Local Authority Education Services in Wales

A framework for inspection under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and Section 51 of The Children Act 2004

Estyn

Rhagoriaeth i bawb....Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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

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

Estyn also:

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

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Part 1: Introduction

The background and statutory basis for inspection

Estyn is Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales.

Estyn's objectives are:

- to deliver high-quality inspection of individual education and training providers, and related services in Wales; and

- to provide independent and sound advice, based on inspection evidence, to inform the National Assembly for Wales in the formulation and evaluation of education and training policy.

In achieving the above we intend to:

- provide an efficient and effective service that is recognised by all for its fairness, integrity and objectivity;

- strive for excellence and improvement for all learners in Wales;

- promote good practice;

- be pro-active in reviewing and developing inspection arrangements and ways of working;

- be open, outward-looking and work closely with all our partners;

- treat both Welsh and English on a basis of equality in accordance with our Welsh language scheme;

- seek continuous improvement in our communication; and

- enable our staff to flourish and give of their best through organisational and individual learning and development.

The development of this framework reflects, and is part of, a model of local authority inspections in Wales which has evolved and changed over time. This model was influenced initially by the Local Government Act 1999 and associated inspection guidance, published as 'Best Value Inspection in Wales'[1]. The model takes account of the fact that education services form part of a wider organisation, the local authority, whose services are subject to external scrutiny from a number of different regulators and inspectorates. From its initiation in 2001, Estyn's approach to inspecting local authority services under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 has placed considerable emphasis on co-operation and collaboration with the providers

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[1] Audit Commission, July 2000

of those services, the local education authorities. This approach reflects Estyn's corporate values, which include close consultation, co-operation and collaboration with its partners and other stakeholders.

Estyn will use this framework as the basis for all inspections of local authority education services under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 (as amended by subsequent legislation) from April 2006. It is likely that there will be a need to revise this framework well before the end of the new LEA inspection cycle, in particular to accommodate anticipated changes in the strategic management and operational delivery of local authorities' children's services. Estyn already collaborates closely with the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales on inspections of local authority services where the two inspectorates have a mutual interest. It is likely that, in the medium term, there will be a need to extend this collaboration further. At some point in the future, there may well be a need to consider whether the pattern of delivery of children's services in one or more local authorities in Wales is such that these services should be inspected jointly by Estyn and SSIW using a common inspection framework. There may also be a need to consider whether the inspection of these services should, in addition, involve Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW).

In December 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government issued new guidance to local authorities in Wales[2] under the Local Government Act 1999, as amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. The guidance further develops the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) as the framework for improving local public services in Wales. WPI requires a different and more flexible approach from local authorities and from those who inspect, audit and regulate them. Under WPI, regulation is increasingly proportionate to risk as the results of the risk assessment are acted upon.

Estyn is a member of the Wales Improvement Board and its Inspection Sub-group, which includes representatives from all the inspectorates with responsibility for inspecting authorities in Wales. Estyn has agreed with the Wales Improvement Board that inspections of local education authorities conducted under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and Children Act 2004 will comply with the requirements of the Wales Programme for Improvement, as set out in the statutory guidance. In particular, Estyn will contribute to the risk assessment for each local authority. The guidance circular explains that Estyn's schedule of planned inspections will be reviewed and adjusted in the light of the outcomes of the risk assessment process.

Within the past four years, Estyn has introduced a common framework for most of the providers of education and training in Wales from September 2004. Because the common inspection framework has a direct focus on learners, it has not been possible simply to apply the framework to LEA inspections. However, a number of important features of the inspection arrangements associated with the use of the common inspection framework have been incorporated into the inspection of local authorities. These include:

- a strong focus on the local authority's own self-evaluation;

- the inclusion of a nominee on each inspection team;

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[2] Wales Programme for Improvement: Guidance for Local Authorities 2005 (Circular 28/2005)

- peer evaluation;

- differentiated inspections based on the risk posed by the local authority; and

- the inclusion of a response from the local authority as part of the report.

