The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
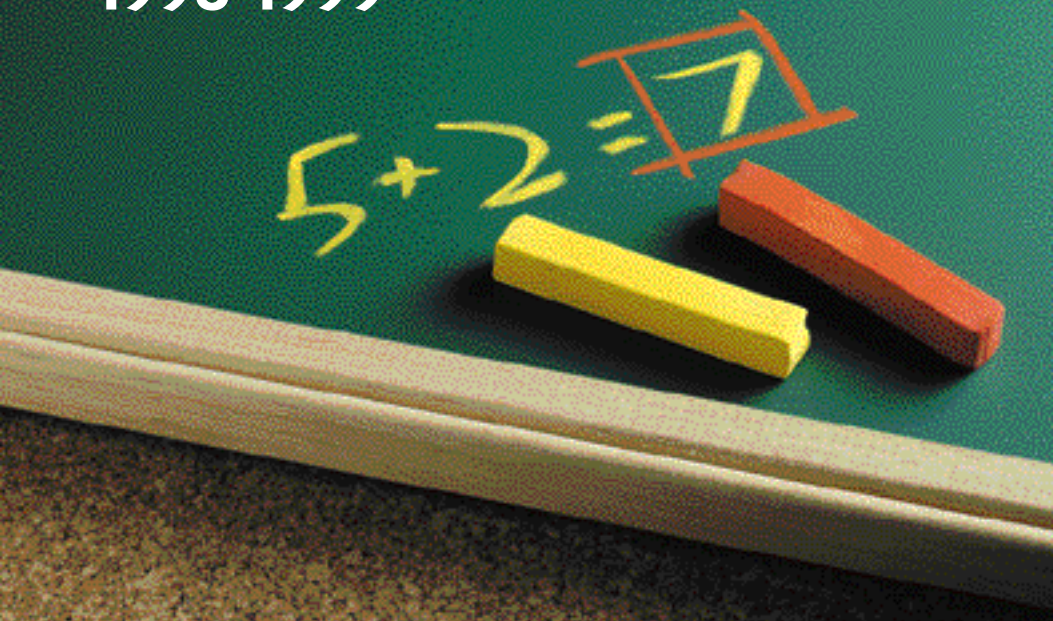
1998-1999

Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

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The Annual Report of
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

1998-1999

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by the First Secretary under Section 5.(7)(a)
of the School Inspections Act 1996*

Ordered by The National Assembly for Wales to be printed

Foreword by Susan Lewis

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

This is the first annual report that my office has produced under the name of Estyn. Our new name relates more closely to our work, now that we are responsible for inspecting a much wider range of education and training across Wales. As always, we aim to help providers reach the highest possible standards in their work.

The purpose of this report is to give advice on trends and issues relating to the quality of education and training in Wales and the standards that pupils, students and trainees achieve. The challenge for teachers and training providers is to apply this advice to their own work so that standards continue to rise.

In 1998-1999, schools have maintained and built on the important improvements of the last few years. Standards have generally been maintained in secondary and special schools, and there is more good work being done in primary schools. It is also particularly encouraging to see the progress made by the secondary schools we inspected in 1993-1994. Many of the schools that were not performing well at that time have made significant progress.

Pupils achieved better results overall this year in National Curriculum assessment in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in GCSE and other public examinations. Results in Key Stage 3 are generally similar to last year's. In this key stage, the quality of teaching and learning, and the standards that pupils achieve, still vary widely.

During the year, small teams of inspectors continued to visit the secondary schools that are trying to raise the levels of their pupils' performance in particularly challenging circumstances. A report on some of this work, 'Tackling Low Performance', was published in May 1999. The messages in the report apply to many schools and not just to those where examination success rates are generally low. In the schools that have the best results, the numbers of pupils who achieve five or more GCSE passes at A*-C continue to rise. It is easy to understand why these and many other schools focus their attention, and sometimes most of their efforts, on the pupils who achieve this 'headline indicator'. However, all schools need to pay at least as much attention to other important indicators such as the 'core subject indicator', A*-G GCSE passes and the average GCSE points score. By looking at all these indicators, we can judge the progress schools make in providing for pupils who are not achieving to the best of their ability. It is most often these pupils who find it difficult to become fully involved in their learning. We risk losing many of them from education and training temporarily, or even forever.

Attendance is good in primary schools, but not so good in secondary schools. Improving attendance is an important issue in almost half of the secondary schools we inspected. Most parents make sure that their children go to school regularly, but a few do not give schools as much support as they should. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) play an important part in keeping pupils in education when they might otherwise drop out. The improvements they have made are a credit to everyone who is involved but, in general, the units need to be managed better. The Youth Access Initiative also shows signs of achieving some good results with pupils who have stopped going to school. There are important messages in this work for schools about how to be more effective in teaching pupils who are not attaining at high levels.

Adult and youth services are responding well to the need to involve people in lifelong learning. The quality and standards of work in voluntary youth organisations are generally good and often excellent. The work in adult and youth services is often affected by a lack of funds.

Our experience of inspecting further education colleges for the Further Education Funding Council for Wales (FEFCW) has given us a good basis for taking on a new area of work - inspecting Assembly-funded training. In 1998-1999, we inspected the work of seven training providers as part of the first phase of a five-year cycle of full inspections of all providers. While the results of the training in this first small sample were generally satisfactory and sometimes good, it is already becoming clear that there are weaknesses that the providers need to deal with, particularly in aspects of planning and managing quality.

Higher education institutions have worked hard to make sure that their teacher training courses meet the requirements that were introduced in September 1998. Partnerships with schools are improving and teachers who act as 'mentors' benefit from the experience. The quality and standards of teacher training continue to be good.

All of our inspections now place an important emphasis on developing and using skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). This goes hand in hand with the work that schools are doing in these three areas, with the strong support of their local education authorities. So far, the main work has been in primary schools, although secondary schools are beginning to become more involved in schemes to develop pupils' key skills. In general, schools are meeting the challenge of making sure pupils develop the skills that will provide the foundation for their future learning and help them in the world of work. They are working closely with their local education authorities to improve teaching and learning and the standards that pupils achieve in these areas. Our own inspections of local education authorities during the year have focused on their work in helping to raise standards in literacy. It is important to make sure that pupils can do their best in the wider curriculum by having well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and using ICT. Standards in areas of literacy and numeracy continue to rise, but most schools could do more to help their pupils develop and use these skills in different subjects. Local education authorities are becoming more successful in supporting schools' efforts to improve work in literacy. Some local education authorities could do more to offer support to the schools who need it most, and to assess how effective their efforts are. Pupils' ability in using ICT continues to fall behind their ability in other skills. This is a cause for concern.
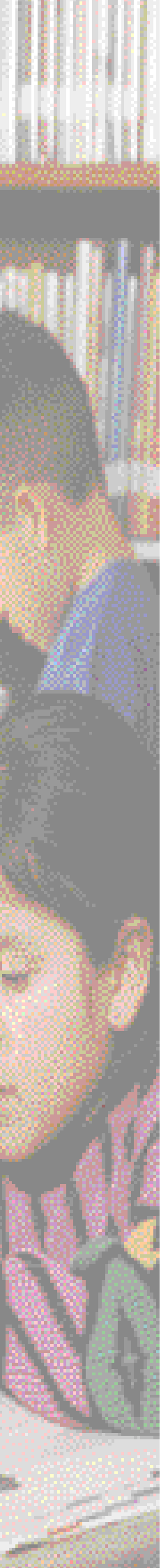
Improvements in teaching and learning, and in the standards that pupils achieve, are closely linked with the quality of leadership shown by headteachers and other senior managers. The quality of leadership continues to improve. In particular, headteachers and other senior managers are becoming better at evaluating the quality of their school's work and planning how to improve it. The 'Framework for the Inspection of Schools', like all of our other inspection frameworks, places great emphasis on this central management role. The analysis of pupils' performance is becoming more detailed and more focused. This type of analysis is now well established as an information base that helps schools to set targets for individual pupils and monitor their progress in subjects across the curriculum. Evaluating the education that is provided and planning for improvement are now more effective overall, but there are still weaknesses. Some primary schools find it difficult to identify suitable priorities for action that include challenging targets for improving pupils' performance. In secondary schools, the main weakness is in monitoring subject departments. This monitoring is not always thorough enough and does not focus enough on classroom work.

There is still a great deal of unevenness in schools' performance. Too often, pupils in different classes, or in different subjects, within the same school achieve widely varying results. As well as headteachers and senior managers, all teachers need to be willing and able to analyse and improve their own performance. Subject and class teachers need to become more effective in using the development planning cycle - monitoring, evaluating, planning for improvement, and taking suitable action. On the whole, teachers are better at monitoring than evaluating, and better at evaluating than planning for improvement. Taking suitable action so performance will improve is the least developed part of the planning cycle. The need to reduce unevenness is a major challenge for everyone who is involved in education and training.

I hope that this report will help to identify where, and in what ways, education and training need to improve. In line with our commitment to self-evaluation and good communication, I encourage all of you who read this report to write to me with your views about it.

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Standards of achievement

Primary schools

Percentage of classes

Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
4%	40%	47%	9%	%

Overall standards of achievement are broadly similar to those reported last year, but there is more good or very good work. Overall standards continue to be higher in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, but the gap in performance has narrowed during the year. The percentage of work with outstanding features is now greater in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. We have seen improvements in the amount of very good work, especially in Year 6 and, to a lesser extent, Year 5. There have been some improvements in Year 3 and Year 4 classes, but overall performance at the beginning of Key Stage 2 still does not compare as well with pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 1. This is largely due to faults in curriculum planning and the quality of teaching in many Year 3 and Year 4 classes. It also reflects some continuing shortcomings in Key Stage 1 in preparing pupils appropriately for the more challenging programmes of study in Key Stage 2. In many schools, the pace of improvement in Key Stage 1 does not match that in Key Stage 2, particularly in English. The performance of boys overall is still weaker than that of girls in both key stages, especially in language work.

Secondary schools

Percentage of classes

Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
3%	44%	46%	7%	%

The standards achieved in secondary schools are generally similar to last year and build on the marked improvements achieved in the previous year. The schools we inspected in 1998-1999 were last inspected in 1993-1994. The grades awarded this year show considerable improvement on the standards we reported for the same schools five years ago. The amount of good work has increased from about a third in 1993-1994 to almost a half. In the same period, the amount of unsatisfactory work has been reduced from about 20% to under 8%. In particular, a number of the schools which were not performing well have made significant progress in reducing the amount of unsatisfactory work and increasing the percentage judged to be good. Standards tend to be highest in:

- Welsh (first language) and history across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4;
- religious education in Key Stage 3; and
- design and technology, information technology (IT) and geography in Key Stage 4.

The lowest percentage of good work appears in music in Key Stage 3 and in personal and social education (PSE), physical education, mathematics and modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4. There is also a relatively high percentage of unsatisfactory work in science in both key stages. We have seen a marked improvement in standards in several individual subjects, most notably in mathematics and history. Only a small amount of work has outstanding features. Standards achieved by sixth-form students continue to improve and are good or very good in almost 60% of classes.

National Curriculum Assessment (NCA) and GCSE examination results

The White Paper 'Building Excellent Schools Together' (BEST) sets out targets for NCA results. The expectations for the year 2000 are that between 60% and 70% of pupils should achieve level 4 or better in mathematics, science and English or Welsh at the end of Key Stage 2, and also that the same percentage of pupils should achieve level 5 or better in these subjects at the end of Key Stage 3. The corresponding targets for 2002 are that between 70% and 80% of pupils should achieve these levels.

Key stages 1 and 2

Key Stage 1: Percentage achieving level 2 or better in teacher assessment and tests

Year	English			Welsh			Mathematics			Science			Core subject indicator		
	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97
Teacher assessment	81%	80%	80%	87%	86%	85%	86%	84%	83%	86%	84%	84%	78%	77%	76%
Test				87%	87%	86%	86%	86%	85%						

Key Stage 2: Percentage achieving level 4 or better in teacher assessment and tests

Year	English			Welsh			Mathematics			Science			Core subject indicator		
	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97	99	98	97
Teacher assessment	67%	65%	65%	63%	63%	58%	69%	65%	66%	75%	71%	72%	61%	57%	55%
Test	68%	64%	64%	65%	65%	56%	67%	61%	64%	77%	69%	72%	58%	51%	52%

The core subject indicator is the percentage of pupils gaining the expected level (level 2 or better in Key Stage 1 and level 4 or better in Key Stage 2) in all three of the core subjects – mathematics, science and English or Welsh.

In Key Stage 1, there is no test in science. The tests in English do not cover all areas of the work and so do not result in the award of an overall level.

In Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 2 has improved slightly across the board, with a matching increase in the percentage achieving the core subject indicator. In Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in the tests has increased significantly in English, mathematics and science. The results in Welsh show a strengthening of the considerable rise in standards of last year. This has led to a substantial increase in the core subject indicators. The test results in both key stages show a close match with teacher assessment.

Key Stage 3

Percentage of 14-year-olds reaching level 5 or better. The 1998 results are in brackets.

	English	Welsh	Mathematics	Science	Core subject indicator
Teacher assessment	62% (62%)	72% (71%)	63% (64%)	59% (60%)	47% (47%)
Test	61% (62%)	71% (71%)	60% (60%)	55% (55%)	45% (45%)

The percentages in each subject are similar to those for last year. Girls continue to perform much better than boys in language work. For example, 70% of girls and 54% of boys reached level 5 or better in the English test. The national targets for the year 2000 are close to being met, but only at the lower end of the range in English, mathematics and science. There is a considerable way to go in meeting the targets for 2002. If the rate of progress since 1996 is maintained, but not increased, these targets will be met only in Welsh.

GCSE examinations and GNVQs

GCSE results continue to improve. The overall percentage of 15-year-olds achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C or vocational equivalent increased from 46% last year to 48%. The percentage achieving five or more grades A* to G or vocational equivalent has increased from 82% to 83%. The core subject indicator (CSI) has increased from 34% to 36%. In 54 schools the percentage of pupils achieving the CSI is 25% or less. The number last year was more than 70. In 32 schools, fewer than 75% of 15-year-olds achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to G. The number last year was 40. In general, girls continue to perform better than boys. Among 15-year-olds, 53% of girls and 42% of boys achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C or vocational equivalent. In the same age group, 39% of girls and 32% of boys achieved the core subject indicator. Both this year and last, the percentage of girls achieving GCSE grades A* to C was higher than that of boys in every subject except physics and chemistry.

Standards in key skills

Literacy

In **primary** schools, overall standards in literacy in English and Welsh (first language) are satisfactory or better in nearly 95% of schools. The main reasons for the improvement are:

- generally well-targeted training and support by local education authorities (LEAs); and
- more of an emphasis within schools on developing strategic approaches to teaching and learning language skills across the curriculum.

Most pupils make good progress in speaking and listening in a range of situations. They talk confidently about their work and express their ideas clearly. However, in over 40% of classes, pupils make only slow progress in their ability to speak formally. They lack confidence and skill in developing their ideas and arguments at length.

In around 50% of classes in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils achieve good, and sometimes very good, standards in reading a wide range of material with

confidence, accuracy and enjoyment. In almost one in ten classes, pupils do not make good enough progress in learning to read independently. In these cases, pupils' phonological skills (using sounds to develop reading skills) are under-developed and, especially in Key Stage 2, pupils lack skill in reading to find specific information.

Standards in writing in different contexts continue to lag behind those in speaking and listening, and reading. They are unsatisfactory in over 10% of classes, most of which are in Key Stage 2. The limited scope of the writing styles teachers encourage pupils to explore, and weak spelling and sentence construction, continue to be the main problems. In some classes taught in Welsh, pupils' speaking and writing skills do not develop as well as they might, particularly where a high percentage of pupils come from English-speaking homes. This is because there is not enough work carried out to strengthen pupils' grasp of subject-specific vocabulary and sentence constructions.

Problems in the provision for literacy overall arise mainly from:

- a lack of strong drive by heads to raise standards;
- the LEAs not getting involved enough; and
- continuing limitations in teachers' professional skills.

The most common areas of weakness are teaching phonics in English, and higher reading skills in both English and Welsh.

Standards of achievement in all areas of literacy are satisfactory or better in nearly 90% of **secondary** schools. Welsh and English departments generally give good attention to literacy skills, but provision across the curriculum is more varied. A number of schools have developed wide-ranging whole-school policies that help subject departments make important contributions to developing literacy through such ideas as subject vocabulary lists, 'word walls' and the testing of key words.

Standards of listening are at least satisfactory in all schools and good, and occasionally very good, in half. In most schools, pupils listen very well in class and are willing to make contributions. Standards of speaking are generally satisfactory and are good in two-fifths of schools. Many pupils speak with confidence, but in some schools there are not enough structured opportunities for pupils to speak at length in class. Teachers sometimes pay too little attention to improving the quality of what pupils have to say.

