

Estyn – listening, learning and changing together

Phase two consultation: Estyn's inspection arrangements from September 2021

This is the second in a series of consultations about how inspection can best support schools and other providers to manage the many changes taking place in education.

Between 2020 and 2024 we plan to make changes to our work:

- in the transition year 2020-2021 we propose to pause our school inspections so that inspectors can work with schools on the curriculum changes. (Phase one)
- in September 2021 we propose to amend our inspection arrangements, to align with the changes to education in Wales. (Phase two)
- before 2024 we will also pilot inspections that focus on validating schools' self-improvement processes. (Phase three)

At each stage we will work with you to shape our plans. During summer 2019 we asked you about what we should do to support schools during the transition year. In this consultation we ask for your views on our inspection arrangements from September 2021.

Context

In 2017 we introduced new inspection arrangements. At the same time, and in the context of ambitious education reforms, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector commissioned an independent review of school inspection in Wales. The review's report 'A Learning Inspectorate' was published in June 2018. It makes a series of recommendations on how we might adapt our work to contribute constructively to education reform. This consultation is part of our response to 'A Learning Inspectorate', focusing specifically on our inspection arrangements.

What's in scope?

This consultation relates to the following sectors:

- primary schools, including nursery schools
- secondary schools
- all-age schools
- special schools
- pupils referral units
- independent schools

Non-maintained nursery settings, initial teacher education, Welsh for Adults and local authorities are not included, though the feedback may also inform future inspection arrangements in those sectors.

Further education colleges, Adult Learning and work-based learning providers will have a separate consultation during 2020.

Some aspects of what and how we inspect 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 <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/consultation-our-inspection-arrangements-september-2021>
- 2 Print this document and post your response to:

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

The consultation will launch on 4 October 2019 and will close on 2 December 2019. Please make sure all postal responses arrive at Estyn by this date.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be held by us and individual responses will not be shared with anybody outside Estyn. The information will be used to help improve how we inspect 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/carers <input type="checkbox"/>	Education professional <input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) Education Workforce Council (Independent Regulator)
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Which sector are you most interested in? (Please select one option).

Non-maintained nursery settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pupil referral units	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Primary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special schools	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent special schools and colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>
All-age schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local government education services and regional consortia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independent schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 1: Estyn's common inspection framework

The common inspection framework tells everyone what we look at on an inspection. Currently, there are five broad inspection areas (IAs). Presently, inspectors evaluate each area separately, and report their findings along with a summative grading.

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

Q1: How important is it that we continue to inspect each of these areas?

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	Unsure
Inspection area 1: Standards Pupils' standards, the progress they make and how well they develop their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Inspection area 2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Inspection area 3: Teaching and learning experiences The quality of teaching, the curriculum and the provision for pupils to develop their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Inspection area 4: Care, support and guidance					

<p>Support for pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who may be vulnerable to underachievement; personal development, spiritual, moral and cultural development; the school's arrangements for safeguarding</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<p>Inspection area 5: Leadership and management</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management; improving the quality of the provision; professional learning and the use of resources</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please use the box below to provide suggestions on:

- 1) any areas we should prioritise more on our inspections
- 2) or areas we need to place less emphasis on than we do currently.

We have not ticked any of the boxes in the above table as the Council wishes to limit its response to matters that are within its remit, specifically the impact that any changes to the inspection framework might have on the education workforce.

In this context, we wish to highlight the broader context of significant (and ongoing) change within the education sector in Wales. Reforms to the inspection arrangements will be being introduced in parallel with other changes and initiatives that are already having a profound impact on staff (and their workloads) throughout the sector. These include the National Mission, ongoing preparations for the introduction of the new curriculum and the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

The inspection process can and should play a key role in helping to guide education professionals through the important period of change that is underway in Wales and in fulfilling this remit we suggest that consideration is given to the significant pressure that the education workforce is presently under as a result of the scale of change. We also suggest that the inspectorate seeks to avoid creating further demands on the workforce with the focus being on the important

role that it has to play in providing schools with constructive advice on what is required and expected of them and how improvements can be delivered.

Part 2: Summative gradings

We currently use the following summative gradings and descriptions in our reports to describe aspects of providers' work.

Summative gradings	What the judgement means
Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

We are proposing to stop giving summative gradings for each inspection area of a school and PRU's work from September 2021. Instead, we would write our evaluations and judgements of each inspection area of the framework in the narrative within the report. We think that this will help schools and PRUs to focus on the messages in the report rather than on summative gradings. This will help the school and PRU to learn from the inspection and to plan its improvement. We have trialled this approach in our inspections of local government education services, and feel that it works well.

We will continue to provide a summary identifying the school/PRU's strengths and priorities for improvement.

We will also continue to make it clear in an inspection report when a school requires significant improvement or special measures which are statutory levels of follow-up, prescribed in legislation.

Q2: To what extent do you agree with our proposal to stop using summative gradings for each inspection area?

