

Consultation on how Estyn inspects

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. It is independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales. The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. This consultation seeks your views on Estyn's inspections. Any changes will be made from September 2017.

This consultation relates to the following sectors:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- all-age schools
- federated schools
- special schools
- pupil referral units
- independent schools and independent special schools and colleges
- initial teacher education and training
- further education institutions
- adult community learning
- work-based learning

Non-maintained settings and local authorities are not included, though the feedback may also inform future inspection arrangements in those sectors.

The inspection arrangements for the further education sector were reviewed last year to reflect changes in the sector in recent years. This consultation will have a bearing on the inspection framework for further education institutions. Any adjustments may be introduced over a longer period of time and in light of an evaluation of the new arrangements in the sector.

Estyn introduced the current inspection arrangements in September 2010 at the start of a six-year cycle of inspections (2010-2016) for most sectors that it inspects. A mid-cycle review, done by Estyn in early 2012, showed that stakeholders were generally positive about these arrangements. In 2013, Estyn and the Welsh Government consulted on changes to the frequency of inspections and the notice period prior to inspection. As a result, regulations were changed to break the predictability of the timing of school inspections.

Since then, major changes have been planned for the education system in Wales as a result of the New Deal and the Successful Futures and Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers reports. It is timely to look again at what and how Estyn inspects. Estyn welcomes a wide debate with learners, professionals, parents or carers and anyone with an interest in education about our future inspection arrangements.

Some aspects of what and how Estyn inspects are legal requirements. Any changes to these aspects would take a little longer and be subject to further consultation.

How to submit your views

There are two ways of completing and submitting your response:

- 1 Complete the online questionnaire at www.estyn.gov.wales/consultation
- 2 Print this document and post your response to:

Consultation Officer
 Estyn,
 Anchor Court,
 Keen Road,
 Cardiff
 CF24 5JW

The consultation will launch on 30 September 2015 and will close on 11 November 2015. Please make sure all postal responses arrive at Estyn by this date.

Confidentiality

The information provided will be held by Estyn and individual responses will not be shared with anybody outside the organisation. The information will be used to help improve how Estyn inspects education and training in Wales. If you disclose your identity, it will be treated in confidence.

Key information about you

Please choose one option below which best describes the capacity in which you are completing this questionnaire.

Learner <input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/carer <input type="checkbox"/>	Education professional <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify): EWC			

Which sector(s) are you interested in? (Please select all that apply).

Adult community learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local authorities and regional consortia	<input type="checkbox"/>
All-age and federated schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Primary schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Early years settings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pupil referral units	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Further education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Secondary schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Independent schools and independent special schools and colleges	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Special schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Initial teacher education and training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Work-based learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):			

Question 1: Planning initial inspections

At the moment, all providers are inspected in the same way. In future we could decide to inspect providers in different ways depending on how they did in their last inspection or for some other reason.

Please tick one box against the statements below to indicate your preferred approach.

All providers should be inspected in the same way	Estyn should look at their last inspection and other information and decide how to inspect them	Do something different
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have selected 'do something different' please use the box below to state how you feel inspections of education and training providers in Wales should be carried out.

Council advocates a more flexible and proportionate approach to inspection. Adopting such an approach would help target resources better to improve provision for all learners. Turning to Professor Donaldson, perhaps we can extend his advice on assessment in the curriculum and apply it to our assessment of educational provision:

'be as light-touch as possible and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy' ('Successful Futures', page 83)

Council is also of the view that more frequent, lighter touch inspection would have greater positive impact on learning and improving outcomes.

Greater flexibility and choice in establishing the focus of inspections would allow Estyn to direct effort on the most relevant and important aspects of performance and delivery for each school, that is, one size does not fit all.

Council also feels that local authorities should be able to request inspections when a need is identified.

Federated schools should be inspected at the same time.

Question 2a: Follow-up activity in schools

During an inspection, inspectors consider whether the provider needs any follow-up activity.

For schools, Estyn has four categories of follow up:

Category	Description
Local authority monitoring	Local authority monitors progress and gives Estyn a report after about 12-18 months
Estyn monitoring	Estyn checks progress and/or visits the school after about 12-18 months
Significant Improvement	Estyn visits the school to check progress after about 12 months
Special measures	Estyn visits the school every term to check progress

Do you feel that these four levels of monitoring are effective for schools?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure / no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 2b: Follow-up activity in post-16 providers

For post-16 providers, there are two categories of follow up, called Estyn monitoring and re-inspection.