Standards in reading are generally satisfactory and are good in two-fifths of schools. Most pupils have plenty of opportunities to read, though they read more rarely for long periods or to research information. In writing, standards are unsatisfactory in more than a tenth of schools and good in only a fifth. In some subjects, pupils rarely write at length and their written work is largely confined to short answers.

Good whole-school assessment policies make an important contribution to promoting literacy skills by making sure that all teachers make pupils aware of the need to use language well. Other areas of good practice in schools that pay close attention to literacy include monitoring the 'readability' of worksheets and other reading materials. These schools sometimes focus in-service training (INSET) sessions for staff on topics such as classroom questioning techniques, or setting challenging written tasks.
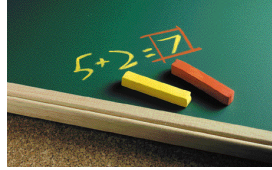
Numeracy

Standards in numeracy in **primary** schools continue to improve. They are at least satisfactory in over 90% of schools, including about 40% where they are good. Many primary schools now give more attention to teaching mathematics directly, and to oral and mental work. We can see the effect on pupils' abilities to calculate quickly, accurately and confidently. Pupils increasingly show that they have a good understanding of the values of numbers and the relationships between them, and can work quickly with numbers. They can measure accurately and handle data effectively in relevant contexts. Continuing weaknesses include:

- pupils' limited ability to recall basic number facts quickly;
- lack of confidence in handling numbers in new situations; and
- not enough development of pupils' numeracy skills in work across the curriculum.

Standards in numeracy are at least satisfactory in almost all **secondary** schools, although they are good in only about one in ten. Most pupils can meet the basic demands for calculation and often cope quite well in tasks that involve handling data. Unsatisfactory work largely comes from less-able pupils. Quite a few of these pupils have weak recall and understanding of multiplication tables, fractions, decimals and percentages. The pupils concerned have difficulties in using basic skills because they tend to rely heavily on partly-memorised procedures and on principles which they do not fully understand. Most pupils use and develop their numeracy skills within activities in a good range of subjects. However, there is too little detailed planning and consultation between subject teachers and mathematics teachers to make best use of these activities. Very few schools have put in place policies to develop numeracy across the curriculum. A few schools are identifying particular numeracy skills that can be used in subjects other than mathematics to improve numeracy in wider contexts.

Information and communications technology (ICT)

In the **primary** years, pupils' ability to use ICT to support their learning across the curriculum varies widely from school to school. Most pupils learn basic skills in Key Stage 1, but a far smaller number go on to develop their skills well enough in Key Stage 2. In about a third of schools, pupils use ICT competently to promote their learning in subjects across the curriculum. In a further 40% of schools, pupils have learned a small range of techniques, but use them mainly to improve the presentation of their work. In around a quarter of schools, pupils have developed few skills and do not appreciate how ICT could help them to work more effectively in a range of subjects. Pupils are using the Internet and electronic mail effectively in a small but rapidly-growing number of schools.

In **secondary** schools, opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum vary within and between schools. Overall, standards are unsatisfactory in about 60% of schools. In a few schools where standards are good or very good, pupils take part in a wide range of activities involving ICT and benefit from challenging and relevant experiences across the curriculum. The best standards in using ICT in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are achieved in design and technology, where they are good or very good in over 30% of departments. Standards are unsatisfactory or poor in over 50% of art, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and religious

education departments, and in more than 40% of English, Welsh (second language) and history departments. In science, they are unsatisfactory or poor in almost 70% of departments and good or very good in under 5%. The planned use of ICT is unsatisfactory or poor in over 50% of English, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education and science departments. Schools need to develop the use of ICT across the curriculum. Factors that affect this development include:

- not enough whole-school planning for using ICT across the curriculum;
- lack of awareness within subject departments about how ICT can be used effectively; and
- issues related to resources, classroom management and teachers' own skills in using ICT.

Standards in National Curriculum subjects, religious education, personal and social education and vocational education

Welsh (first language)

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

KS1	56%	42%	2%
KS2	43%	41%	16%

■ Very Good or Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
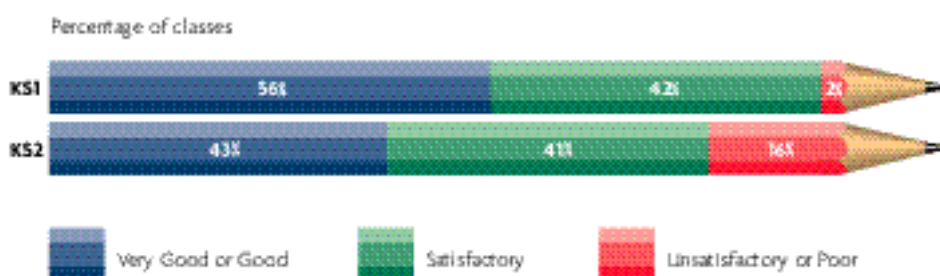
Standards of achievement continue to be higher in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. The percentage of good work has increased in both key stages. Pupils achieve higher standards in oral work and reading than in writing. Where standards are good in oral work, pupils progress well in their ability to express themselves confidently in a number of different contexts and situations. Where there are shortcomings, pupils do not have a good enough grasp of effective communication skills particularly when expressing and justifying points of view. In reading, pupils generally make consistent progress, but a large number in Key Stage 2 have difficulty in understanding and interpreting texts in tasks which need higher reading skills. Features of good standards in writing include well organised and fluent work reflecting a good grasp of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Where there are weaknesses, particularly in Key Stage 2, pupils use a limited range of vocabulary and sentence patterns and do not give enough attention to improving their work by re-drafting it.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

KS3	85%	13%	2%
KS4	63%	33%	4%

■ Very Good or Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
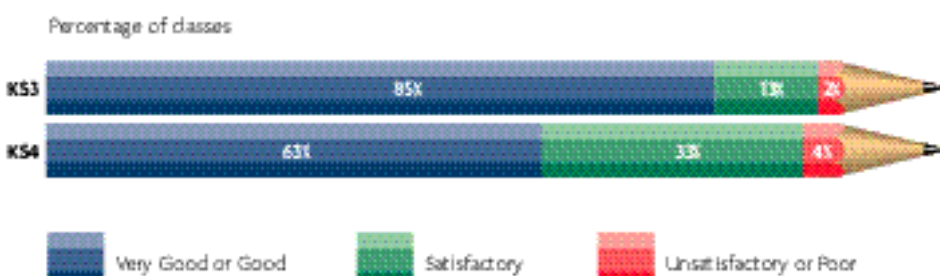
In Key Stage 3, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of good work. In Key Stage 4, there continues to be a high percentage of satisfactory or better work. In both key stages, pupils make generally good progress in oral work. They give extended responses, express opinions well and discuss a number of different texts effectively. Where there are shortcomings, mostly in Key Stage 3, pupils do not have a good enough grasp of sentence structures and cannot adapt their language to suit different situations. In reading, standards continue to be mostly good in both key stages and pupils learn an appropriate range of skills. In writing, standards show an upward trend, though in Key Stage 3 there is less good work than in speaking, listening and viewing, and reading. Most pupils of all abilities write skilfully and accurately in a wide range of different forms. Basic grammatical errors often affect the written work of quite a few pupils, particularly those in middle-ability and lower-ability groups.

English

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	42%	50%	9%
KS2	42%	51%	7%

In Key Stage 1, the percentage of satisfactory or better work has reduced slightly overall. This reduction is rather larger in Year 2, where there is slightly more unsatisfactory writing than last year. This has happened, in particular, where pupils find it difficult to form adequate sentences and to connect ideas and present them in a logical order in their written work. In Key Stage 2, the percentage of good or better work has improved and the 'dip' in the percentage of good or better work at the start of the key stage has reduced. This is mainly as a result of teaching reading and writing skills more directly. Pupils' oral skills often develop well, particularly where the contribution of role-play and drama is good. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 do not receive enough feedback on the quality of their oral work and this limits the progress they make in developing their skills further. In both key stages, pupils are developing more strategies for reading texts and have increased their appreciation of how texts are structured and organised. At the start of Key Stage 2, weaker readers do not receive enough direct teaching of reading skills and there are not enough challenges for readers who are more able. Writing continues to be the weakest area, particularly amongst boys. However, the introduction of more direct teaching about different kinds of writing is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement in many schools.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

KS3	42%	50%	7%
KS4	48%	47%	5%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
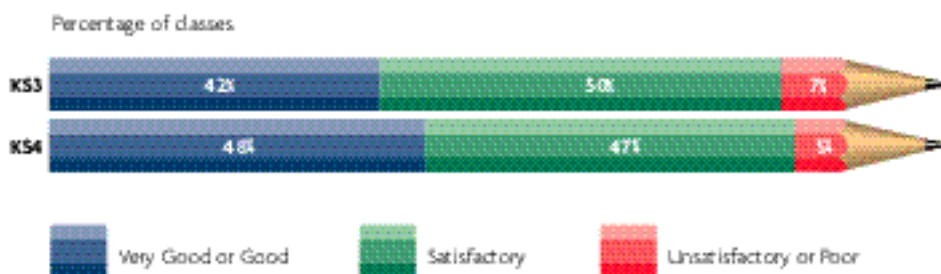
In Key Stage 3, the improvement in standards over the last few years has levelled out, while standards in Key Stage 4 are similar to those we reported last year. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of good or better work in Year 7, often as the result of an increased emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills when they enter secondary school. Standards of speaking and listening are good in most schools, although quite a few pupils, particularly in middle-ability sets or groups, do not get actively involved in oral work. Standards of reading are also generally good. Many pupils can read fluently, understand and appreciate a range of texts, and respond critically to an author's style. There is often not enough use of the school library as a resource for wider reading. Overall, writing is still the weakest area of pupils' work. Schools often do not place enough emphasis on improving the technical accuracy of pupils' writing. Nevertheless, many pupils continue to perform well in tackling many different kinds of writing.

Mathematics

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

KS1	48%	48%	4%
KS2	43%	50%	7%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
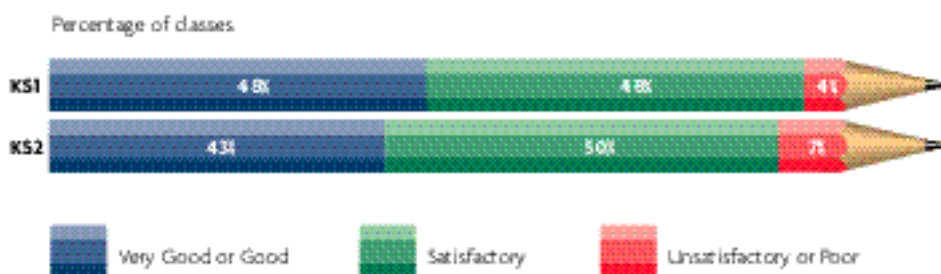
The amount of good and very good work has increased significantly this year, particularly in Key Stage 1. In both key stages, an increased emphasis on developing mathematical thinking skills and quick oral responses is leading to a clear improvement in pupils' confidence and achievement. In Key Stage 1, most pupils develop a good understanding of basic concepts of number, measure, and shape and space. They use numbers confidently and mathematical terms correctly. They develop an awareness of the need for standard measures, and recognise and name simple shapes and their properties. In Key Stage 2, pupils develop appropriate number skills, though some lack confidence in using number facts in different contexts. Most pupils work successfully across a good range of mathematical tasks. A common weakness is that pupils cannot develop strategies for solving unfamiliar problems or carrying out mathematical investigations. Many pupils who are more able achieve high standards, but others are held back by a lack of suitable challenge in the work.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	40%	51%	9%
KS4	36%	55%	9%

In both key stages, standards of achievement are slightly higher than last year and considerably higher than two years ago. Most pupils have a satisfactory or better understanding of mathematical concepts and can solve problems similar to ones they have practised thoroughly. Using and applying mathematics is still the weakest area. Despite the improvement in standards, there are still important shortcomings in over half the classes we inspected. The most prominent of these shortcomings are similar to those reported in previous years. They include:

- an inability to remember important number facts rapidly and accurately;
- a lack of understanding of number operations; and
- a lack of fluency in mental arithmetic and using formulae and equations.

In classes where standards are high, pupils show confidence in their skills of understanding and using mathematics. They can identify and discuss mathematical strategies to solve problems. Teaching that uses pupils' responses to assess and improve their understanding contributes significantly to raising standards, but does not happen as often as it should.

Science

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	49%	46%	5%
KS2	44%	48%	7%
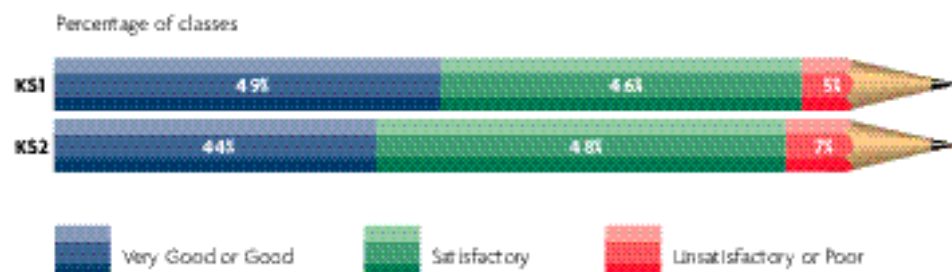
In Key Stage 1, the amount of good work continues to increase steadily, the gains being greatest in Year 2. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes. They develop an appropriate vocabulary for naming and describing things and a firm grounding in routine practical skills. In Key Stage 2, there is less unsatisfactory work, particularly in Year 3. However, progress towards increasing the amount of good work has slowed in Year 5 and Year 6. Pupils continue to make satisfactory or better progress in their grasp of the broad range of scientific concepts. In about a half of classes in both key stages, including those where work is satisfactory overall, pupils do not always understand the work well enough to give lengthy, reasoned explanations orally and in writing. These weaknesses often

happen where pupils have too few opportunities to carry out investigations. Pupils in both key stages often lack the experience needed to investigate their own questions without depending too much on the teacher. Their scientific enquiry skills do not develop enough and often lag behind other areas of their work.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	43%	45%	12%
KS4	41%	48%	12%

Standards in both key stages are higher than those achieved two years ago, but last year's increased percentage of good or very good work has not been maintained. Standards are slightly higher in biology and chemistry than in physics. Standards are highest in Year 7, where pupils generally respond with enthusiasm as they work in laboratories for the first time. After this, about 40% of pupils continue to achieve a thorough understanding of scientific concepts. The other pupils are not challenged to work with enough rigour and do not grasp the scientific ideas behind much of what they do. Pupils' achievement is greatest in classes where learning in science goes hand in hand with learning in the skills of literacy, numeracy and using information and communication technology (ICT). In these classes, pupils listen thoughtfully and speak and write about ideas as well as stating facts and providing descriptions. They analyse and present data effectively and consider their findings critically. Very few pupils use ICT effectively to find and handle information.

Art

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	56%	43%	2%
KS2	48%	42%	9%

In Key Stage 1, there is overall improvement since last year. The amount of good and very good work has increased. Pupils generally use a good range of materials and techniques. They work from observation, memory, feelings and imagination. They develop practical skills and a creative understanding of works of art - mainly paintings. Standards in Key Stage 2 are broadly similar to those we reported last year. Pupils extend their understanding of art and practise their skills in visual communication and expression effectively, often in relation to class topics. They generally show they have improving levels of control in handling materials and can readily discuss their own work and that of others. In about a half of schools, shortcomings in both key stages include:

- a narrow and over-directed curriculum;
- pupils not reviewing and modifying their work;
- teachers not sharing their assessment criteria; and
- not enough attention paid to the arts and crafts of Wales.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

KS3	45%	45%	10%
KS4	65%	29%	6%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
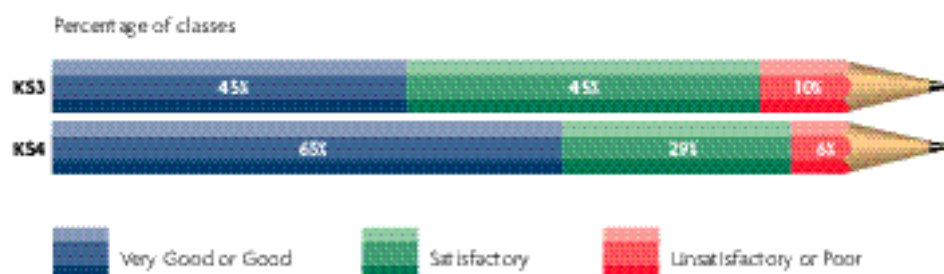
In both key stages, there have been increases in the percentages of satisfactory and better work. In Key Stage 3, the quality of observational drawing and standards of craft skills are generally good. Painting skills are poor in a few classes and sketchbooks are not always used well. Standards in making are better than those in investigating and understanding. Pupils generally develop some useful knowledge of European art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but do not express their own opinions or develop skills of critical analysis enough. The amount of good and very good work has increased greatly in Key Stage 4. In this key stage, pupils make good progress in drawing from observation. Their work is often imaginative and exploratory. Pupils handle materials and media well. They can complete tasks independently and confidently review and arrange their work. Pupils' use of computers is improving. Most schools use visits to galleries effectively to stimulate pupils' imagination and to help them with their use of techniques and treatment of themes.

