



Understanding inspections
in independent specialist colleges:
a guide for parents
and carers



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- / nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- / primary schools;
- / secondary schools;
- / special schools;
- / pupil referral units;
- / independent schools;
- / further education;
- / independent specialist colleges;
- / adult community learning;
- / local authority education services for children and young people;
- / teacher education and training;
- / Welsh for adults;
- / work-based learning; and
- / learning in the justice sector.

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

Our inspection work and advice play a key part in raising standards and quality and informing policy in education and training across Wales.

Head Office:

Anchor Court,
Keen Road,
Cardiff CF24 5JW

Tel: 029 2044 6446

Fax: 029 2044 6448

www.estyn.gov.uk

How will an inspection benefit my child?

Inspection tells you about the standards and quality at your child's college. It tells you what the college does well and not so well. It gives the college an expert view on its work and helps it to improve and raise standards.

Why do we inspect independent specialist colleges?

Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires Estyn to inspect all independent specialist colleges in Wales at least once in every six-year period. The current period lasts from September 2014 to August 2020.

Who inspects the college?

The inspection team is led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). They are joined by team members who are either HMI or additional inspectors with considerable experience of teaching and education.

Many inspection teams will include a peer inspector. Peer inspectors are normally current teachers or leaders from other independent specialist colleges.

Each independent specialist college can have someone who works at the college on the inspection team. This nominee keeps the inspectors informed about the college and its work. Colleges do not have to take up this option.

Inspectors will have gained enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service. In conducting the inspection, inspectors will adhere to Estyn's code of conduct.

How will the college be inspected?

Colleges will generally receive about four weeks' notice of their inspection.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with Estyn's guidance for the inspection of independent specialist colleges, which you can find by visiting the Estyn website at www.estyn.gov.uk.

Inspections start with the college's assessment of its own work. Inspectors use this self-assessment report to plan the inspection.

How do inspectors take account of my views of the college?

Estyn wants to know your views of the college.

You will find a questionnaire included in this leaflet. You can complete this questionnaire in hard copy and return it to the college. Alternatively, you can return it by post to the Inspection Co-ordinators' team at Estyn (address on page 8 of this leaflet).

How will inspectors take account of my child's view of the college?

During the inspection week, in the college day, inspectors will be asking groups of learners how they feel about the college. They will talk to them about the work they are doing and how well they are getting on. Listening to learners is a very important part of the inspection process.

A sample of learners will receive questionnaires to complete. For specific groups of learners, inspectors will carry out oral surveys during the inspection instead.

How will I know the inspectors' views?

Estyn will produce the final report and summary within 45 working days from the start date of the inspection. The college will then be able to make available to you a copy of the inspection report upon request once they have received it.

You can also read the report on our website at estyn.gov.uk.

The report will have:

- / an overall judgement on current performance of the college;
and
- / an overall judgement on the college's prospects for
improvement.

It will also have judgements on:

- / outcomes – the standards achieved by learners and their
wellbeing;
- / provision – learning experiences, teaching, care, support
and guidance, and the learning environment; and
- / leadership – leadership, improving quality, partnership
working and resource management.

All judgements will be based on a four-point scale:

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; and

Unsatisfactory: important areas for improvement outweigh
strengths.

The report will include a table summarising the responses expressed in the questionnaire.

What happens next?

Colleges that are doing well will have recognition of their performance in their inspection report. Any sector-leading practice will be written up as a case study and may be shared with other colleges via Estyn's website.

What do I do if I have concerns about the inspection?

Complaints about an inspection are rare. All complaints are treated very seriously. If you have a concern about the inspection of your child's college, you should telephone 029 20 446446 or email feedback@estyn.gov.uk or write to:

Feedback and Complaints Manager

Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW