEARNING

A1.1 Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)

Specific learning difficulties is an umbrella term which indicates that pupils display differences across their learning. Pupils with SPLD may have a particular difficulty in learning to read, write, spell or manipulate numbers so that their performance in these areas is below their performance in other areas. Pupils may also have problems with:

- fine or gross motor control skills;

- tasks involving specific abilities such as sequencing, organisation or phonological or short-term memory abilities;

- language development;

- forming concepts, especially when information requires first-hand sensory experiences; and

- frustration and/or low self-esteem, taking the form, in some cases, of behaviour difficulties.

Pupils with SPLD cover the whole ability range, and the severity of their learning difficulty varies widely.

Specific learning difficulties include:

Dyslexia

Pupils with dyslexia may learn readily in some areas of the curriculum but have a marked and persistent difficulty in acquiring accuracy or fluency in learning to read, write and spell. Pupils may have poor reading comprehension, handwriting and punctuation. They may also have difficulties in concentration and organisation and in remembering sequences of works. They may mispronounce common words, or reverse letters and sounds in words.

Dyscalculia

Pupils with dyscalculia have difficulty in acquiring mathematical skills. Pupils may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures.

Dyspraxia

Pupils with dyspraxia are affected by an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement, often appearing to be clumsy. They find gross and fine motor skills hard to learn and difficult to retain and generalise. They may have poor balance and co-ordination, and poor awareness of body position. Their language may be late to develop, and they may have immature articulation.

A1.2 Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments well below expected levels for pupils of similar age in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. They have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, in understanding concepts, in dealing with abstract ideas and generalising from experience. They may also have problems with:

- developing speech and language skills;

- low self-esteem;

- concentration and attention; and

- social skills.

A1.3 Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)

Pupils with severe learning difficulties have significant intellectual or cognitive impairments. This has a major effect on their ability to participate in the school curriculum without support. They may also have associated difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication and perception and the acquisition of self-help skills.

Pupils with SLD will need support in all areas of the curriculum. They are likely to require teaching of self-help, independence and social skills. Some pupils may use sign and symbols but most will be able to hold simple conversations and gain some literacy skills. Their attainments may be below level 1 of the National Curriculum for much of their school careers.

A1.4 Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)

Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have a profound cognitive impairment/learning difficulty, leading to significant delay in reaching developmental milestones. In addition, they display one or more of the following:

- significant motor impairments;

- significant sensory impairments; and/or

- complex health care needs/dependence on technology.

The inter-relationship of these disabilities increases the complexity of need, in turn affecting all areas of learning.

Pupils with PMLD need a distinctive curriculum to help them to develop sensory, motor, social and communication skills all through their school careers, and into adult life. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Pupils require a very high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for personal care.

A2 BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES (BESD)

Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties cover the full range of ability, and a continuum of severity. Their emotional needs and behaviours present a barrier to learning and persist despite the implementation of an effective school behaviour policy, pastoral support and the personal/social curriculum.

Pupils may be:

- withdrawn or isolated;

- disruptive and disturbing;

- hyperactive and lacking in concentration;

- immature in social skills;

- unable to form and maintain positive relationships with peers and/or adults; and/or

- presenting challenging behaviours.

Pupils with mental health difficulties, including depression, eating disorders, attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) should be recorded as BESD if additional or different educational arrangements are being made to support them.

A3 COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION DIFFICULTIES

A3.1 Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD)

Pupils with speech, language and communication needs cover the whole ability range. They have difficulty in understanding and/or making others understand information conveyed through spoken language.

Speech and language difficulties may show themselves in the following ways:

- problems with the production of speech;

- difficulty in finding words and joining them together in meaningful and expressive language;

- problems in communicating through speech and other forms of language;

- difficulties or delays in understanding or responding to the verbal cues of others;

- difficulties with the acquisition and expression of thoughts and ideas;

- difficulty in understanding and using appropriate social language; and

- frustrations and anxieties arising from a failure to communicate, possibly leading to apparent behavioural difficulties and deteriorating social and peer relationships.