Design and technology

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

KS1	40%	50%	10%
KS2	34%	51%	15%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor

Standards are broadly similar to those achieved last year, although there has been a reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory work. Cross-curricular links, especially with English, mathematics, science and art, continue to improve and have a positive effect on standards and on developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving. In the best instances, pupils investigate and evaluate ready-made products and use the knowledge gained in their own designing and making. They use construction kits to model ideas and experiment with linkages and simple control devices. More and more emphasis is placed on the accuracy of measurement and the quality of tasks completed as they progress. In almost all schools, pupils have opportunities to design and make using food, card, timber, textiles and, in some cases, plastics. Pupils talk well about their work in group and class discussions. They use their skills well in drawing graphs to communicate their ideas.

Shortcomings include:

- weaknesses in design skills;
- weaknesses in planning practical work; and
- the limited use of ICT to support designing and making activities.

Standards are sometimes restricted by low teacher expectations and the limited range and quality of materials.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

| | Very Good or Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory or Poor |
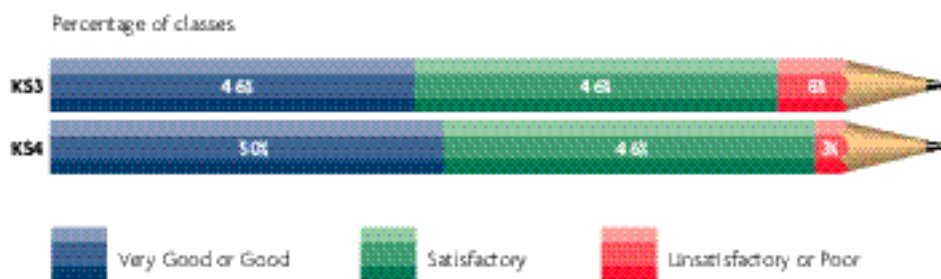
Standards of achievement continue to improve in both key stages, the greatest improvement being in Key Stage 4. In about 20% of schools where standards are very good, pupils in both key stages use their knowledge of making and control in suitably challenging situations. They use a wide range of techniques, including ICT, to design and make good-quality products. In the best instances, pupils use computer assisted design and manufacturing techniques confidently and well. Shortcomings continue to include a poor understanding of materials and processes, and weaknesses in design skills, particularly in Key Stage 3. Using ICT to extend or improve design, communication and practical outcomes is increasing, but is good or very good in only about a third of departments. In a significant number of classes, standards of achievement are restricted by design tasks that are not challenging enough and by teaching that limits creativity.

Geography

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

| | Very Good or Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory or Poor |
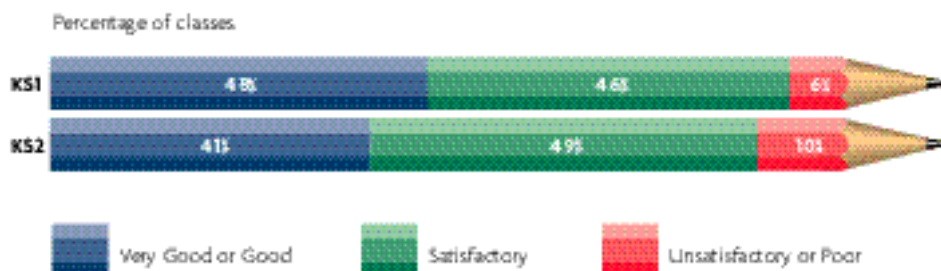
In both key stages, there has been an increase since last year in the amount of good work. Most pupils achieve good standards in their work on maps, the weather and the relationships between people and their environment. In both key stages, pupils have a good knowledge of the geography of their own area, but few pupils in Key Stage 2 know enough about the geography of Wales. There have been more improvements in pupils' work on localities (small-scale areas) in less economically

developed countries. There have also been some improvements in pupils' knowledge and understanding of a contrasting locality in Wales or the UK, though this is still a main area of weakness in many schools. Good standards overall are most common in fieldwork and enquiry-based studies in the classroom, where pupils provide explanations for their conclusions. In a few classes, not enough attention is given to important areas of the subject and the geographical objectives of the work are not clear.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	40%	55%	5%
KS4	49%	47%	4%

The main change since last year has been a reduction in the percentage of unsatisfactory work in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, pupils generally achieve good standards in gaining geographical skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the relationships between people and their environment. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the geographical themes identified in National Curriculum (NC) Programmes of Study (PoS), but quite a few cannot use their knowledge and understanding in a suitable range of places. A main weakness in Key Stage 3 is the lack of attention given to using skills in fieldwork and geographical enquiries. In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well in most areas of the subject, but few use their understanding of geographical patterns and processes effectively. Good work in both key stages is associated with well-planned oral activities and writing tasks in which pupils have to describe and explain.

History

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	57%	38%	5%
KS2	53%	41%	6%
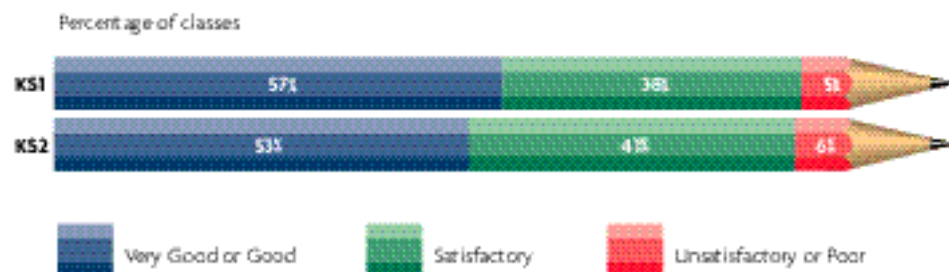
There has been a substantial increase in the percentage of good work in Key Stage 1. Many pupils in this key stage develop a good basic understanding of the passage of time and make thoughtful comparisons between life in the past and life in the present. Most show a good grasp of change over time and can recall outlines of events. In Key Stage 2, there has been considerable improvement in the percentage of good work in Year 3 and Year 4. Important contributory factors to this are the slimmed-down curriculum, the effect of visits and the well-planned use of visitors

to the school, some of which involve historical role play. A good percentage of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 work confidently with primary sources of evidence (evidence from the time) and develop good levels of knowledge and understanding. The higher achievers carry out useful enquiries and record these well in a number of different ways. Quite a few Key Stage 2 pupils have a reasonable level of knowledge but find difficulties in using it.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	54%	41%	5%
KS4	66%	33%	1%
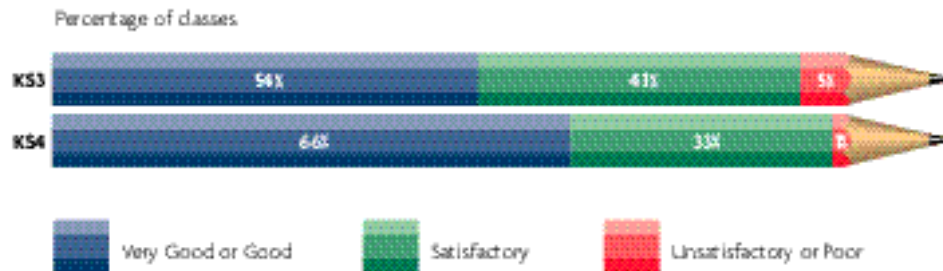
The increase in the amount of good and very good work recorded over the previous two years has been maintained. In Key Stage 3, good and very good standards are most common in Year 9. Much of the best work in Year 9 arises from the twentieth-century history unit, which creates high levels of interest. It involves focused enquiries and varied, clear communication of findings. In Year 8, more of an emphasis on developing work around personalities and enquiry-based narrative has made the curriculum more accessible for many pupils. Throughout both key stages, the more able pupils progress well in developing historical skills and, to a lesser extent, in learning and using historical knowledge and concepts. The achievement of pupils of average ability in Key Stage 4 continues to improve significantly. Oral work is still a relative weakness in Key Stage 4. Work relating to interpretations of history continues to be a significant weakness, especially in Key Stage 3.

Information technology (IT)

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	33%	53%	13%
KS2	27%	49%	24%
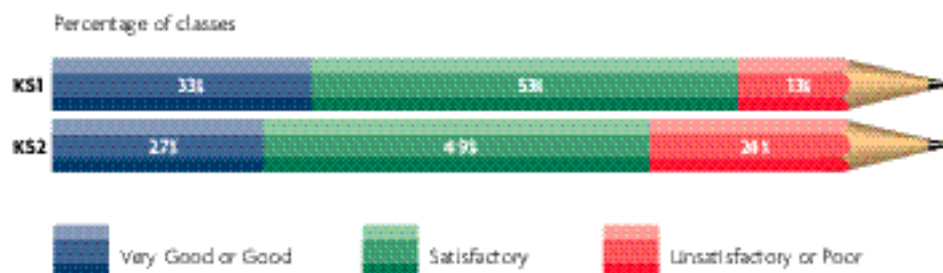
The percentage of Key Stage 1 classes in which standards are unsatisfactory has reduced considerably. In Key Stage 2, the percentages of good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory work are largely the same as last year. In classes in both key stages where standards are unsatisfactory, and to a lesser extent where they are satisfactory overall, the range of pupils' experiences is too narrow and often involves mainly simple word-processing. Pupils tend to use the computer for tasks that do little to improve their IT skills. They do not use ICT purposefully to carry out tasks arising from work in other subjects. Good standards are most common in schools where:

- teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach the subject;
- the scheme of work promotes progression in pupils' learning; and
- there is enough hardware and software available.

In these schools, pupils use ICT for a wide range of tasks to improve their learning in many subjects. They edit text and graphics and manipulate and display data, adapting them thoughtfully for different purposes and audiences. They monitor the environment, control robots and use simulations to investigate. They use information from the Internet and communicate with other schools using electronic mail. In many schools, the Welsh Office Multi-media and Portables Initiative (WOMPI) has played an important role in giving pupils confidence to use computers for a wide range of purposes.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	40%	48%	12%
KS4	45%	51%	4%
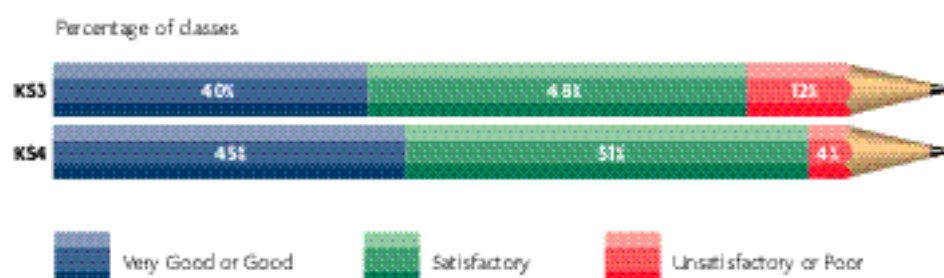
The amount of good and very good work has fallen in both key stages since last year, though not back to the level of the previous year. The amount of unsatisfactory work has increased in Key Stage 3. The highest percentage of this is in Year 7. Standards achieved in communicating and handling information are good or very good in both key stages in over half the schools. In Key Stage 3, there continue to be weaknesses at times in this area of work. The work in controlling, measuring and monitoring is of a considerably lower standard and is unsatisfactory overall. These weaknesses often result from a narrow range of experiences and a lack of challenge in some of the tasks. As a result, pupils do not develop their abilities across the whole IT curriculum. In about a fifth of schools, standards of achievement are negatively affected by limited access to good-quality resources.

Modern foreign languages

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	43%	51%	6%
KS4	39%	55%	6%
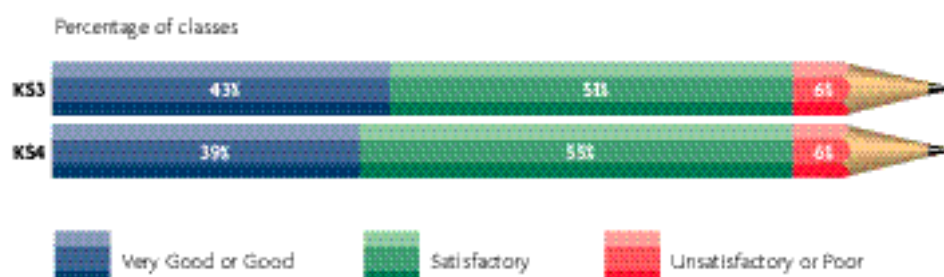
The percentage of classes in which pupils achieve good or very good standards has fallen in both key stages, with a marked reduction in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Key Stage 4 in the schools we inspected this year are achieving higher standards than those in

the same schools in 1993-1994, when we first inspected them. However, these standards do not match those achieved in the schools we inspected last year. There are very good standards in only 2% of classes. There is still too much variation in achievement between the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Standards continue to be highest in listening. Speaking continues to be weak, particularly in Key Stage 4. In reading in both key stages, and in writing in Key Stage 3, pupils achieve good standards in less than a third of schools. The lack of attention to writing in Key Stage 3 limits progress in all four language skills in both key stages. Writing improves in Key Stage 4, when it generally receives more emphasis. Overall, in both key stages, pupils do not have a good enough understanding of the basic grammar of the language that they study.

Music

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	50%	43%	7%
KS2	48%	43%	9%

In Key Stage 1, there has been a small increase in the percentage of work reaching good and very good standards. All areas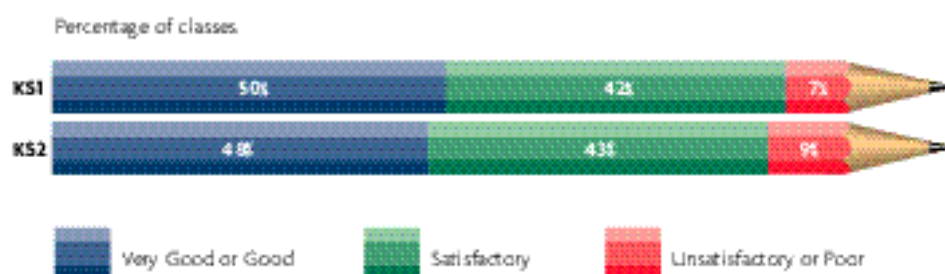 of the subject have improved, especially singing. In Key Stage 2, standards are broadly similar to those achieved last year. There have been improvements in standards of performing, with substantial increases in the amount of good and very good work in both singing and instrumental performance. In both key stages, the work in most classes involves a good variety of activities in which performing, composing and appraising are suitably mixed. The higher standards we reported this year reflect improved lesson planning and teachers' increasing confidence in tackling most areas of the subject. Despite the improvements we have noted in some areas, there are still common weaknesses. Appraising music is the weakest area of the subject. The work in this area often lacks a clear focus on the elements of music. In some Key Stage 2 classes there is little progression in the work in performing and composing.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	32%	56%	12%
KS4	43%	48%	9%
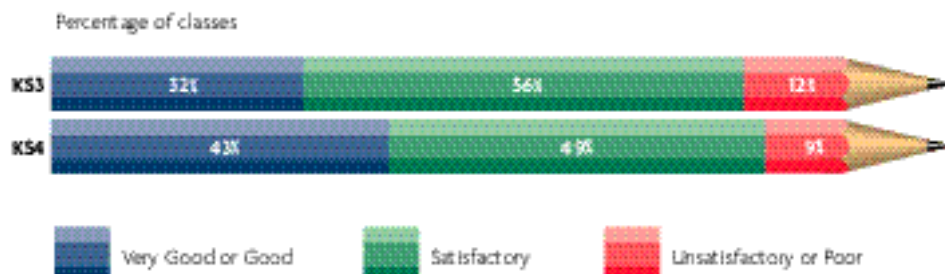
In Key Stage 3, there has been a slight fall in overall standards. Standards of singing have improved, but there has been a substantial drop in standards of appraising

music. In Key Stage 4, there has been a substantial reduction overall in the amount of good work. Standards of appraising music have improved. The largest reduction in the amount of good work has been in performing, although this continues to be stronger than other areas of work in this key stage. To some extent, in both key stages, the generally lower standards this year reflect weaknesses in the teaching. Some of the work in appraising in Key Stage 3 involves testing pupils' listening skills at the expense of more direct teaching and learning. Pupils make little progress in appraising music when they do not have enough opportunities to talk in depth about it. Shortages of musical instruments have a negative effect on the work in more than three-fifths of schools. There have been improvements in the attention given to the music of Wales, but the use of ICT is generally unsatisfactory.