The statutory basis for LEA inspection

Inspections of local education authorities are carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 which provides that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI) 'may, and, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, shall, arrange for any local authority to be inspected'. Such an inspection 'shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function…which relates to the provision of education for (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise) or (b) for persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority'. Other aspects of local authority provision are subject to inspection under a range of legislation, including the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The inspection of other aspects of local authority work will be amended to take account of the commencement of the Children Act 2004. The Children Act 2004 introduces a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate to improve the well-being of children.

As far as local education authorities are concerned Estyn is given the powers to review the LEA's functions relating to Section 51 of the Act, namely in co-operating to improve well-being and producing children and young people's plans where these functions relate to education, training or youth support services.

Section 51 of The Children Act 2004 changes section 38 of the Education Act 1997 so that "…An inspection of a local education authority in Wales under this section shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing:

(a) any function conferred on them in their capacity as a local education authority; and

(b) the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 so far as relating to education, training or youth support services (within the meaning of section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000)."

Local education authority inspections will be conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training (HMI) in Wales. HMI may be joined on inspections by additional inspectors (AI) authorised under paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 of the School Inspections Act 1996. HMCI may, under Section 41 of the Education Act 1997, as amended by the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, request the Wales Audit Office to assist with any inspection under Section 38. HMCI and the Wales Audit Office have agreed that:

- the Wales Audit Office will contribute to those inspections of local authorities in which their expertise will add to the rigour and effectiveness of the inspection;

- the Wales Audit Office will contribute to the regular collection and analysis of local authority performance data; and

- as partners in the inspection of local authorities, the Wales Audit Office and
  Estyn may use local authority inspection reports to produce other reports,
  surveys and studies.

Circular 28/2005 further develops the concept of the Wales Programme for
Improvement (WPI) as the framework for improving local public services in Wales.
The guidance supersedes Circular 18/2002 and previous guidance on Best Value. It
enables Estyn to build on and develop further the collaborative approach established
under WPI.

The purpose of inspection

The primary functions of local authority inspection are:

- to act as a catalyst for improvement; and

- to provide assurance to Ministers and the public about the standard of local
  authority services.

The nature and range of improvements that result from local authorities' self-
evaluations of their functions and services vary widely, reflecting the diversity of local
political agendas, authorities and the communities that they serve. The best
authorities will have clear aspirations for the way in which they wish their community
and local services to improve, and will have demonstrated the leadership and
capacity required to achieve these improvements. Local people will support
authorities' plans for improvement and the way that services are provided. Where
government has set clear standards or duties, they will be addressed in local
strategies.

The outcomes of self-evaluation reviews will often pose difficult questions for local
politicians. An authority changing its political system will find that inspection helps it
to provide an effective external challenge. Every inspection report will offer practical
recommendations for improvement.

Inspections will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for
examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome
barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources. Estyn will work
closely with other organisations such as the Wales Audit Office that are involved in
supporting improvement, in order to ensure that the collection and dissemination of
best practice are well co-ordinated.

The principles of inspection

In relation to local education authority inspections Estyn will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all
  service users;

- fully involve local authorities in the inspection process by inviting the local authority to nominate a member of staff (the nominee) to work with the inspection team;

- relate inspection to the Wales Programme of Improvement, the local authority's self-evaluation and a regulatory plan which is both proportionate to risk and manageable;

- wherever possible, incorporate an element of peer evaluation in the inspection process;

- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation, and seek to co-ordinate inspection activity with other regulators and inspectorates;

- consult and agree on a suitable programme of inspection;

- apply the principle of equality for both Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate; and

- use the framework fairly and consistently across all local authorities.

Part 2: Conducting inspections

The inspection programme

Estyn aims to make local authority inspections more flexible than they are at present. We are taking more account of local authorities' planning processes when scheduling inspections. We are making inspections more flexible and responsive, so that they relate more effectively to the authority's planning processes and systems. The inspection programme links more closely with the work carried out under the Wales Programme for Improvement. In particular, it takes account of the outcomes of the risk assessments.