Do you feel that these two levels of monitoring are effective for post-16 providers?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure / no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to provide suggestions on how Estyn could improve its follow-up arrangements for both schools and post-16 providers.

Question 3: Estyn's common inspection framework

The common inspection framework tells everyone what we look at on an inspection. There are three key questions (Key Questions 1, 2 and 3) split into 10 different areas (1.1 - 3.4). Currently we ask questions about all these areas.

More information about Estyn's common inspection framework can be found on Estyn's website: <http://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/inspection-explained/common-inspection-framework>

How important is it that we continue to inspect each of these areas?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	Unsure
Key Question 1: Outcomes for learners					
1.1 Standards – do learners work well and get good results?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Wellbeing – are learners enjoying education?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Question 2: Quality of provision					
2.1 Learning experiences – do subjects (the curriculum) help learning?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 Teaching – is teaching meeting learners' needs?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3 Care, support and guidance – is there support when learners need it?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4 Learning environment – is the provider a positive place to learn?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Question 3: Leadership					
3.1 Leadership and management – is there good leadership?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 Quality improvement – does the provider keep getting better?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3 Partnership working – is the provider working well with others to help learners?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4 Resource management – does the provider make good use of money and staff?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please use the box below to provide suggestions on any areas that you feel that Estyn should prioritise or focus on in its inspections, including areas that are not included in the current framework.

Key question 1 will require some revision in order to align it with the vision for learners described in 'Successful Futures'.

Key questions 2 and 3 will require revision following the introduction of new professional standards for the workforce.

Question 4a: Estyn's judgement words

Estyn currently uses the following judgement words and descriptions in its reports to describe providers.

Judgement word	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Do you think that Estyn should continue to use these four words and descriptions for inspection judgements?

Yes

No

Unsure/ no preference

If you selected 'No', please use the box below to state what you would find more useful.

Council recognizes that the judgement words develop meanings and interpretations beyond those intended by Estyn. We are pleased that this question is included in the consultation and acknowledge that Estyn realizes the significance of the words it uses.

Council identified the descriptor 'adequate' as particularly problematic, might the word 'satisfactory' better convey the judgement meaning?

In general we urge Estyn to work with partners to ensure they have the right words which reflect the judgement accurately.

Question 4b: Making judgements

Currently, Estyn makes 15 judgements in an inspection report. Inspectors make a judgement against each of the 10 quality indicators described earlier in question 3 (standards, wellbeing, teaching etc). They then use these findings to make a judgement for three key questions on outcomes, provision and leadership. Inspectors also make two judgements about the provider’s overall performance and how likely they are to improve.

What are your views on the number of different judgements that Estyn makes?

Far too many <input type="checkbox"/>	Too many <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Just about right <input type="checkbox"/>	Too few <input type="checkbox"/>	Far too few <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/no response <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to explain your answer and to make any further comments about what Estyn should make judgements on.

Council believes that there is a balance to be struck between evaluations and labelling. Labelling and associated stigma can obviously have a detrimental effect on learners as well as on the morale of practitioners.

Question 5: Notice period

Since 2010, providers across most sectors have 20 working days’ notice before an inspection.

What do you think about the present notice period?

Far too long <input type="checkbox"/>	Too long <input type="checkbox"/>	Just about right <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Too short <input type="checkbox"/>	Far too short <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/no response <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to state what you feel the notice period should be and to explain your reasons why.

Council is of the view that the current notice period is appropriate.

Question 6: Involving parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors in inspections

Parents/carers in schools

Currently, parents/carers can complete an online questionnaire and can attend a parents/carers meeting before the start of the inspection to share their views.

Question 6a: Should Estyn continue to use anonymous questionnaires to seek the views of parents/carers before an inspection?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 6b: Should Estyn continue to invite parents/carers to attend a meeting as part of an inspection?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Learners

At the moment, a proportion of learners over the age of seven complete an online questionnaire before an inspection. Inspectors also meet groups of learners during an inspection and speak to individual learners when they observe lessons.

Question 6c: Should Estyn continue to use anonymous questionnaires to seek the views of learners before an inspection?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Staff

Inspectors interview some members of staff during inspections but Estyn does not use a staff questionnaire to enable all members of staff to share their views.

Question 6d: Should Estyn introduce anonymous staff questionnaires before an inspection?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Governors

Where a provider has a governing body or similar body, inspectors interview the chair of governors and a small number of other representatives.

Question 6e: Should Estyn introduce anonymous governor questionnaires for all governors before an inspection?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no preference <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to provide suggestions on any other ways Estyn can involve everyone in inspections.