Please note that pupils whose first language is not English should not be recorded as SLCD unless they also have a special educational need in this area.

A3.2 Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Autistic spectrum disorders are characterised by a triad of impairments in social relationships, social communication and imaginative thought, and may show themselves in the following ways:

- difficulties in attuning to social situations and responding to normal environmental cues;

- evidence of emerging personal agendas which are increasingly not amenable to adult direction;

- a tendency to withdraw from social situations and an increasing passivity and absence of initiative;

- repressed, reduced or inappropriate social interactions extending to highly ego-centric behaviour with an absence of awareness of the needs or emotions of others;

- impaired use of language, either expressive or receptive; this may include odd intonation, literal interpretations and idiosyncratic phrases and may extend to more bizarre expressive forms and limited expression, reducing the potential for two way communication; and

- limitations in expressive or creative peer activities extending to obsessive interests or repetitive activities.

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder cover the full range of ability and the severity of their impairment varies widely. Some pupils also have other learning difficulties or disabilities, making identification difficult.

There are a number of sub-groups within the spectrum of autism. Pupils with Asperger's syndrome should be recorded in this category.

A4 SENSORY AND PHYSICAL DIFFICULTIES

A4.1 Hearing Impairment (HI)

Pupils with a hearing impairment range from those with a mild hearing loss to those who are profoundly deaf. Pupils cover the whole ability range.

It is possible for specialists to assess and quantify pupils' hearing loss and in many cases this will have been done before children reach statutory school age. However, the level of hearing loss alone does not determine the level of difficulty which pupils experience in school. It has to be set alongside other indicators more directly related to the classroom.

For educational purposes, a pupil is regarded as having a hearing impairment if he or she requires hearing aids, adaptations to their environment and/or particular teaching strategies in order to access the concepts and language of the curriculum.

A4.2 Visual Impairment (VI)

Pupils with a visual impairment range from those with partial sight to those who are blind. Pupils cover the whole ability range.

It is possible for specialists to assess and quantify pupils' visual loss and in many cases this will have been done before children reach statutory school age. However, the level of visual impairment alone does not determine the level of difficulty which pupils experience in school. It has to be set alongside other indicators more directly related to the classroom.

For educational purposes, a pupil is regarded as having a visual impairment if he or she requires adaptations to their environment or specific differentiation of learning materials in order to access the curriculum.

A4.3 Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)

Pupils with multi-sensory impairment have a combination of visual and hearing difficulties. They are sometimes referred to as deaf blind, but may have some residual sight and/or hearing. Many also have additional disabilities but their complex needs mean that it may be difficult to ascertain their intellectual abilities.

A4.4 Physical and Medical Difficulties (PMED)

There is a wide range of physical and medical difficulties, some temporary and others permanent. Pupils cover the whole ability range.

Some children who experience physical or medical difficulties have no problems in accessing the curriculum and learning effectively. In such cases, therefore, simply having a medical diagnosis does not imply that the child has special educational needs.

On the other hand, some children enter school with identified physical needs or a medical diagnosis and well-understood educational difficulties. They may have received an educational assessment and early educational intervention, and may also have a statement of special educational need. Schools clearly need to monitor their *educational* needs extremely carefully, but will already be highly alert to this requirement.

There are a number of medical conditions associated with physical disability that can affect a pupil's mobility. These conditions include cerebral palsy, spina bifida and muscular dystrophy. Pupils with physical disabilities may also have sensory impairments, neurological problems or learning difficulties.

The impact of physical or medical difficulties on a child's education range from mild to severe may become apparent in the following ways:

- evidence of difficulties in the other areas of special educational need as set out elsewhere in this guidance;

- impact of the physical or medical difficulty on the pupil's confidence, self-esteem, emotional stability or relationships with peers;

- impact of the physical or medical difficulty on classroom performance (for example, through drowsiness, lack of concentration, lack of motivation); and

- impact of the physical or medical difficulty on participation in curriculum activities.