Physical education

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	48%	46%	6%
KS2	49%	46%	5%

Standards in Key Stage 1 are broadly similar to those achieved last year. There has been a substantial increase in the amount of good work in Key Stage 2, largely as a result of better planning and organisation by teachers. In both key stages, standards in performance continue to improve. Almost all of the work in games is satisfactory or better. Standards in pupils' planning and evaluating have also improved, although there continue to be problems in a few classes. Most work includes a suitable range of activities combining performing, planning and evaluating, but there is often not enough progression in planning and evaluating throughout each key stage. In both key stages, most pupils take part enthusiastically and understand the benefits of exercise. However, in Key Stage 2 many pupils are overweight and make only limited gains in strength, stamina, speed and flexibility. Shortcomings in facilities and resources contribute to unsatisfactory work, although weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge, especially in gymnastics and dance, are also responsible. These factors limit many schools' ability to provide the full range of activities set out in the National Curriculum.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	43%	47%	10%
KS4	36%	51%	14%
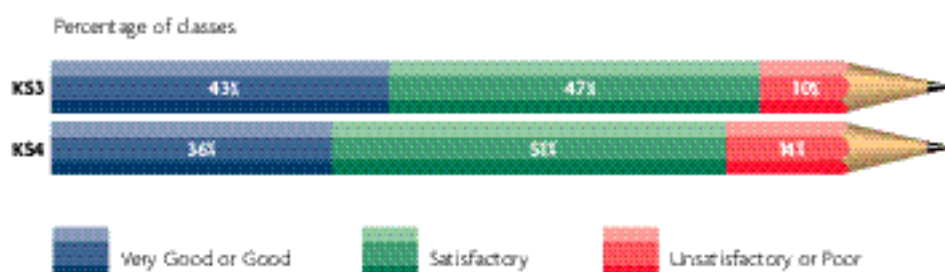
In Key Stage 3, there has been an increase in the percentage of good or very good work. Improved planning by teachers is having a beneficial effect on standards. Nonetheless, there is still too much variation in the quality of experiences provided for boys and girls. As a result, girls generally achieve higher standards in gymnastics and dance while boys continue to achieve higher standards in games. In Key Stage 4, there has been a large reduction in the percentage of good work and a substantial increase in the amount of unsatisfactory or poor work. The poorer work this year has mainly arisen from classes where low expectations result in lack of physical and mental challenge, and where teachers do not build upon the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils have already gained. Often, there is not enough lesson time for the subject and this limits the standards that pupils can achieve. More pupils are taking examination courses and this has a beneficial effect on the standard of pupils' work. Performance in GCSE examination classes is often of a good or very good standard. In both key stages, pupils' fitness and endurance levels are often unsatisfactory and limit the work carried out.

Welsh (second language)

Key Stages 1 and 2

Percentage of classes

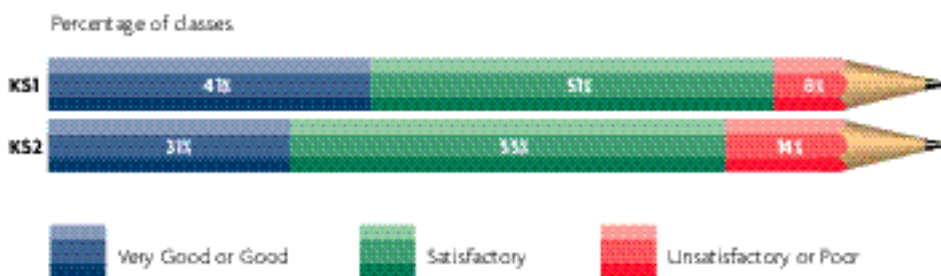|	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	41%	51%	8%
KS2	31%	55%	14%

Very Good or Good   Satisfactory   Unsatisfactory or Poor

In Key Stage 1, standards are broadly similar to those achieved last year. In Key Stage 2, standards are slightly higher than last year, with more good work and less work which is unsatisfactory. In both key stages, where standards in speaking and listening are good, pupils ask questions and make increasing, spontaneous use of Welsh during lessons. They can adapt and use their language skills in dialogues and role play. In classes where standards of reading are good, pupils willingly turn to books and read confidently and meaningfully on their own. Common weaknesses include a lack of confidence in speaking Welsh outside structured situations and not enough progress within key stages, particularly in Key Stage 2. There continues to be unevenness in progress across a range of reading and writing skills in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	41%	47%	12%
KS4	42%	53%	5%

Very Good or Good   Satisfactory   Unsatisfactory or Poor
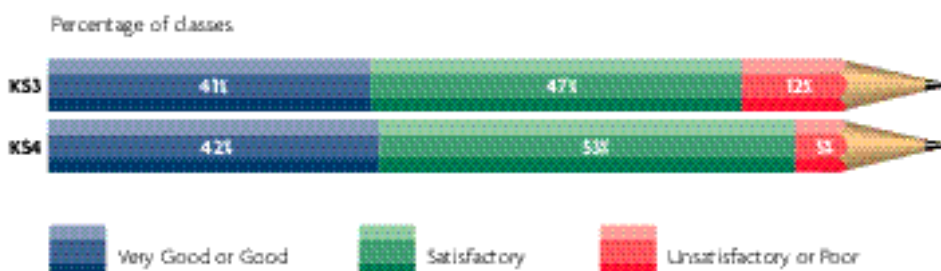
Overall standards are broadly similar to those achieved last year. Pupils generally make good progress across the key stages in using a range of sentence structures to communicate their ideas orally. In classes where there are only limited opportunities to strengthen and practise vocabulary and phrases, pupils' responses are not as fluent. An increasing number of pupils can read aloud with good inflection and expression, but the percentage of pupils who read independently is still relatively small. In writing, good standards are characterised by extended responses, including a range of purposes, and an ability to write clearly using a variety of sentence patterns with good accuracy. Where standards are no better than satisfactory, pupils use only a limited range of sentence patterns and vocabulary. Many of these pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length in their own words. In a significant percentage of classes, pupils' ability to plan and improve the content and accuracy of their written work through re-drafting is still not being developed.

Religious education

Key Stages 1 and 2

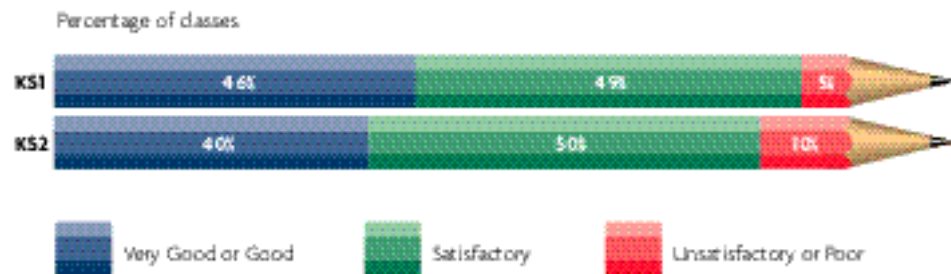Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS1	46%	49%	5%
KS2	40%	50%	10%

Standards are broadly similar to those achieved last year. All schools plan on the basis of the locally-agreed syllabus, but many do not achieve an appropriate balance between different aspects of the work. In both key stages, contacts with places of worship and faith communities improve pupils' understanding of worship and the significance of religious celebrations and rites. In the process, pupils become familiar with the important features of these communities. Pupils' awareness of religious authority develops as a result of meeting local religious leaders and looking at sacred books. In Key Stage 1, pupils respond well to questions about human relationships and responsibilities for the natural world. Their religious understanding is largely based on Christianity and depends heavily on stories from the Bible. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils gain an appropriate understanding of the significance of Jesus for Christians and express their own beliefs and opinions clearly. In the best work, pupils use a good religious vocabulary and can relate their own views to those of religious believers. In Key Stage 2 there is more emphasis on studying non-Christian faiths, but pupils often gain only a superficial understanding of them. In both key stages, the range of writing that pupils produce is often limited.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

	Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
KS3	47%	45%	7%
KS4	48%	41%	12%
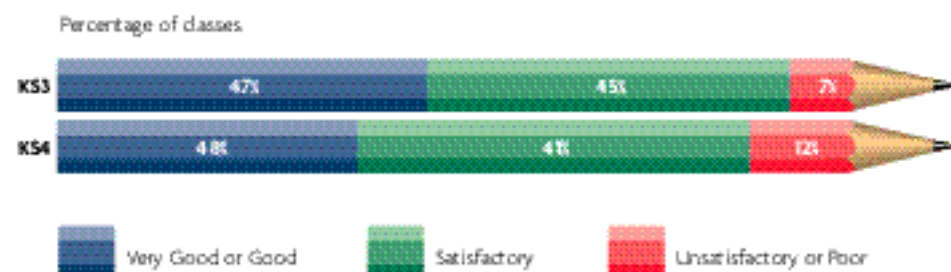
Standards in Key Stage 3 are broadly similar to those we reported last year. In Key Stage 4 they are substantially better. Nevertheless, in a few classes in Key Stage 4, learning activities do not match pupils' ability. As a result, there is a lot of under-achievement, particularly among the more able and less able pupils. In Key Stage 3, most pupils have a good or better knowledge and understanding of religion, but significantly fewer can confidently handle moral and ethical questions raised by human experience. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are more commonly able to handle these questions effectively. In quite a few classes in this key stage, pupils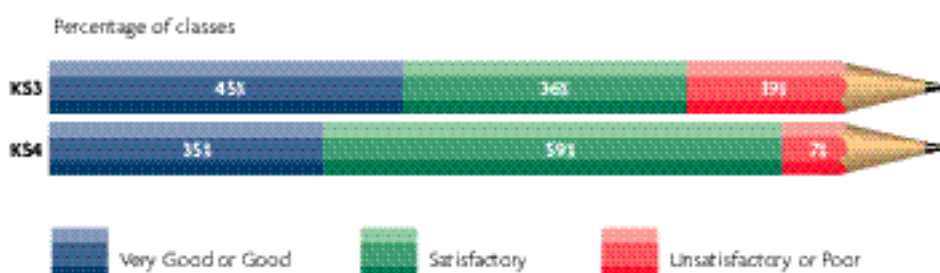' knowledge and understanding are not good. This is especially the case in statutory lessons, where provision is often not good enough. In both key stages, the ability to investigate, research and express personal responses is unsatisfactory in quite a few classes. Almost without exception, oral work is at least satisfactory. There are often shortcomings in written work, especially in non-examination classes in Key Stage 4. The place of the subject in the curriculum is unsatisfactory in almost a half of all schools, mainly because of inappropriate staffing or not enough time spent on each part of the subject. These schools do not fully meet the requirements of the locally-agreed syllabus.

Personal and social education (PSE)

Key Stages 3 and 4

Percentage of classes

KS3	45%	36%	19%
KS4	35%	59%	7%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor

In secondary schools, pupils' personal and social development is promoted through the life and work of the school, both within and outside lessons. Most schools provide a PSE programme or pastoral curriculum that provides guidance on topics which are relevant to pupils. Most schools have well-structured programmes covering a good range of issues, including health education and careers education and guidance. About a third of the 1998-1999 secondary school inspection reports provided evaluations of PSE as a curriculum subject. The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in most classes and often good. The standards achieved in careers education and guidance in Key Stage 4 are slightly better overall than in PSE as a whole. There are good standards in classes where pupils have plenty of opportunities to share ideas and extend their thinking about relevant issues. In these classes, pupils develop key skills, especially in communication, working with others and specific study skills such as researching information. In classes where standards are unsatisfactory, the main emphasis is on getting information and filling in worksheets. As a result, pupils have few opportunities to work together and develop a deeper understanding of the issues raised. In these classes, teachers do not have a clear understanding of content and teaching methods, and many lack appropriate training in these areas. In a few schools, the PSE programme is poorly co-ordinated and its aims are not well defined. A few schools do not provide enough curriculum time for PSE.

GNVQ and vocational courses

Percentage of classes

KS4	54%	46%	

Very Good or Good   Satisfactory   Unsatisfactory or Poor
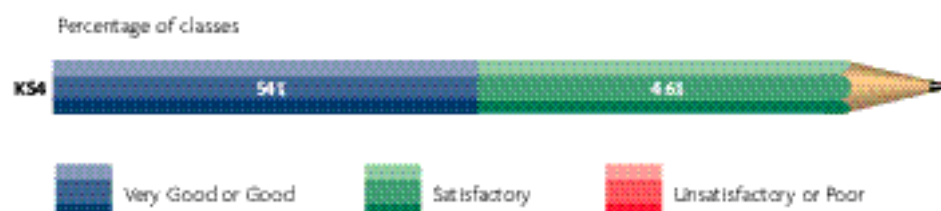
Standards of achievement in GNVQ courses have improved for the second year running and are more consistent across vocational areas than in the past. The percentage of good work has increased a great deal over the last three years. Nearly all the work we inspected is at least satisfactory and there are outstanding features in about 8% of classes. The most popular courses are in business, manufacturing, and health and social care, although take-up is gradually increasing in engineering, construction, art and design and leisure and tourism. Pupils on IT courses are particularly well motivated. Where standards are good, lesson planning is detailed and there are clear aims and appropriately-challenging tasks. Pupils explain their work and use a range of experiences effectively, including industrial visits and visiting specialist speakers. Pupils also use a wide range of materials in their practical work and on-going assessment helps with their progression. Where there are weaknesses, these are most often associated with poor attendance. The quality of written work is often variable. Pupils on foundation level courses often have problems with spelling and putting sentences together. Some have difficulty expressing themselves clearly and do not meet deadlines.

Standards in classes for those over 16

	Very good or good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or poor
Welsh (first language)	80%	20%	0%
English	66%	33%	1%
Mathematics	63%	35%	2%
Science	52%	45%	3%
Art	66%	32%	2%
Design and technology	54%	43%	3%
Geography	66%	34%	0%
History	68%	33%	0%
Information technology (IT)	45%	50%	5%
Modern foreign languages	48%	52%	0%
Music	60%	33%	7%
Physical education	45%	49%	6%
Welsh (second language)	68%	32%	0%
Religious education	59%	38%	3%
GNVQ and vocational courses	46%	54%	0%

In **Welsh (first language)**, standards are still high. Students generally discuss literary works with fluency and maturity. In the better work, they use background reading effectively to support their analysis of text. In writing, most students show that they are aware of structure and purpose, and express themselves clearly. Only a few produce work which has flair, originality and a high level of accuracy. In **English**, there has been a marked increase in the percentage of good work and very little work is unsatisfactory. Students generally develop an appropriate range of critical

approaches to texts and to studying language, often combined with strong personal involvement with the work. Students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are generally good.

Standards of achievement in **mathematics** are similar to those of last year and are considerably better than those of the previous year. Most students following A-level courses have good mathematical understanding, knowledge and skills. There is less evidence this year of difficulty in using algebraic symbols. Where there are shortcomings in standards, the teaching puts too much emphasis on using learnt techniques with not enough discussion of the principles and problem-solving strategies. Standards in **science** are not as high as those achieved last year, but still show a large improvement on the year before. They are still highest in classes where students are encouraged to think critically about both theory and experimental work and express their ideas orally and in writing.

In **art**, investigation and research are thorough and practical work is creative and skilful. There is a wide range of design and craft work and, where computer-aided art and design (CAAD) is a feature of the department's provision, students achieve high standards of work in computer-generated design. In **design and technology**, most students continue to achieve good or very good standards in designing and making. They use analytical skills together with a good range of technical knowledge effectively to support their design projects. In some instances, projects are set in an industrial context and, where this happens, standards are often very good. In most schools there is not enough use of ICT to improve the work.

The percentage of good work in **geography** is the same as last year, but there is no unsatisfactory work. The main factor in this has been the increased amount of thematic work that is set in the context of real places. Well-planned fieldwork enquiries make a good contribution to high standards. Overall standards in **history** are still high, despite a slight reduction in the amount of good and very good work. Most students have a secure grasp of issues and events, and what caused them. Many can develop a range of explanations, but far fewer can provide convincing argument to support their particular interpretations. The quality of students' oral work has improved, but is not as high as that of their written work.

The practical project work of students on **information technology** examination courses is often of a high quality, including problem-solving approaches that involve using a range of knowledge and skills. The main weaknesses are related to a lack of depth in students' understanding of theory. Standards in **modern foreign languages** are similar to those of last year. They are highest in listening and reading, and weakest in speaking and writing.

Standards in **music** are broadly similar to those achieved last year. Performing continues to be the strongest area of the work. 'Aural perception' is the weakest. However, even in this area standards are good or very good in half the schools we inspected. In **physical education**, students in most GCE A-level and BTEC sports science classes make particularly good progress in learning observational and analytical skills. They achieve good standards when they have to extend their knowledge and understanding through using appropriate research skills, often involving using ICT. Opportunities for most students to take part in recreational sports activities are becoming limited in more and more schools.

Standards in **Welsh (second language)** are broadly similar to those achieved last year. In general, students can discuss current topics and literary texts with confidence, although in a few classes they rely heavily on written notes to support their oral contributions. Students' written work is generally well-organised, but a few pupils do not have a secure grasp of grammar. There has been little change since last year in the standards achieved in **religious education**. In A-level religious studies classes, students develop good analytical and critical skills. In most schools, students in religious education classes where there is no examination make limited progress in relation to the locally-agreed syllabus. This is usually because provision is poor or timetabling arrangements do not allow students to have lessons regularly throughout the year.