Council believes that drawing evidence from a wider range of sources as possible can only help Estyn gain a broad a picture of performance and thus, make valid, robust evaluations and judgements. It is Council's view that continuing with surveys and meetings with pupils, governors and parents are valuable and should continue. At the same time, we are sure Estyn can capitalise on digital technology to explore new ways of benefiting from insights from these groups.

Question 7: Inspection reports

To be useful, inspection reports should be easy to understand and published quickly after the inspection. They should give the reader a clear picture of a provider's strengths and weaknesses. They should also help providers to improve.

Using the above definition of usefulness, how far do you agree or disagree that Estyn's inspection reports are useful?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no response <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to provide suggestions on how Estyn can improve its inspection reports.

If a more streamlined approach to inspections is adopted, Council would anticipate that Estyn's reports could appear more expeditiously.

Question 8: Lay inspectors

Lay inspectors are members of the general public who are trained by Estyn to take part in school inspections. They are not education professionals, but they provide a lay person’s opinion.

How far do you agree or disagree that Estyn should include a lay inspector on school inspection teams?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no response <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to explain your choice and provide any other suggestions about the use of lay inspectors on inspections.

Question 9: General comments

Estyn consulted on its inspection arrangements in 2012 and there was strong support for the aspects such as:

- a senior member of staff from a similar provider (a ‘peer inspector’) should be included as a member of the inspection team
- a senior member of staff from the provider should be invited to join the inspection team as a ‘nominee’
- inspection should build on the provider’s own self-evaluation

Estyn is committed to improving the way it inspects and aims to build on these strengths.

We are interested in your views on how we can do our work more effectively.

Please use the box below to provide feedback on any other aspects of Estyn's inspection arrangements and to provide suggestions on any other issues that should be considered as part of the review.

Council welcomes this consultation. We consider it both timely and appropriate to review our entire accountability framework to ensure it can be aligned with the new emerging curriculum informed by the recommendations from 'Successful Futures'. This consultation by Estyn is an essential first step.

The high degree of prescription and detail in the national curriculum, allied to increasingly powerful accountability mechanisms, has tended to create a culture within which the creative role of the school has become diminished and the professional contribution of the workforce underdeveloped. The extent of legislative control and associated accountability mechanisms, seen as necessary at the time, have inhibited professionalism, agility and responsiveness in dealing with emerging issues, and have focused too-frequent political intervention in non-strategic matters. ('Successful Futures', page 10)

What we are looking for from inspection then, is a framework that is able to balance accountability and creativity, which reflects the aspirations of a new curriculum and a shared common purpose and understanding of what is great learning across the different educational sectors and all practitioners.

Estyn has a key role in forming the culture in educational institutions subject to inspection. We need to ensure that we have an inspection system that is measuring and making judgements about the elements that we all agree are important, rather than measuring what is easy to measure. Punitive accountability structures can have a distorting effect on schools, colleges as well as on the practice of those working in them.

In adopting the recommendations and proposals from 'Successful Futures', we will need an inspection system which can measure how well we have developed rounded citizens who are:

*Ambitious, capable learners,
Enterprising, creative contributors
Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society*
(('Successful Futures', page 29)

This will require a more enabling and trusting culture and framework which aims to build capacity within the system to improve and innovate, and this is what we would look for in a revised inspection framework.

Council recognises that designing an inspection system that is aligned with the new direction for curriculum and assessment for Wales is a real challenge. But it is key that inspections are fit for purpose within the new vision for education.

Council would like to see a renewed inspection system which provides assurance that we are measuring what matters, not what is easy to measure. We need to measure progress of individual learners within a framework which values schools and colleges as partners in evaluation and improvement.

Additional information

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please use the box below to state the name of the organisation.

Education Workforce Council (EWC)

The EWC came into being on 1st April 2015. The EWC is the professional regulatory body for the education workforce, covering school teachers, Further Education (FE) teachers and learning support workers in school and FE settings. It is also the policy intention of the Welsh Government to further extend the Council's remit to Youth workers and Work based learning professionals from April 2017.

If you are happy for Estyn to contact you again in relation to your comments please provide your contact details below:

EWC
9th Floor Eastgate House,
35-43 Newport Road,
Cardiff, CF24 0AB.

Tel: 029 20460099
Fax: 029 20475850

Thank you for taking part in Estyn's consultation. The information received will be used to develop how Estyn inspects. The new arrangements will start in September 2017. If you have any questions regarding the consultation, please email Estyn at: consultation@estyn.gov.wales