Appendix 3: How well do learners achieve? (Estyn, Common Inspection Framework, Key Question 1)

Inspectors should evaluate and report on the standards achieved by learners, including:	In making their judgements, inspectors should consider, where applicable, the extent to which learners:
• **their success in attaining agreed learning goals**	1.1 *achieve good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills;* 1.2 *achieve agreed learning targets and goals;* 1.3 *reach appropriate levels in key skills, including bilingual competence; and* 1.4 *succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.* and the extent to which: 1.5 *results and retention rates compare well with national averages and local and national benchmarks; and* 1.6 *trends in performance show continuous improvement or the maintenance of high standards.*
• **their progress in learning**	1.7 *acquire new knowledge or skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding;* 1.8 *understand what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve; and* 1.9 *make good progress towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning.*
• **the development of their personal, social and learning skills**	1.10 *show motivation, work productively and make effective use of their time;* 1.11 *behave responsibly and show respect for others;* 1.12 *achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality;* 1.13 *develop the capacity to work independently, including the skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning;* 1.14 *progress well in their personal, social moral and wider development;* 1.15 *demonstrate an awareness of equal opportunities issues and a respect for diversity within society; and* 1.16 *are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and the community.*

Case study 1: Caerphilly

CRIS2 is a Special Educational Needs Self-Evaluation Profile (CRIS2) that was developed by a partnership between the advisory service, ESIS, and four authorities in South Wales: Caerphilly, RCT, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil.

The profile enables primary and secondary schools, including those with designated resource centres, to evaluate the quality and impact of their special educational needs provision, linked to the seven key questions in Estyn's inspection framework.

The CRIS2 spreadsheets for each school capture:

- pupil numbers and basic information on staffing;

- specific information about pupils and their SEN (taken from PLASC);

- delegated income for SEN; and

- expenditure on SEN.

The profile data can be analysed and used to inform school and authority improvement planning of provision for pupils with SEN.

Although the CRIS2 guidance does not include a common data set of local performance indicators, it does advise schools to consider the impact of provision on:

- pupils' progress in developing key skills;

- pupils' progress in developing personal, social and learning skills;

- pupils' progress in improving behaviour;

- the attendance of pupils with SEN in comparison to the school as a whole;

- the exclusion rates for pupils with SEN in comparison to the school as a whole;

- attainment and achievement compared with similar groups of pupils locally and nationally; and

- attainment and achievement compared with entry level baselines and the performance of previous cohorts.

Overall, the CRIS2 system is a comprehensive, robust tool for improving the transparency and monitoring of SEN funding streams in mainstream schools.

Case study 2: Blaenau Gwent

In Blaenau Gwent, SENCos and senior managers in the authority have worked together to improve the accuracy and value of information entered into the PLASC record for pupils with SEN. The authority is developing a comprehensive record of the provision made for pupils with SEN, and is beginning to link this to the progress that they make.

Following a successful pilot study early in 2006, SENCos are continuing to record the provision made for pupils with SEN, using the proposed new PLASC categories of:

- curriculum and teaching;

- grouping and support;

- specialised resources; and

- advice and assessment.

In addition, SENCos and officers have developed a 5-point scale to describe the progress that pupils with SEN make in relation to key targets in their individual education plans:

(1) still many aspects giving cause for concern with little progress in evidence;

(2) some progress in evidence but shortcomings in important areas;

(3) some shortcomings but outweighed by progress in key areas/generally;

(4) good levels of progress in key areas/generally across the curriculum; and

(5) outstanding levels of progress in key areas targeted, and progress in other areas in line with age and level of potential.

SENCos play a key role in judging pupils' progress, and ensuring that the information is accurately recorded in an additional field within the PLASC database. SENCos and officers make good use of this information to:

- highlight groups of pupils making most and least progress;

- evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress; and

- prioritise provision for pupils making least progress.