Standards achieved in **GNVQ and vocational courses** are broadly similar to those we reported last year. Where standards are good, students can relate their learning to realistic contexts and use evidence from a wide range of sources well, including local businesses and case studies. However, students' written work, though relevant in terms of content, is often affected by weak expression and technical mistakes.

Standards in special schools

Percentage of classes

Very Good or Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or Poor
46%	45%	9%

The overall profile of standards achieved is similar to that of last year. The percentage of good work has been maintained, but there continues to be little very good work. The percentage of unsatisfactory work varies widely, from 20% of classes in some schools to none in others. Within schools, standards often vary widely from class to class and between key stages.

Standards achieved by children under five are good in nearly two-thirds of schools and satisfactory in the rest. Children's overall progress has improved and is now more consistent across all six areas of the desirable outcomes for learning.

In Key Stages 1 to 4, standards in English, Welsh (first language), mathematics and science are satisfactory overall, but there has been a reduction since last year in the percentage of good work. In **English**, pupils' oral skills are often well developed, but the lack of use of communication aids often hampers the progress of pupils with complex or profound difficulties. Younger pupils usually make a good start in early reading skills, but more limited progress after this. Progress is slow when too little time is spent on teaching reading and the range of material used is too narrow. Pupils' writing skills continue to have shortcomings in all but a small percentage of schools. In **Welsh**, there are good features in oral work and reading, but shortcomings in the quality and quantity of writing. In **mathematics**, there have been improvements in pupils' ability to use skills and knowledge in other subjects and in real-life problems. However, in a few schools, pupils' numeracy skills do not progress well enough and older pupils often have a poor grasp of basic facts. In the best work in **science**, pupils learn appropriate skills, knowledge and vocabulary and can observe, identify, ask questions and predict. Older pupils' ability to carry out practical work involving experiments and investigation is often limited.

In the non-core foundation subjects, standards continue to vary across subjects and key stages. In **Welsh (second language)**, standards are generally satisfactory and occasionally good, especially in oral work. In **modern foreign languages** standards are usually good and sometimes very good. Overall standards in the **other subjects** and in **religious education** are satisfactory. Often, standards in a subject are good in one class or key stage, but overall progress is not consistent. There have been improvements in **music**, particularly in composing and performing, and in **IT**, though the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is rarely well developed. In **design and technology** there is some good work in food technology, but, overall, skills in design and evaluation are limited.

Standards for students over 16 are generally satisfactory. There is some inconsistency across subjects and areas of learning, but students often make good progress in work-related education and in using knowledge and skills in real-life settings.

Quality of education provided

Education for the under-fives

Maintained schools

The overall quality of educational provision for three- and four-year-olds is satisfactory or better in just over 90% of maintained schools and classes. This represents a slight improvement on last year's achievements and includes a significant increase in the percentage of good or very good provision. There is evidence of good curriculum planning, often based on themes. The best work takes full account of the desirable outcomes for learning. There are clearly specified learning aims for all activities and lessons, and children experience a good range of stimulating activities in the six areas. In about a third of classes there are shortcomings that limit children's progression in some or all of the six areas of learning. Sometimes the scheme of work does not provide enough guidance to make sure the progression is consistent across all areas. In some classes, children have too little scope to explore, make choices and decisions, and talk about their learning. Too often, role play does not contribute enough to developing language skills and the work does not take advantage of opportunities to reinforce mathematical skills across the curriculum. Limits on space, both indoors and outdoors, and a lack of suitable resources that offer children physical and mental challenges, often affect children's physical development.

Non-maintained nurseries and playgroups

During the year, we inspected 40 non-maintained nurseries and playgroups under the requirements of the 1998 Schools Standards and Framework Act. The overall quality of educational provision was at least satisfactory in all of the nurseries and playgroups, and good in just over half. However, there are significant weaknesses in planning and assessment in nearly half the settings we inspected. These weaknesses affect continuity and progression in children's learning so that many do not achieve their full potential. This is particularly the case in developing language, literacy and communication skills and in mathematical development. The provision for children's personal and social development, and for their spiritual, moral and cultural development, is generally good.

Quality of teaching

Primary schools

Percentage of classes

47% 45% 8%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor
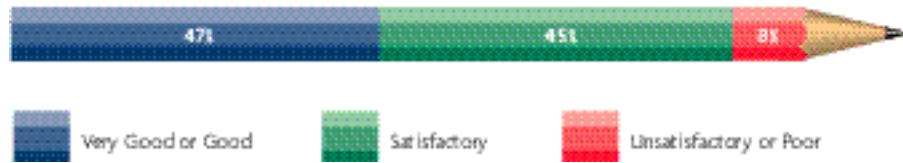
The quality of teaching has improved slightly during the year. The percentage of good or very good teaching has increased, especially in Year 5 and Year 6. In overall terms, an increasing number of lessons in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 involve effective planning, good expectations of pupils and appropriate teaching methods. The most effective lessons are brisk and have a clear structure which the pupils understand and can follow. Where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, the work does not effectively match pupils' developing needs and abilities. Unsuitable teaching methods and classroom organisation are the main weaknesses. Expectations of pupils are good in nearly a half of classes, but not as high as they might be in the rest. In over a half of classes, teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach. In around 10% of classes, teachers do not have enough expertise in their subject to allow them to promote depth as well as breadth in pupils' learning. This is particularly the case in IT and design and technology.

Secondary schools

Percentage of classes

55% 39% 6%

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor

In secondary schools, the quality of teaching is similar to last year. Teaching is good or very good in about half the lessons we inspected in Key Stage 3, and slightly higher in Key Stage 4. The highest percentage of unsatisfactory teaching is in Key Stage 3. Teachers' specialist knowledge is a positive factor in three-quarters of lessons, and planning and organisation are good in about a half. The weakest area of teaching is still matching the work to pupils' needs. In just over half the lessons we inspected, the teachers' expectations are too low and the range of teaching techniques and strategies used is narrow. The quality of teaching for those over 16 is still high. It is good or very good in two-thirds of lessons, including 12% that have outstanding features. In all key stages, there is a close link between effective teaching and providing challenging opportunities for pupils and students to develop and use skills in literacy, numeracy and using information and communications technology.

Assessment, recording and reporting

Primary schools

The overall quality of assessment and record-keeping for children aged under five years is satisfactory or better in about 80% of schools. We found the main weaknesses occur when teachers do not use their assessments to help them plan new work. Pilot baseline assessment schemes, introduced in September 1998, are proving effective in helping teachers to identify and meet pupils' learning needs early in their education. The schemes also provide information about individual pupils' progress to parents, carers, support agencies and the school or class to which pupils transfer when they start education at age five.

In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the quality of teachers' assessment in the core subjects of the National Curriculum is satisfactory or better in over 80% of schools. About three-quarters of schools analyse the results of National Curriculum assessment and various standardised tests in order to evaluate and improve their performance. These schools use the information to identify trends in the teaching and learning and to set clear, measurable targets for improving the work. In around 40% of classes, and especially in Year 2 and Year 6, teachers encourage pupils to be constructively critical of their work. As a result of this, pupils can identify aims and targets for improvement.

The quality of teachers' assessment in the non-core foundation subjects of the NC and religious education continues to be less developed. There are particular weaknesses in IT, design and technology, religious education, geography and music. In these subjects, teacher assessment is unsatisfactory, and occasionally poor, in more than a quarter of schools. The problems arise mainly because of:

- limitations in teachers' subject knowledge;
- weaknesses in teachers' understanding of different levels of the National Curriculum; and
- whole-school planning that does not clearly identify assessment opportunities or fully use assessment data to help plan lessons in the future.

The quality of record-keeping is satisfactory or better in about 90% of schools, but it is generally better in the core than in the non-core foundation subjects. The quality of written reports to parents is satisfactory in around 95% of schools, including about a half where it is good or, occasionally, very good. Most reports give a clear and detailed account of pupils' achievements in the core subjects, but tend to focus more on effort and attitude when describing pupils' performance in the non-core subjects and religious education.

Secondary schools

Overall, teachers' assessment and recording continue to provide accurate and consistent evaluation of pupils' achievements. The overall quality and use of assessment data are satisfactory or better in about 85% of schools. This includes about 40% where they are good. Data is used effectively, for example, to identify pupils whose progress would benefit from close monitoring. However, using assessment to promote higher standards is good or better in only about 10% of schools and unsatisfactory in about 15%. Most departments have generally effective

assessment systems. However, some inconsistency in the quality of assessment procedures is still common. In many schools there is a need to share, more widely, the good practice that exists. As last year, assessment is at its best in English, Welsh (first language) and history. Assessment in art is much improved this year. The subjects where there is most variation are IT, music and physical education. In these subjects there are considerable amounts of both good and unsatisfactory practice. The quality of reports to parents is good in only about 15% of schools and unsatisfactory in a similar number. There is a great deal of inconsistency of practice between departments. In particular, written comments are not always specific enough to the subject or do not provide enough guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their performance. Some of the weaknesses in assessment and recording stem from not using appropriate whole-school policies consistently.

Curriculum

Primary schools

The quality of planning for the curriculum is similar to that of last year. About 95% of primary schools provide an appropriately broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. More and more schools organise the curriculum effectively to promote pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy, and achievements in these skills improve all other areas of pupils' work. In about 20% of schools that have yet to develop detailed schemes of work, planning for progression in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the National Curriculum subjects and religious education is sometimes barely satisfactory. Even the best planning often gives too little attention to ways of providing appropriately-challenging work for those pupils who are more able. Most schools provide enough time for the different subjects and areas of the curriculum. However, about a fifth of schools emphasise some subjects at the expense of others. For example, in some classes, mathematics is not taught every day and there is too little teaching of science, design and technology and humanities subjects. Schools generally use discretionary time (time that is not used for teaching the National Curriculum and religious education) effectively to raise the standard of pupils' achievements, mostly in literacy and numeracy, and sometimes for extra practice in swimming. Arrangements for personal and social education are at least satisfactory in most schools and good in just over 70%. Extra-curricular activities, educational visits and homework add to the breadth of curriculum provided. Over 90% of primary schools involve pupils in activities outside school hours, including sport, music, mathematics, science and gardening. Well-planned, regular homework opportunities successfully promote pupils' language and mathematical skills and, in some instances, their research and investigation skills.

Secondary schools

All secondary schools maintain a broad, balanced curriculum of National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The time spent on each subject is broadly in line with guidance issued by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC). This overall pattern of provision is good.

Provision in Key Stage 3 is generally good, but quite a few schools do not take enough account of what pupils have achieved. As a result, pupils often repeat work already covered in primary schools. This repetition can waste resources and demotivate pupils. In a few schools, lessons in some subjects are unevenly

distributed across the week. In some cases, this makes it difficult to make sure that pupils learn effectively. There is a negative effect on standards in some classes where pupils have more than one teacher for a subject.

All pupils in Key Stage 4 study English, Welsh (where taught as a first language), mathematics, science, physical education, religious education and areas of PSE. They also choose subjects from humanities, arts, technological or open option groups. Many schools have developed good plans for introducing compulsory Welsh (second language) in Key Stage 4 from September 1999. Fewer than 50% of pupils overall study a modern foreign language in Key Stage 4. In some schools, all, or almost all, pupils continue with at least one modern foreign language, whereas take-up in other schools is as low as 20%. There has been an increase in the range of pre-vocational courses offered. In some areas these are taught with help from a local college and, for part of the course, outside normal school hours. These new programmes often have a positive effect on pupils' motivation, but sometimes lead to an imbalance in the subjects studied by individual pupils. Planning to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and using information and communications technology is weak in many schools.

Education after 16

Schools continue to provide a good range of A-level subjects. Most schools provide breadth, balance and a very good range of choice. The curriculum for those over 16 is targeted mainly at A-level students, but most schools offer a small number of GNVQ courses as well. The most popular of these subjects are health and social care, business, and leisure and tourism. The take-up of GNVQ courses and the small number of A/S courses is generally low. Students tend to choose more traditional combinations of A-level subjects. Few students study a combined GNVQ/A-level programme. In small schools, and elsewhere in subjects where take-up is relatively low, students in Years 12 and 13 are taught together. This arrangement makes provision more cost-effective, but brings increased challenge for teachers planning lessons. In some schools, up to half the A-level classes have fewer than 10 students. This arrangement of A-level teaching groups often leads to not using resources effectively in other areas of the school.

Most schools continue to provide a good range of other activities for students in Year 12 and Year 13, such as a tutorial programme, PSE, work experience and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These add breadth to students' experience and provide opportunities for growth and development. However, there are still general weaknesses in provision for those over 16. Many schools do not provide statutory religious education, have poor provision for key skills, particularly ICT, within subjects, and make poor use of students' non-contact time.

The pattern of provision for those over 16 continues to vary quite widely between and within LEAs. However, overall there is a growing recognition of the value of partnership arrangements between schools and colleges. Where partnership arrangements are in place, the curriculum is often much improved. However, these arrangements do not offer solutions to all the challenges facing school sixth forms, especially in schools where the teaching and learning is carried out in Welsh.

Cross-phase continuity

During the year, we carried out a survey of continuity and progression in pupils' learning from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. We focused on standards in literacy and numeracy. Most primary and secondary schools have effective social and pastoral links to ease the move of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, but only around a third work with others to promote continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Only a few secondary schools have clear policies for improving standards in key skills across the curriculum and for building effectively on pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 2. Poor curricular links between most primary and secondary schools add directly to under-achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3, especially in literacy and numeracy. LEAs have an important role to play in promoting more effective links and in sharing examples of good practice more widely. The effective strategies we have seen used by primary and secondary schools which co-operate to promote continuity and progression in pupils' learning include:

- working closely with LEA advisers to evaluate areas of performance and identify targets for improvement;
- sharing curriculum and assessment materials;
- joint planning of teaching materials, for example, units of work for the National Curriculum core subjects;
- planning together and then evaluating a curricular project which is introduced in Year 6 and finished in Year 7;
- secondary school subject specialists helping with the planning and teaching of units of work in Year 6;
- Year 6 teachers visiting the secondary school to observe lessons or contribute to teaching units of work in Year 7; and
- making secondary school specialist facilities and staff available to the primary school, for example for short programmes of work in information technology or physical education.

Cwricwlwm Cymreig

Most schools give satisfactory attention overall to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig - the Welsh dimension of the curriculum. They do so through those subjects for which there are separate National Curriculum orders in Wales, and through cultural activities such as concerts and eisteddfodau. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is one of the common requirements of all National Curriculum subjects. A small but growing number of mainly English-medium schools, as well as Welsh-medium schools, allow pupils opportunities to study subjects such as history, geography, art, design and technology and religious education in Welsh. Provision of this kind allows pupils to use their linguistic skills in different contexts and supports the bilingual nature of schools. In planning, the Cwricwlwm Cymreig receives less attention than any other common requirement of the NC except for ICT. To some extent, this is associated with teachers' limited understanding of the contribution that each subject can make to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. It also reflects a limited awareness of the resources that are available to support this area of the curriculum.

English as an additional language (EAL)

Some primary and secondary schools have a large number of pupils from ethnic minority groups who are learning English as an additional language. The evidence

available shows that, in general, these pupils achieve standards in English and other subjects which are similar to those achieved by their peers. In a growing number of secondary schools, specific, well-targeted support has allowed pupils learning English as an additional language to achieve good outcomes in GCSE examinations. Most LEAs and schools do not monitor the achievements of different ethnic or language groups and there is no national system for collecting information relating to their performance. As a result, schools rarely set specific targets for improvement for identified groups of pupils with EAL.

Specialist teachers usually provide extra support to pupils at the early stages of learning English. Most of this provision is appropriate, well-targeted and built into the curriculum effectively. There are weaknesses when mainstream and EAL support teachers do not plan work together, or when the content of lessons does not take enough account of the National Curriculum. Planning by teachers who have no extra support for EAL is effective when it identifies and deals with pupils' needs in terms of the most important concepts and vocabulary. Teachers' planning is less effective when it does not focus enough on the difficulties pupils may have. Some EAL learners do not have the specifically targeted help that they need to gain full access to the curriculum.

Many primary schools that receive extra EAL support use it to improve provision during sessions spent on literacy or numeracy work. Few schools evaluate the teaching strategies they use in work of this kind so that pupils with EAL gain as much benefit as other pupils. This is especially so when pupils for whom English is an additional language also have special educational needs (SEN). In a few primary and secondary school classes, when two or more teachers are present, EAL support staff do not have a prominent enough role in the teaching. In a growing number of schools, bilingual assistants who speak community languages are working as a powerful resource for the school in promoting better links with parents.

The Youth Access Initiative (YAI)

The YAI is a three-year programme, funded by the National Assembly for Wales, which focuses on young people under school leaving age who have dropped out, or are in danger of dropping out of school. The programme aims to help these young people get back into mainstream education, or to progress to other effective forms of education and training which fully meet their needs. It also aims to help young people, who are above the school leaving age but are not in education, training or employment, to progress to suitable education or training, or to find a job.