Strongly agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/no opinion <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please use the box below to give us your opinions and state the reason(s) why you chose the option above:

The Council agrees with the proposal to end the practice of providing summative gradings for each inspection area of a school or PRU's work. At present these gradings are frequently treated (including by parents, the media and schools themselves) as the most important output of the inspection process. This can sometimes obscure the more nuanced and specific findings that are contained within Estyn inspection reports. The Council is hopeful that removing the summative gradings will help create a stronger focus on both the broader narrative and the more detailed, constructive findings that are set out within inspection reports. This will help schools and PRU's to focus on specific areas that are in need of improvement.

The Council also notes that it is proposed that inspection reports will continue to make it clear if a school requires significant improvement or special measures. This will help to ensure that the inspection regime remains robust and is able to command public confidence, which is essential.

Part 3: Follow-up activity in maintained schools

During an inspection, inspectors consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity. Significant improvement and special measures are statutory levels of follow-up, prescribed in legislation. These levels of follow-up will remain.

Estyn review is a non-statutory level of follow-up. Inspectors check on the progress of schools in Estyn review through a desk-based review, and may visit the provider to check progress a year or so after the inspection.

We are considering whether we still require Estyn review. Currently Estyn review is for schools where inspectors have concerns about aspects of the school/PRU's work, but those concerns are not serious. Removing it could enable inspectors to focus their follow-up work on schools causing the most concern and are in the statutory category of significant improvement or special measures.

Q3: Should we remove Estyn review?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure / no opinion <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you wish to provide any further comments or suggestions about this proposal, please use the comments box below:

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The Council supports the proposal to remove the 'Estyn review' follow-up category and agrees that this will help to focus on schools that are most in need of improvement.

The Council also believes that the workforce in schools and PRU's where Estyn inspection reports have highlighted specific (but less serious) concerns about aspects of their performance, will appreciate the greater autonomy and increased level of trust placed in them to resolve issues, without the need for a formal process to be in place.

Part 4: Inspecting A level/vocational learning in school sixth forms

Since 2017 we have strengthened how we report on school sixth forms. Currently we write about the sixth form across all inspection areas but this information is not collated into an overall summary of the sixth form. We would like to report on sixth-form standards and provision separately to the main report so that our evaluations are clearer to the reader.

Q4: Should we have a separate section in secondary school inspection reports to capture standards and provision in the sixth form?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/ no opinion <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you wish to provide any further comments or suggestions about this proposal please use the comments box below:

The Council believe that a separate section within secondary school inspection reports, that summarises standards and provision in the sixth form, would be a welcome innovation. Providing such a summary would be helpful for parents and could also be useful for pupils who are deciding where to undertake post-compulsory education. It would also allow inspection reports to highlight particular issues that are specific to sixth form provision within a school, including the quality of teaching, the breadth of subjects that are available and outcomes for students.

Part 5: Notice period

We give providers notice of an inspection. This is because we give parents, pupils, staff and governors time to complete pre-inspection questionnaires. In addition, we

allow time for the Reporting Inspector to contact the provider and plan the inspection activities.

In our consultation in readiness for the changes in 2017, many respondents favoured reducing the notice period. As a result, since 2017, providers across most sectors have 15 working days' notice before a core inspection. We no longer inform providers of an autumn inspection before the six-week summer holidays.

We are proposing to reduce the notice period to 10 working days. This will still give parents, pupils, staff and governors time to complete pre-inspection questionnaires and also reduce the waiting time for schools and PRUs from notification to the start of the inspection.

Q5: We are proposing to reduce the notice period to 10 working days from September 2021. To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure/no opinion <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you wish to provide any further comments or suggestions about this proposal please use the comments box below:

The Council agrees with the proposal to reduce the notice period for inspections.

The Council notes and supports the fact that the proposed 10 day notification period remains significantly higher than that provided by Ofsted in England (where schools are only provided with notice on the working day before inspection commences) and by the inspectorates in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where two days' notice is provided.

The Council is confident that the proposed notice period of 10 working days will ensure that adequate time is provided for pre-inspection paperwork to be completed, whilst also reducing the intensely stressful period between notification and the inspection commencing.

Part 6: General comments

We are committed to improving the way we work and are interested in your views on how we can carry out our work more effectively.

Q6a: Please use the box below to provide feedback on any other aspects of Estyn's inspection arrangements.

The Council wishes to commend Estyn on its practice of producing thematic reports that address specific issues within the education system in Wales. These reports provide useful insights into current and emerging practice and research of this nature can play a key role in promoting good practice. This is particularly important in the context of the National Mission, introduction of the new curriculum and other changes such as the ALN reforms. The Council would therefore encourage Estyn to continue to produce thematic reports covering a broad spectrum of issues and to ensure that the findings are disseminated as widely as possible across the sector in Wales.

Q6b: We would like to know your views on the effects that the proposals in this consultation would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

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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

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

Mr Ben Lester, Senior Policy and Planning Manager, Education Workforce Council
Email. ben.lester@ewc.wales

In spring 2020, we will be establishing a 'virtual parent/carers' panel'. The panel will enable parents/carers' to share their experiences and influence decisions to help shape the way forward for Estyn.

If you are interested in being part of this forum, please email us at:

NIA21@estyn.gov.uk

Thank you for taking part in our consultation. We will use the information we receive to develop our inspection work. The new inspection arrangements will start in September 2021.

If you have any questions regarding the consultation, please email us at:

consultation@estyn.gov.wales