Case study 3: Flintshire

The authority has successfully established, with its schools, a core data set of local performance indicators (PIs) against which the progress and achievements of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools can be monitored and evaluated across the whole authority.

The local PIs for secondary schools include targets, for pupils on each school's SEN register, of:

- annual improvement in reading age over a 12 month period;

- annual improvement in spelling age;

- percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 3 that achieve Level 3 Teacher Assessment in English, mathematics, science and Welsh where appropriate;

- rate of attendance;

- percentage of Year 11 pupils that achieve Entry Level or higher in English, mathematics, science, Welsh where appropriate and one other subject;

- percentage of school leavers that move on to further education, training or employment;

- percentage of Year 11 pupils that achieve at least 1 GCSE or other nationally recognised qualification at the end of key stage 4; and

- number of Year 11 pupils with a reading age of less than 10 years in the December of Y11.

The authority has also established an equivalent set of local performance indicators for the work of the Inclusion Support Service.

Case study 4: Wrexham and Caerphilly

PASS (Pupils' Attitudes to Self and School) is a commercially available tool that measures pupils' attitudes towards learning, and can track changes in those attitudes over time. It provides standardised measures of nine aspects of pupils' attitudes, including their feelings about school, self-confidence as learners, attitudes to teachers, to work and to attendance. It identifies individual pupils and groups whose attitudes to learning and to themselves are more negative than average for their peer group, and who are therefore considered to be at risk of underachievement.

The PASS system allows the 'flagging' of pupils with individual learning needs, including those with SEN and pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL). The system provides information that enables schools and authorities to compare measures of these pupils' attitudes with measures of their progress in learning and attendance, and so to evaluate the outcomes of specific interventions.

Fuller details of PASS are available at: http://www.w3insights.pass-survey.com

In Wrexham and Caerphilly, officers are already working with mainstream primary and secondary schools to identify pupils with negative attitudes to learning who may be in need of additional support to prevent under-achievement. Appropriately, these authorities see this work as making an important contribution to the drive to promote inclusion and to raise standards of attainment for all pupils.

In the longer-term, these authorities will be able to use information from PASS, together with data on key learning outcomes such as performance at GCSE and attendance, to evaluate the impact of additional support for pupils found to be at risk of underachievement.

Case study 5: Gwent regional service for visually impaired children

The Gwent Visual Impairment Service uses the Oregon Project materials to plan appropriate activities for very young children with visual impairment, and to monitor their progress in developing important skills, including early language development, visual motor co-ordination, colour sorting and matching and independence.

The service evaluates the impact of its work with pupils of school age by tracking their progress in relation to specific targets on IEPs, many of which link to key educational and personal achievements. The service also evaluates the extent to which intervention helps visually impaired pupils to make better use of the vision that they have.

Specialist teachers for visual impairment keep careful records of the progress that pupils make in learning to read using the Braille version of the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability. There is good data over a 5 year period to show the progress made by individual pupils in reading rate, accuracy and comprehension.

Case study 6: Denbighshire

The authority has developed an early intervention programme – Autistic spectrum Children's Education (AsCE) – to support nursery and reception children who have had an early diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and who are placed in mainstream schools.

A core team that includes specialist teachers, staff in the mainstream schools, educational psychologists, education officers and speech and language therapists meets each half term to evaluate the impact of the AsCE programme on the progress and learning outcomes for each individual pupil. The core team is developing an evaluation tool for parents to enable them to give their perception of the value of the programme.

Case study 7: Blaenau Gwent

Officers in Blaenau Gwent make it a priority to train school staff in the use of PLASC and FFT data to support self-evaluation. The training has included specific sessions for SENCos and middle managers in the use of PLASC and FFT data to evaluate the performance of specific groups of pupils and to look for areas where the school's provision is either particularly successful, or is relatively unsuccessful and in need of review. School improvement officers monitor the impact of this training during their regular visits to discuss target-setting, school performance and self-evaluation.

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