Many young people are already showing improved levels of confidence, self-esteem and skills, often from a very low base. Although there is, as yet, little evidence about the long-term outcomes, there is good evidence of young people taking a new look at their options and making more informed choices about their lives. In many projects, there have been significant improvements in the attendance and motivation of young people. This has included some outstanding individual achievements. Marked improvements in attitudes towards learning are common, but the progress of many young people is often affected by the low level of their literacy and numeracy skills.

The quality of work with young people is generally good and occasionally outstanding. Staff consistently show a clear understanding of young people's needs and show an appropriate range of skills in dealing with them. The informal, but

productive, relationships between young people and staff are a particular strength in all the projects we have inspected. However, in a small number of cases, sessions have important weaknesses.

The nature and scope of the initiatives are wide ranging. They often have complicated management arrangements, a few of which are unsatisfactory. There have been a considerable number of teething problems in some areas, although, elsewhere, satisfactory arrangements are now developing. In most areas, projects draw effectively on the resources and expertise of a wide variety of agencies.

Where projects for 14- to 16-year-olds are successful, an important characteristic is the quality of the relationship between the project and the school. While there are examples of good relationships, in a significant number of cases, managing relationships between projects and schools presents considerable difficulties. Procedures for managing quality are generally not developed enough.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

Support and guidance for **primary** school pupils are at least satisfactory in almost all schools and good or very good in about three-quarters. Well-established policies covering pastoral care, health, safety and hygiene often include the school's approach to issues such as sex education and drugs awareness. Staff show high levels of care and concern for their pupils, who in turn feel safe and secure and are confident to approach adults in the school for help. Overall, appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection, including policies aimed at reducing any incidents of harassment and bullying. Most schools have improved the security of school sites and buildings in recent years.

Most **secondary** schools have a clear, well-structured pastoral system which promotes good relationships between pupils and staff. In these schools, pupils who need help or advice turn readily to form, year or house tutors who know them well. In a growing number of schools, younger pupils can also turn to older pupils who have been trained to offer appropriate support. Some of the better pastoral systems use individual action plans (IAPs), pupil planners or homework diaries which help communication between subject teachers, form tutors and parents. In quite a few schools, the pastoral system is less effective in monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress across the curriculum. Common weaknesses include inconsistency, both within and between schools, in the use of time during registration periods and in completing and monitoring homework diaries.

Partnerships

Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Partnerships between schools and parents, the wider community, other schools and teacher training institutions are at least satisfactory and often good. Most schools give parents good information, a large number using newsletters, bulletins or newspapers effectively. In the best examples, these are also circulated more widely in the local community. Almost all school prospectuses and governors' annual reports give parents valuable information. However, a significant number of reports do not fully meet legal requirements. Most schools actively ask parents for their opinions,

provide enough information on educational matters, advise parents how to support their children's learning and make sure that teachers are easily accessible.

In **primary** schools, parents are made welcome and, with members of the wider community, go to assemblies, concerts and other school functions. Parents often support schools by helping to supervise educational visits and organising fund-raising events, and give their time generously. Many also help regularly with pupils' reading and other activities, and a few take vocational qualifications to develop their expertise. Some **secondary** schools use parents effectively to support pupils' learning, especially in SEN and literacy activities. However, in over two-thirds of schools, parents' contribution to school life is limited.

Most primary and secondary schools effectively promote a strong sense of community and make good use of local facilities and media. They use the local environment well as a learning resource. Schools commonly have good social and sporting links with nearby schools, but only a few work closely to share good practice in teaching and learning, policy development and INSET. Trainee teachers and students on work experience provide valuable support for pupils.

Partnership with industry

About 80% of **primary** schools make at least satisfactory links with industries and businesses. Pupils benefit most of all from visits to workplaces which allow them to see people in their working environments and learn about the different occupations in their community. In the best practice, teachers and employers work closely together to prepare pupils thoroughly and plan time for follow-up activities. Work of this kind is well built into class work and pupils often interview and report back to visiting speakers. Successful partnership with industry often brings advantages in the form of support and sponsorship for specific projects, but only about a quarter of schools make good use of their links to arrange work placements for staff to update skills. In a few schools, headteachers and senior staff have learned valuable management practices. School-industry links, often created by Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), are improving overall, although a few schools are still not aware of potentially beneficial contacts.

Strategies and policies promoting partnerships with industry are good or very good in over 60% of **secondary** schools and satisfactory in the rest. Where links are well planned and built into the curriculum, they contribute effectively to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world of work. Industrial placements are a good feature of staff development in almost all schools and lead to improved teaching and curriculum provision. When placements are unsatisfactory, plans are unclear and the aims have not been identified or agreed by all partners. Most schools have set up good or very good working relationships with their local EBP. These allow them to broaden their curriculum and add relevance to the work in a range of subjects, especially design and technology, science and vocational courses. In particular, there has been an increase in visits made by pupils to employers to support their studies in GNVQ courses. In the best instances, these visits give pupils opportunities to use their learning in new situations, to draw on relevant experiences of industry and to use data to support their vocational studies. All schools work closely with local employers to provide work experience for pupils in Key Stage 4, but only a few organise work experience for all pupils in Year 12 and Year 13. Work placements are generally well planned to give pupils relevant experiences that help motivate and create a sense of responsibility. In the best

instances, teachers use these experiences as a focus for study across the curriculum and encourage the development of the full range of key skills.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

Primary schools

Schools are putting the SEN Code of Practice into place in 95% of classes. In nearly all classes, teachers take account of the White Paper, 'Building Excellent Schools Together' (BEST) and the Green Paper on SEN.

Most schools make suitable arrangements to identify pupils with SEN and provide appropriate support. Individual education plans (IEPs) are often of good quality, though a few do not have precise enough targets. In quite a few schools, class teachers do not use IEPs effectively. The SEN co-ordinators generally provide good leadership. Most SEN registers and other records are accurate and carefully maintained. In most schools class teachers, visiting teachers and learning support assistants work together well.

The support for pupils' progress and achievement is generally good or very good. In a few schools, a lack of co-ordination between work in withdrawal sessions and work in class affects pupils' progress and continuity. Mostly, pupils are included in the life and work of their school and have access to a suitable variety of activities. However, in almost a quarter of schools, work carried out in class is not challenging enough. While there is increasing use of ICT to support learning, this area is still not developed enough in many schools. Links with parents and outside agencies are generally well developed and effective. The awareness and participation of governors in providing for special educational needs continue to improve.

Provision for pupils where the National Curriculum is modified or disapplied (that is, where the statement of SEN does not require the pupil to follow the detailed requirements of the National Curriculum) is at least satisfactory and often good or very good.

Secondary schools

The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory or better in just over 90% of schools, including almost 60% where it is good. Provision for pupils with dyslexia and for those with visual or hearing impairment is generally good. Schools are often less successful in catering for the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils with SEN follow a broad and balanced curriculum. However, in most schools there is still a great deal of inconsistency in provision between subjects. In history and art, provision is at least satisfactory in all the schools inspected, but it is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 in at least one school in ten in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography.

In many schools, pupils with SEN are entered for, and succeed in, a good range of examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. More and more schools do not teach Welsh or a modern foreign language to pupils with statements of SEN. Schools withdraw

these and other pupils from classes in these subjects so they can receive extra support, usually for literacy. While the quality of this support is generally good, it eats into the time set aside for one or more subjects. As a result, continuity of provision and pupils' progress suffer.

The quality of teaching in small groups, whether taught by subject specialists or by members of the SEN department, is at least satisfactory overall. In over half the schools, the quality of teaching in mixed-ability classes is too varied. In some subjects, a shortage of suitably-adapted resources or a lack of well-briefed support staff affects the progress of pupils with SEN. Activities outside classes, such as reading and spelling clubs, continue to make a positive contribution to improving pupils' standards of literacy in Key Stage 3. In many schools, older, more able pupils often provide effective support for this work.

Almost 90% of the schools we inspected have SEN policies of at least satisfactory quality. Schools take account of the SEN Code of Practice and are beginning to respond to the recommendations of the BEST programme for special education. Only a few schools put SEN policies into practice consistently across all departments. In these schools, the senior management team provides strong support for SEN matters. Teachers from each department have gained enough expertise to lead SEN developments within their subjects. Most schools produce IEPs for those pupils who need them. The best IEPs contain specific targets for pupils which subject departments develop into practical programmes of learning. Few schools succeed in putting IEPs in place effectively across the whole curriculum.

Special schools

Quality of teaching

Percentage of classes

| Very Good or Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory or Poor |

The overall profile of good features and shortcomings is similar to that of last year. Most lessons are carefully planned and clearly structured. Strategies and techniques are varied and purposeful, and the tasks set are challenging and closely related to the objectives in pupils' individual education plans. Teachers do more to help pupils understand lesson aims and to take part in assessments. This allows them to become more fully involved in the work. Within a few schools, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching across classes and key stages. Persistent problems include not enough:

- differentiation to cater for the range of pupils' ability and special needs;
- knowledge of some National Curriculum subjects;
- use of ICT; and
- opportunities for pupils to work together.

Assessment, recording and reporting

The accuracy and consistency of the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory overall, but there is wide variation within and across schools. Generally, assessment information is used appropriately to set targets in individual education plans. In about a half of schools, teachers do not use assessment information well enough when planning teaching and learning, and so it has a limited effect on classroom work. Statutory reviews of statements of SEN and arrangements for reporting to parents are generally good and sometimes very good.

Curriculum

The quality of curriculum provision for under-fives is good and fully promotes the 'desirable outcomes for learning'. In more than a third of schools, the Key Stage 1 to 4 curriculum does not fully meet legal requirements. The subjects most commonly missing from the curriculum are Welsh (second language) and a modern foreign language, but other non-core foundation subjects are sometimes left out or taught only partially in one or more key stages. Schools place appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but give them rather less priority as pupils go through the school. Few schools have whole-school approaches to using ICT and to promoting communication for pupils with severe and complex needs. There is commonly a lack of regularly-organised homework. There has been a good deal of development of accredited courses in Key Stage 4 and for pupils over 16. However, in many schools the focus on accreditation requirements has led to the curriculum being narrowed. Work-related education, extra-curricular activities and learning carried out in the community are often strong features.

Management

Few schools have effective methods to monitor and evaluate the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. School development plans are gradually improving, with suitably focused short-term and longer-term aims and criteria for evaluating the success of any action taken. Few of these plans include targets for improvement and, in particular, for raising pupils' achievement. Daily administration and organisation are usually effective and efficient. In a few schools, a lack of suitable rooms limits the teaching content in one or more subjects. Strategies for co-ordinating subjects across the age range are not always effective, with particular implications in all-age schools. Governing bodies (GBs) are highly supportive and increasingly knowledgeable, but their management role is not developed enough. The content of governors' annual reports to parents and of school prospectuses frequently falls short of the legal requirements. Most schools use time effectively during the day, but in quite a few the amount of available teaching time is below recommended levels.

Ethos

Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good and the provision made for their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. A few schools do not do enough to develop pupils' awareness of the Welsh language and culture, or of other cultures. A few schools do not meet the legal requirement for collective worship. Schools successfully promote a supportive, respectful and orderly environment and a strong community spirit. Pupils make good progress in attitude, confidence and behaviour as they move through school. They can accept responsibility, but have too few

opportunities to develop initiative. A few schools do not give enough attention to health and safety matters and to sex and drugs education. Effective professional support from outside is a great benefit, though sometimes limited in quantity. Attendance varies across schools from very good to unsatisfactory. Most absences are due to medical reasons, but in a small number of schools the extent and effect of unexplained absences are significant, and strategies to improve matters are not effective. Only a very few schools set targets to maintain or improve attendance.

Partnerships

Almost all schools have strong, beneficial relationships with parents. Parents' attendance at meetings and the help they give in school and at other events are frequently good, as is the transfer of information between school and home. Schools are well known and well respected in their local communities. They regularly use library, shopping, transport and leisure facilities. Occasionally, community groups use the school's facilities. There are good links with mainstream schools, but these are mostly limited to planning and monitoring the integration of individual pupils. Schools do not take enough advantage of other possible links, such as staff exchange visits, sharing facilities and joint curriculum development. Older pupils who take part in further education link courses receive valuable preparation for leaving school. Links with industry and the local business community are usually limited to work-experience placements, but a few schools have set up productive partnerships resulting in:

- teacher placements;
- workplace visits;
- visiting speakers;
- support for mini-enterprises; and
- donations of money and materials.

Residential provision

In schools providing residential provision, the overall quality of care is good. Appropriate child protection procedures are firmly in place. Links between residential and teaching staff are generally effective and contribute positively to support and guidance and good behaviour. Many schools miss opportunities to relate residential activities to the curriculum, especially in language and literacy, physical education and design and technology, and through homework support. Residential care staff continue to have limited access to relevant training.

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

There are currently 25 pupil referral units (PRUs) in Wales. The units vary in size and in the age range for which they cater, but most have between 10 and 30 pupils on roll. In a few LEAs, several separate off-site units are registered as a single PRU for administrative purposes. Most of the pupils who go to PRUs have emotional and behavioural difficulties, and many have a record of poor attendance in mainstream schools. With few exceptions, pupils' attainments when they enter a PRU are below national averages. This is largely because of significant disruptions to their learning.

The quality of support and guidance provided to improve pupils' social and personal development is often good and sometimes very good. Teachers and support staff

are generally successful in helping pupils to improve their behaviour, attitude and self-esteem. Most behavioural support plans contain suitable and specific targets and aims by which progress can be measured effectively. Standards of behaviour are often good or very good. In most cases, individual levels of attendance improve significantly.

The educational progress made by pupils in full-time and part-time placements has improved overall and is now at least satisfactory in most classes. In relation to what pupils have achieved before entering the units, standards achieved in English are satisfactory overall and occasionally good in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In mathematics, standards are satisfactory overall. Standards in science are mostly satisfactory. When there are not enough specialist resources and suitable facilities for science in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, standards are often unsatisfactory. Standards in personal, social and health education are often good, especially in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 classes.
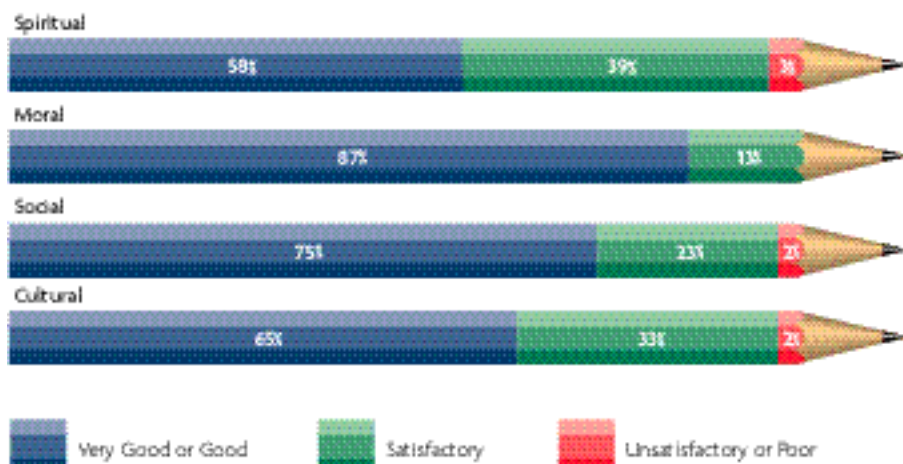
Most units offer a reasonably broad curriculum, though provision for arts subjects is often not good enough. There has been a general improvement in the quality and use of individual education plans (IEPs). In most units, the quality of IEPs is satisfactory or better. However, in quite a few units these plans do not contain specific enough targets to allow teachers to measure progress, especially in literacy and numeracy. Despite a general improvement in links between these units and mainstream schools, too often pupils' early progress is affected by a lack of accurate information about their performance before they moved into the units.

Accommodation and resources are often not good enough for teaching the full range of subjects, especially to pupils of secondary age. The day-to-day administration of the units is efficient and the leadership of teachers-in-charge is generally effective. Few PRUs have effective procedures for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the education provided and, overall, the units are not managed well.

Ethos of schools

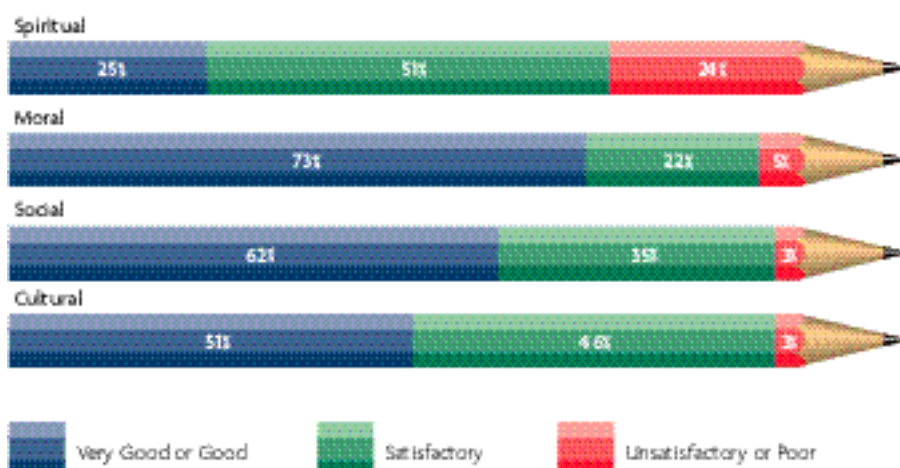## *Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

Primary schools

Spiritual	58%	39%	3%
Moral	87%	13%	
Social	75%	23%	2%
Cultural	65%	33%	2%

Very Good or Good　　Satisfactory　　Unsatisfactory or Poor

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory or better in almost all **primary** schools. Schools are effective in promoting values such as honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice. Relationships between pupils and staff and amongst pupils are particular strengths that form the basis of pupils' developing attitudes to good social behaviour and self-discipline. The well-planned involvement of pupils in environmental projects and in providing support for worthy causes also offers the chance for pupils to be responsible, use their initiative and work with others.

Schools increasingly provide a curriculum that reflects the many different aspects of language, culture and heritage of Wales and the wider world. Acts of collective worship contribute much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The content of these acts has improved and there is better planning to make sure pupils are more involved.

Secondary schools

Spiritual

| 25% | 51% | 24% |

Moral

| 73% | 22% | 5% |

Social

| 62% | 35% | 3% |

Cultural

| 51% | 46% | 3% |

■ Very Good or Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor

In all **secondary** schools, pupils are generally respected and encouraged to respect one another. Most schools effectively nurture pupils' self-discipline and give them suitable opportunities to be responsible, although these opportunities are sometimes restricted to older pupils. In a small number of schools, school councils allow pupils to influence policy and practice. Programmes of personal and social education almost always contribute positively to pupils' moral, as well as their social, development. Clubs and extra-curricular activities extend many pupils' cultural experiences, but few schools monitor patterns of attendance to see which pupils take part, so that they can take action to spread the benefits as widely as possible. Many schools try to involve pupils actively in civic and community service, as well as supporting fund-raising for charitable causes. Eisteddfodau and Urdd activities make an important contribution in very many schools, but the everyday life and curriculum of a few do not have a distinctively Welsh ethos.
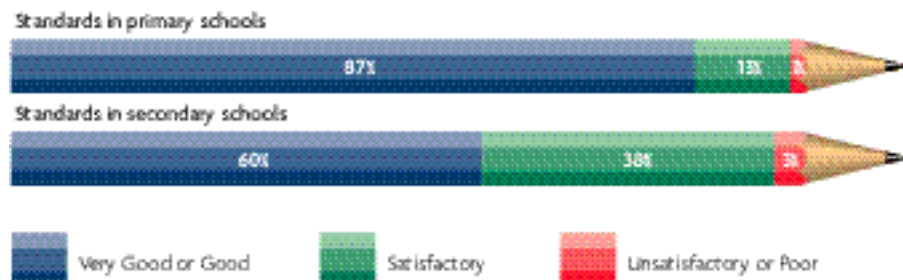
Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory in a quarter of schools. The limited effect of collective worship is a significant factor in this. Its contribution to spiritual development is good or better in less than 10% of secondary schools and unsatisfactory in a third. Few schools meet legal requirements for collective worship. Very often, this is because of a breakdown in the arrangements for class assemblies. Despite some well-planned examples, many acts of collective worship are not stimulating, do not involve pupils enough and offer little opportunity for personal reflection. While most schools have a positive approach to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, it is rarely well planned across the curriculum.

Measures to deal with racism

Although most schools report low levels of racial tension, very few have specific procedures to put into practice policies of equal opportunity, or programmes designed to promote multi-cultural understanding and racial equality. Only a few consider a range of strategies for dealing with reported incidents through planned and documented procedures. The situation in schools largely reflects the generally low priority that most LEAs give to putting together strategies to combat racism. While some LEAs have policy statements on equal opportunities that include a general reference to race, only a few are beginning to develop specific plans designed to promote racial harmony. A few LEAs are working with other agencies to draw up strategies to promote racial equality. Some other LEAs have set up working parties to look at more general issues related to equal opportunities. A few LEAs do not believe the issue of racism is particularly relevant locally. Most are not doing all that they could to prepare young people appropriately for life in a multi-ethnic society.

Behaviour

Standards in primary schools: 87% Very Good or Good, 13% Satisfactory, 1% Unsatisfactory or Poor

Standards in secondary schools: 60% Very Good or Good, 38% Satisfactory, 3% Unsatisfactory or Poor

In **primary** schools, there is increasing evidence of good or very good behaviour. Parents often comment favourably on the 'positive behaviour' systems that schools use to promote high standards of behaviour. In many schools, pupils and teachers have agreed a code of conduct that the whole community sees as fair and just. Praise and rewards systems, and consistent expectations of high standards, help to make sure that pupils behave well and that they are polite and respect adults. These good attitudes have a positive effect on pupils' learning and standards of achievement. In a small number of classes, misbehaviour by a few pupils restricts teaching and learning for all pupils in the class. In schools where this happens, staff try hard to develop a good ethos and set up appropriate procedures so that pupils can learn to aim for acceptable standards.
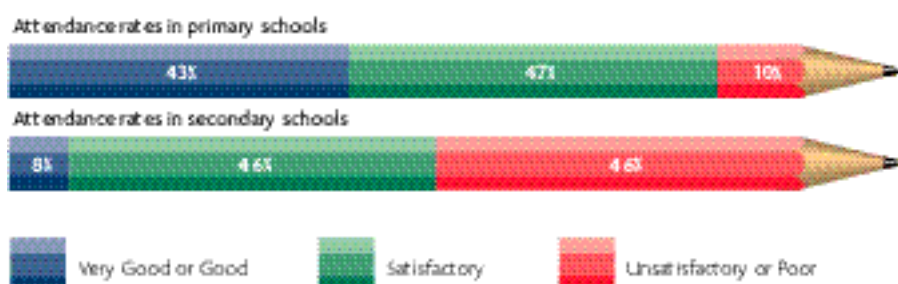
Most **secondary** school pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to their work. They are polite, co-operative and considerate to others. In some schools, a few teachers experience difficulty in dealing with low-level disruption from small groups of pupils, most commonly in lower-ability classes in Key Stage 4. This is often because the work does not match pupils' abilities and needs. Many schools use systems of rewards and punishments effectively, but a few do not put these into practice consistently across subject departments.

The behaviour of a few pupils outside lessons is sometimes noisy, boisterous and thoughtless, especially in areas of the school where congestion is acute. The way staff supervise pupils' movement between lessons is not always consistent. In only a few schools do pupils have access to classrooms outside lesson times. In these schools, pupils usually respond positively by behaving well.

Many schools have reduced the number of exclusions in recent years. Strategies that are helping to achieve this include:

- a 'time out' facility to allow pupils to cool off;
- special projects or other curriculum arrangements for pupils who have been put off by normal lessons; and
- counselling and other strategies designed to help pupils improve their behaviour and attitudes to work.

Attendance

Attendance rates in primary schools

| 43% | 47% | 10% |

Attendance rates in secondary schools

| 8% | 46% | 46% |

■ Very Good or Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory or Poor

The percentage of primary and secondary schools with good or very good attendance has reduced this year. Illness and medical appointments are the most common reasons for pupils' absence. In many secondary schools, and to a lesser extent in primary schools, the repeated, lengthy absences of a small group of truants reduce these attendance figures. A somewhat larger group of pupils is the cause of occasional absences of one or two days at a time, repeated over many weeks. The disruption to learning for pupils in both of these groups causes many difficulties for staff, other pupils and for the pupils themselves when they return to school.

Some 'authorised' absences are almost certainly agreed to, for inappropriate reasons, by parents. Pupils who go on family holidays during term time also add to the absence figures. Schools find it difficult or impossible to improve the attendance of pupils whose parents, for whatever reason, do not appreciate the importance of regular attendance at school and cannot or will not make sure their children go to school. In a small number of schools, parent support for the school's efforts to make sure their children go to school regularly is unsatisfactory.

Where attendance is good or very good, **primary** schools set high expectations and work hard to maintain and improve attendance levels through regular contact with parents and support agencies. Teachers mark registers correctly and analyse attendance patterns carefully. There are effective systems for the prompt follow-up of unexplained absences. Schools make good efforts to reduce absences arising from family holidays taken during term time and to make parents aware of the effects of not going to school on their children's learning. Education welfare officers (EWO) provide effective support when it is needed.

Increasingly, **secondary** schools are setting targets for improving pupils' attendance, although a few schools do not monitor attendance patterns well enough to allow this. Many schools, and especially those where attendance figures have been poor in the past, have succeeded in making modest improvements by using special initiatives and setting targets at whole-school, year-group, class and pupil level.

Successful initiatives include:

- rewarding good attendance;
- contacting the parents of absent pupils on the first day of their absence;
- making effective use of the support provided by the education welfare officer; and
- setting up special projects for pupils who show no enthusiasm for normal lessons.

Management

Leadership and efficiency

The overall quality of leadership by heads has improved in **primary** schools during the year. It is satisfactory or better in nearly 95% of schools, including over 55% where it is good or very good. We can put the improvement down largely to the general responsiveness of heads to national and local initiatives aimed at raising standards. We can also put it down to more heads using strategic approaches to planning the curriculum, evaluating the school and setting priorities. We can see the benefits in the clear educational direction provided in the schools and in effective routines for organisation and administration. In just over 5% of schools, leadership is weak and does not deal directly with the need for improvements in the quality of education provided and the standards of pupils' achievements.

Around 80% of curriculum leaders offer satisfactory to good support and advice to their colleagues on planning and organising the subjects or areas for which they have special responsibility. However, the long-standing difficulty of providing enough non-contact time means that they are rarely able to visit colleagues' classes to influence the quality of teaching and to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and performance. In about 20% of schools, the roles of curriculum leaders are poorly defined and managed. This greatly limits their effectiveness and prevents strategic planning for future improvement.

Most governing bodies have effective committee structures which help to share the load of management and make the best use of expertise. Governing bodies are involved more and more in decision taking, though many are still not clear about how best to monitor standards or the quality of the curriculum. Many governors are ill at ease with the breadth of their responsibilities and need advice and support to help them carry out their considerable duties effectively. Nevertheless, most governors give their own time generously and generally deal with their many duties in a dedicated way. They offer strong support to headteachers and staff.

Primary schools generally provide at least satisfactory value for money. Around 60% manage their budgets effectively through linking spending to school development priorities. Although there has been an improvement in financial planning, a few schools do not provide detailed costs of the priorities identified in their development plans. In around 10% of schools, the evaluation of major spending decisions continues to be weak.

The quality of leadership is good in over 60% of **secondary** schools and satisfactory in a further 30%. Over 60% of schools have achieved, or are working towards, the

'Investor in People' standard. Governors bring a wide range of professional expertise to their task. It is becoming more common for governors to take an interest in particular departments or areas of the school and to visit regularly to see the school at work. In well-led schools, senior managers have clear job descriptions and work effectively as a team. Good communication promotes a team spirit and there is a purposeful yet relaxed atmosphere. All members of staff play a part in the planning and development cycle each year. In-class monitoring of quality and standards takes place in an increasing number of schools, but is still the weakest area of leadership. Financial management is generally strong. However, about 15% of schools have faced quite large financial cuts. Senior managers who have tried to reduce the effects of these by taking on substantial class teaching commitments do not have enough time for management. In the small number of schools where management is unsatisfactory, development planning is poor and governors or senior managers take decisions without consulting other members of staff. In these schools, teachers' morale is often low and pupils achieve less than they might.

Three-fifths of departments are managed well, but the management of one in 12 departments is unsatisfactory. Within many schools, there are marked variations in the quality of departmental management from subject to subject. Overall leadership tends to be better in Welsh (first language), history, English, geography and music than in other subjects. Despite some improvements in the quality of monitoring by heads of department, only a third do it effectively. A major weakness in monitoring in many departments is the lack of focus on the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils. Only a quarter of departments set targets well. In a further quarter, procedures are unsatisfactory.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

In general, **primary** schools have enough staff to keep class sizes manageable. In more and more schools, teachers exchange classes to provide specialist subject teaching. This often has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

In almost all **secondary** schools, the match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the requirements of the curriculum is at least satisfactory overall. It is good in about two-thirds of schools. Religious education is the subject in which teaching by non-specialist staff is most common. Most schools make effective arrangements for introducing newly-qualified teachers and, to a lesser extent, other new staff when they join the school.

Accommodation

In more than a half of **primary** schools, a lack of suitable accommodation has a negative effect on standards of achievement and the quality of provision, even though schools generally use their accommodation effectively. A significant percentage of classrooms are too small for the number of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, although some schools do not make best use of available space to help solve the problems caused in these classrooms. Other common shortcomings in accommodation include the lack of an adequate school hall, problems in the general quality of the fabric of the building and poor toilet facilities.

The accommodation in over 40% of **secondary** schools is good. In a few schools, accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Specific health and safety issues, related

to school premises, were reported in about a fifth of the schools we inspected. In quite a few science and physical-education departments, the condition of the accommodation is unsatisfactory. About a quarter of music departments do not have enough specialist rooms to allow the subject to be taught effectively. Facilities for specialist teaching are unsatisfactory in about a quarter of information technology departments and more than one-tenth of English and geography departments.

Resources

The provision and use of resources in **primary** schools have improved a lot since last year. The most common areas where there are still shortages in resources are design and technology, science and reading materials in Welsh. A number of schools still do not have enough resources for physical education, or to provide a balanced curriculum for the under-fives. Most schools have enough computers, but unsatisfactory planning and lack of staff expertise continue to limit the use pupils make of them to improve their learning across the curriculum.

Resources are at least adequate overall in most **secondary** schools. However, they are not good enough in about 15% of schools and this has a negative effect on standards and the quality of education provided. Quite a few art, science, music and religious-education departments do not have enough specialist resources. In almost a half of the schools inspected, poor equipment makes it difficult for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum. Many schools have large numbers of computers, but few with the specifications to support up-to-date software. Between a quarter and two-thirds of all subject departments have unsatisfactory or poor ICT resources. The NC core subjects and modern foreign languages are among the subjects with the poorest ICT resources.

School improvement

Schools' self-evaluation and planning for improvement

Around 40% of **primary** schools are using assessment data, inspection findings and other measures of performance well to evaluate their achievements and identify targets for improvement. These schools show a willingness to act vigorously to improve the quality of education provided and raise the standards of pupils' achievements. All are achieving success and many have improved significantly, sometimes from a low base. In a further 45% of schools, the scope and effectiveness of development planning are satisfactory. The schools understand what they must do to improve, but are not always clear about the strategies needed to achieve those improvements. Common shortcomings in their development plans include a lack of clarity about the priorities for action and arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of any new initiatives. On occasions, the targets for improvement identified in the schools' development plans are not rooted well enough in the actual performance of their pupils. Some of these targets are unchallenging and do not provide suitable measures against which heads and other senior managers can judge improvement. Around 15% of primary schools have an incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate, understanding of their relative strengths and weaknesses. They do not take stock of their achievements effectively and, as a result, are not well-placed to identify targets for improvement. The development

plans in these schools tend to be put together badly and have little effect on standards.

This is the first year that we have reported separately on **secondary** schools' self-evaluation. The quality of self-evaluation is good in about 35% of schools and satisfactory in a further 55%. It is unsatisfactory in about one school in ten. The self-assessment reports that schools have prepared before their Section 10 inspections show that a range of effective self-evaluation procedures is in place. Heads and senior managers generally know their schools well. Most self-assessment reports accurately identify the school's strengths, but are less thorough in identifying weaknesses or areas for development. Increasingly, heads and senior managers base their assessments on performance data and, to a lesser extent, their first-hand evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. However, the quality of middle managers' self-evaluation is inconsistent and there are few examples of very good practice. In most schools, only one or two departments have set up rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures. Most of the evaluations are informal and do not use specific criteria. The lack of rigour in most departments' evaluations is an important factor that limits the quality of teachers' work.

Tackling low performance

Most of the work in **primary** schools is satisfactory or better, but there is still a persistent 10% or so of unsatisfactory work overall. Although good features outweigh some weaknesses, in a further 45% or so of classes pupils are not learning all that they should. Progress is being made in tackling this low performance, but there is still unevenness in the system. Schools that have made the most progress have identified clear priorities for action, handed out responsibilities for the work, set targets and success criteria, and put together firm procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Teachers' increasing intolerance of under-achievement and good support from LEAs and governing bodies are at the heart of much of this improvement. There are still a few schools which are not tackling low performance urgently and well. Common problems in these schools include:

- weak leadership and management;
- unsatisfactory teaching;
- poor curriculum planning;
- not enough analysis of the school's performance; and
- vague task and target setting.

Dealing with these problems means schools must recognise their strengths and weaknesses and show determination to achieve better results. The evidence from inspections is that, with drive, commitment and high expectations on the part of all concerned, they can make further large improvements in the quality of education provided and in the knowledge and skills pupils gain.

We carried out a number of short inspection visits in 1997-1998 to some of the lowest-performing **secondary** schools in Wales. The findings were published as 'Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools - Tackling Low Performance' (OHMCI, 1999). Most of the schools visited serve urban catchment areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. They cater for a large number of pupils entitled to free school meals, suffer from high levels of pupils' absence and have a relatively large number of less able pupils.

Despite the relatively low performance of their pupils, it is not necessarily the case that all schools with low GCSE success rates are failing to provide an acceptable standard of education. In the classes we inspected, standards of achievement in relation to pupils' ability are below national averages overall, but in some schools are close to national averages. In general, the more able pupils and those with special needs achieve higher standards than those of average ability. This is because pupils of average ability are not challenged enough. Partly because of the complexity and heavy demands of the challenges that they face, senior managers in several of the schools inspected are not involved as much as they should be in tackling issues related to pupils' performance. In the best instances, schools use a range of strategies to raise standards and develop a culture of achievement, including:

- monitoring pupils' performance and setting targets for improvement;
- improving the school's ethos;
- involving parents;
- improving pupils' attendance and behaviour; and
- improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The more successful schools place special emphasis on developing pupils' key skills, improving teaching and learning within departments, and providing one-to-one help for pupils whose performance needs to be improved.

The role of local education authorities (LEAs)

There is marked variation between LEAs in the performance of both primary and secondary schools, but the gap between the highest and lowest performers is narrowing slowly. Overall, standards in primary and secondary schools improved in all LEAs between 1996 and 1998. However, this happened at different rates and with many swings in certain indicators in different years. In all LEAs the performance of some secondary and primary schools falls well short of national targets. Some lower-performing LEAs, in particular, have made significant gains. However, these authorities face a particularly stern challenge in co-ordinating the efforts of various council services and other agencies in order to raise educational standards and to deal with issues, such as social exclusion, which affect standards.

Early indications in each of the LEAs we inspected are that many of the initiatives to raise standards in literacy are effective. Many schools take full advantage of presentations delivered to groups of teachers and headteachers, or of materials produced by the LEA. They often adapt the ideas to suit their own needs and priorities. Other schools need more intensive support from the LEA to make sure that they put the initiatives in place effectively. Most LEAs are only beginning to target human and financial resources at those schools most in need of support. Increasingly, LEAs' literacy strategies are well built into a broader raft of strategies aimed at improving schools.

All LEAs use a team of advisory staff to provide a range of curriculum support to schools and also to provide information to the LEA for the purpose of monitoring. The quality of advice and training provided by advisers is generally good. A few LEAs lack the staff with the managerial experience needed to command the respect of schools when discussing management issues. In some LEAs, Welsh-medium schools have difficulty in finding a good enough range of curriculum support using Welsh. Pre-inspection work takes up too many resources at the expense of follow-up after

inspections. Few LEAs monitor, effectively, the progress made by schools in putting their action plans in place.

Several LEAs have begun to re-structure their teams so they can play a more active role than in the past. There has been good progress in analysing the performance of the LEA's schools, and LEA officers use this effectively in schools as a basis for discussing the school's targets and for raising their expectations of pupils' achievement. Few LEAs have yet used the information gained from this analysis as a basis for giving extra support.

The quality of strategic planning by LEAs has improved, but few plans contain enough detail of the planned outcomes to allow LEAs to make effective evaluations of success and cost-effectiveness. Elected members generally support the work of officers, but, overall, their role in managing LEA work is limited.
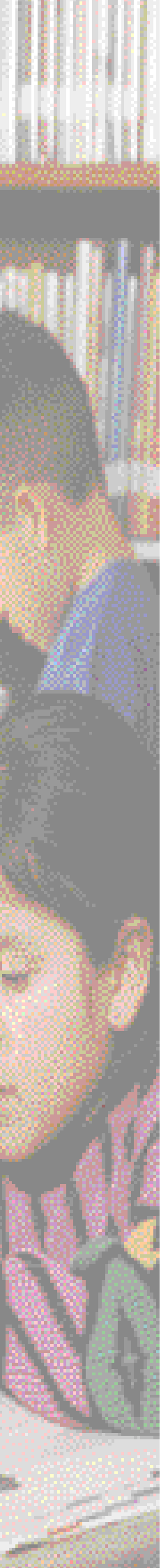
Teacher education and training

Initial teacher training

During the year, we inspected initial teacher training (ITT) at two higher education institutions (HEI) and their partner schools. We also carried out a survey of ICT in primary ITT. Inspectors visited all the higher education institutions that provide ITT. In all, we inspected 358 college-based training sessions, 135 school-based training sessions and 270 lessons taught by trainees. The two higher education institution inspections and the information and communications technology survey involved visits to 109 partner schools.

The standard of trainees' teaching ability in **primary** schools is good or very good in almost 60% of lessons and satisfactory in about 35%. Trainees have good subject knowledge and a firm understanding of the primary curriculum. They plan lessons and organise classes well, but a few do not identify learning aims clearly enough and do not match the work effectively to pupils' needs. Trainees assess pupils' progress well, but tend to use too limited a range of assessment methods. Quite a few trainees do not use assessment information to plan new work. Trainees teach literacy and numeracy satisfactorily, but a few do not use effective strategies for developing pupils' skills in speaking, listening and reading. Most trainees have well-developed ICT skills, but often cannot use them in their teaching to support pupils' learning. The standard of teaching ability shown by trainees in **secondary** schools is good or very good in almost 60% of lessons and satisfactory in 35%. Trainees use their subject knowledge well when planning and delivering lessons. In general, they manage classes well, but, occasionally, presentations to the whole class are too long and there is not enough variety in the tasks set for pupils. Most trainees monitor pupils' achievements and progress efficiently, but a few do not assess well enough whether the planned outcomes of the lesson have been achieved. Quite a few make little or no use of assessment information to plan new work. Trainees in both phases are aware of teachers' professional responsibilities and have good relationships with staff. Most are fully involved in school life.

The overall quality of training and assessment is good. Course design and content are good. All the courses meet the requirements that came into force in September 1998.

The quality of college-based training and assessment is good, with instances of very good provision. With very few exceptions, the primary training sessions we observed were satisfactory or better and 87% were good or very good. Nearly all the secondary training sessions are also satisfactory or better and 79% are good or very good. In the primary and secondary training, there is effective use of theory and practice. Most sessions provide good teaching models. The training encourages trainees to think critically and reflectively. It develops trainees' understanding of the ways that pupils learn. Primary training includes appropriate guidance on teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy. A few primary and secondary sessions are lacking in pace and variety and there is not enough challenge in the questioning. Training in using ICT to support teaching and learning has improved, but is still variable and is often not co-ordinated well enough. Assessment of trainees is generally thorough, accurate and consistent. Occasionally, assessment criteria do not give enough of an idea of expected progression or show what is good or very good performance.

The quality of school-based training and assessment is good overall. Of the school-based training sessions we observed, 95% of the primary sessions and 98% of the secondary sessions were satisfactory or better. Schools give trainees an appropriate range of classroom experiences. Trainees generally receive good support and guidance on a range of matters, including how to teach literacy and numeracy. At times, expectations of trainees' performance are low and the feedback they receive does not identify clearly enough areas that need improvement. In a few instances, there is too much variation within and between schools in the quality of the training and assessment. There is also a lot of variation in the availability of ICT equipment in schools and the amount of support that trainees receive when it is used.

Partnership arrangements continue to improve. In almost all cases, there is a strong commitment to partnership and to providing high-quality ITT. Primary school teachers who act as 'mentors' benefit and develop professionally from the process. The effect of ITT partnership on quality and standards was at least satisfactory in all of the secondary schools we inspected during the year and good in just over 80%.

The attention given to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig in both primary and secondary college-based courses is generally appropriate and often good. Trainees' awareness and understanding of the common features of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig are mostly well developed. In school-based training, the extent to which trainees' knowledge and understanding of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is used and fostered varies widely between and within schools, particularly in the secondary phase.

Continuing professional development of teachers (CPD), including in-service education and training (INSET)

There is generally effective training to meet the broad range of teachers' needs, including support for putting the National Curriculum and associated assessment in place. School improvement and target-setting continue to receive relevant emphasis, as do strategies for improving pupils' literacy skills.

The effect of professional development on quality and standards is satisfactory or better in about 90% of primary and secondary schools. It is good in a larger percentage of **primary** schools than secondary schools. Most teachers go to a range of in-service training (INSET) events, but many of these are not well planned to match the needs identified. In around 10% of schools, there are not enough

opportunities for staff to develop and they do not share, with their colleagues, all that they have learned from INSET. The extent and effect of teachers' continuing professional development are limited in a few subject departments in **secondary** schools, especially in music, art and information technology. In **primary** and **secondary** schools, the effect of INSET is most marked when it is planned carefully in line with priorities identified in development plans. It is particularly beneficial in schools that pay for training activities to meet their specific needs. Links between INSET and school or departmental development plans are becoming stronger.

LEAs continue to be the main providers of INSET. In some areas, advisers from different LEAs carry out work together effectively to broaden the scope of training made available to schools. Many course organisers do not ask teachers to carry out preparatory tasks so that they can make better use of time during the training courses. Most LEAs and schools do not monitor, well enough, the effects of INSET on the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' work.

Longer full-time or part-time courses give teachers opportunities for extended professional development. These often lead to post-graduate qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. Training of this kind is particularly beneficial when course activities are designed to improve the effectiveness of teachers' work in their schools.

Teacher appraisal

About a half of primary schools and two-thirds of secondary schools have suitable arrangements for teacher appraisal. In about a quarter of primary schools and a third of secondary schools the arrangements are good. In these schools, appraisal helps teachers to review their performance and to identify specific training and development needs. This, in turn, leads to well-targeted in-service training. More and more, schools are developing procedures based on the 'Investor in People' standard and the most successful schools have included teacher appraisal in their systems for regular monitoring and evaluation. In the other half of primary schools and a third of secondary schools, arrangements for teacher appraisal are not good enough. A few of these schools try to identify teachers' training needs in other ways, but do not focus enough on classroom performance.

LEA youth and adult education services and voluntary youth organisations

Adult education and youth services

During the 1998-1999 academic year, we carried out surveys of provision in LEA-maintained and assisted youth and adult education services and in voluntary youth services.

LEA-maintained services

Standards achieved by young people vary within and between LEAs, but in most cases, good features outweigh any shortcomings. In a significant percentage of clubs, projects and other youth work settings, achievement is good with occasionally outstanding features. The quality of youth work and youth response is good in
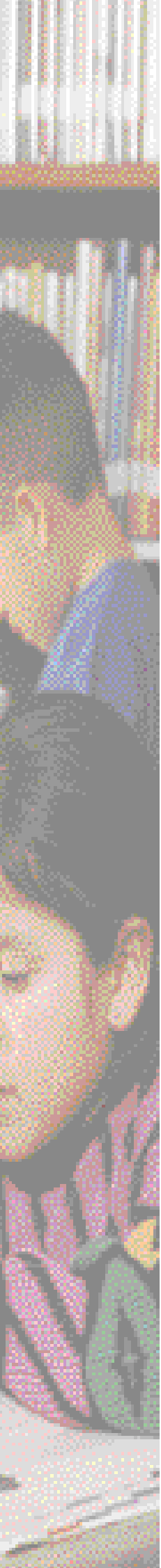
almost two-thirds of sessions. These include a small percentage where there are outstanding features, most often linked to high expectations and levels of challenge in the opportunities presented to young people.

In adult education, standards of achievement are generally good and often outstanding. Many students show improved skills and confidence and, where opportunities are available, progress to more advanced levels of study. Many students gain accreditation for their achievements. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good and often outstanding.

The financial resources for youth and adult education are rarely enough to provide adequate levels of services and a significant number of authorities are not meeting legal requirements. Few authorities have an effective policy in place for managing quality. Data collection and analysis do not provide enough of a basis for developing and improving the service.

Many authorities have broadened the nature and scope of provision available in youth service and adult education in order to reach new groups of clients. However, stepping-stones to activities at more advanced levels are not set up well. While some authorities have equal opportunities policies, there is little evidence of monitoring services or of action in response to findings.

In many LEAs, local government re-organisation has stimulated the development and improvement of services. However, in quite a high number, there is a lack of clear direction and purpose for the work at a strategic level. The publication of the Green Paper, 'Learning Is For Everyone' (LIFE) and the Education and Training Action Plan (ETAP) has focused thinking in many cases. A few LEAs have begun to draw together adult, youth and other public-education programmes within the authority. These can make a significant contribution to dealing with the agenda for lifelong learning set out in LIFE and the ETAP.

Quality and standards in voluntary youth organisations

The quality of work and standards achieved by members of voluntary youth organisations are generally good and often outstanding. Those holding office at a national level within the organisations often provide positive leadership. Organisations are generally well managed, and many managers at national and local levels show they have entrepreneurial skills and considerable ingenuity in maintaining levels of provision. In some cases, efforts made to include as many young people as possible are outstanding. Most of the organisations have difficulty keeping members in the older age groups and have tried new ways of targeting and keeping them. Large numbers of volunteers make a strong commitment to developing young people and their communities.

Most of the organisations have been negatively affected by the loss or reduction of financial support from LEAs. Some have been successful in attracting some other short-term funding from a range of funding organisations. Quality management systems are generally not developed enough. In some cases, substantial National Lottery grants are given to new youth work providers without any assurance that they have access to appropriate advice and support. There is an element of duplication of services between some organisations, where these relate to support for local youth clubs.

In a number of cases, organisations are making more efforts to encourage young people from a wider range of backgrounds to take part, but the lack of detailed information about membership makes it difficult to analyse, for example, by numbers of young people with disabilities, or of those from minority ethnic groups.

Government-funded training

Standards and quality in work-based training

In 1998-1999 we inspected and reported on the quality and standards of the training achieved by seven providers as part of a test phase leading to a five-year cycle of full inspections of all training providers. The National Assembly for Wales pays for these inspections and publishes the reports on the Internet. All the occupational categories we inspected during the test phase were at least satisfactory overall and about a fifth were good. However, none of the training we inspected had outstanding features and not all trainees were receiving satisfactory training.

Quality of training, learning and assessment

In the good and satisfactory training, trainees are given a range of on-the-job and off-the-job experiences which cover the range of skills and knowledge that they need. Trainees understand what they are doing and collect evidence and witness statements which allow them to present a portfolio for assessment. They make satisfactory progress and achieve their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or other qualifications within the planned timescale. Assessment of the key skills of communication, numeracy and using ICT is effectively included in all areas of their training.

There are a few weaker areas of provision. Some of the training fails to provide a wide enough range of experience and trainees cannot put together a satisfactory portfolio which draws from both their on-the-job and off-the-job training. Training in the workplace is occasionally narrow and not focused and does not always include opportunities for assessment. In some cases, the elements of training are poorly linked and trainees do not make satisfactory progress in developing key skills.

Standards achieved by trainees

The standards achieved by most trainees are satisfactory or good. Standards of occupational competence are good when trainees can carry out an appropriate range of relevant vocational tasks. Standards of oral communication are generally satisfactory, but the standards achieved by trainees in the other key skills are less secure. Quite a number of trainees do not gain an NVQ within the time set in their training plans. Punctuality and attendance are generally satisfactory and most trainees are well motivated. The poor quality of data available from training providers and nationally makes comparisons of achievement difficult.

Planning and managing training

The quality of communication, co-operation and teamwork is good. However, in a number of organisations, the poor link between on-the-job and off-the-job training is a major problem. The assessment of vocational competence and key skills during on-the-job training is not organised well enough.

Equal opportunities and support for trainees

The support provided for trainees by trainers and supervisors is generally good and often helps to promote effective learning. All the organisations we inspected have suitable equal opportunities policies and procedures, though more could often be done to monitor their effect. In general, trainees' choice of courses reflects conventional male-female patterns. The reviews of individual training plans are not specific enough and the process is often affected by the poor quality of review documents.

Resources for training

Most training staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. However, too few employers and workplace supervisors are trained to carry out assessments. Opportunities for trainers to develop their training skills are not developed enough, especially in delivering key skills. The work-based environment generally provides good accommodation for training.

Managing quality

Three of the seven inspections identified significant shortcomings in managing quality. These include:

- not taking enough account of the views of trainees in planning their training;
- not monitoring their progress well enough; and
- lack of specific target setting for improvement.

All the providers evaluated their own provision and sent their self-assessment reports to us. A common weakness of these evaluations is their failure to assess adequately the quality of on-the-job training.