Each local authority in Wales is a unitary authority which carries out the functions of a local education authority (LEA).

In negotiation with Estyn, local authorities are able to opt for an inspection of the whole range of their section 38 work, or separate inspection of their major fields of responsibility.

The schedule for inspection covers the whole period of the six-year inspection cycle. During this cycle, most if not all areas of the local authority's activity will be inspected. The six-year cycle for the inspection of local authorities allows for differentiated amounts of time to reflect risk and the range of inspection work to be carried out.

The extent and nature of inspection will reflect the quality of performance by the local authority. Within the various fields of responsibility, Estyn will concentrate its resources on areas of greatest risk. A risk assessment determines the allocation of inspector days. The risk assessment will relate closely to the Wales Programme for Improvement.

For each local authority, there are three dimensions that will determine the nature of the inspection programme:

- the scope of an individual inspection, that is, the range of services being inspected – all fields of major responsibility, a single field, or a combination of fields;

- the timing of inspections; and

- the scale of the inspection based on risk.

For the first dimension, inspections will fall into one of three categories:

- Full inspection - the inspection of all major fields of responsibility in a single inspection;

- Combined fields inspection – the inspection of two or more major fields of responsibility in a single inspection; or

- Single field inspection - the inspection of one major field of responsibility in a single inspection (the single field will not be support services or strategic management).

For the second dimension, local authorities will propose the approximate timing of an inspection and Estyn will confirm or amend as necessary in consultation with the local authority and other regulators if appropriate.

For the third dimension, inspections will be described in accordance with the terms used in the Wales Audit Office Summary Risk Assessment Template (RAT), that is:

- high risk;

- medium risk; or

- low risk.

Local authorities may have a range of approaches to determining the **scope** and **timing** of the inspections in their programme. These approaches may include:

- having an early inspection to affirm their own evaluation of where improvement is needed;

- seeking to secure improvements before an inspection;

- having a concentrated period of inspection which would free up time before or after to focus on other matters; and

- having their inspections spaced out at regular intervals.

The **scale** of inspections is based on the risk assessment that has taken account of the LEA's self-evaluation, performance in previous inspections and a number of key performance indicators. Estyn would normally expect LEAs to have taken some account of the allocation of risk when they proposed their inspection programme, but there may be other factors that over-ride consideration of risk alone. If there is disagreement about the allocation of risk, then Estyn makes the final decision.

The risk assessment in 2005 was used to help LEAs to plan their approach to the inspection programme for the period 2006-2012. The risk assessment was used to determine the scale of inspection and the amount of time allocated to any Section 38 inspection that was agreed for 2006-2007. In the same way, the risk assessment informed the inspection arrangements for subsequent years, although the agreed programme for these years did not initially have the same level of detail as that for 2006-2007. It was not envisaged that there would normally be any need to amend the six-year programme once it was agreed in 2005, but it is reviewed annually and, if necessary, adjusted in the light of any significant changes in circumstances.

Certain other fields of local authority provision, including adult and community based learning, are inspected under separate legislation and do not fall within the scope of this framework. However, the findings of inspections in these other fields will be

taken into consideration in coming to a rounded judgement about the work of the local authority under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and the Children Act 2004.

HMCI will retain the right, where circumstances justify it, to determine the type of inspection to be carried out in any LEA, even if this differs from the type of inspection that would normally result from the risk assessment.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning may, at any point, request HMCI to arrange the inspection of any local authority under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. Such an inspection may require Estyn to vary any arrangements previously made in agreement with the local authority, in particular those relating to the timing and focus of the inspection.

Who will carry out the inspection?

Team composition

Estyn will decide the composition of each inspection team in consultation with the Wales Audit Office and other inspectorates when appropriate. The size and specialist knowledge of the inspection team reflects as closely as possible the nature of the service(s) being inspected.

LEA inspections are supported by an inspector from the Wales Audit Office staff or by a specialist education inspector from the Audit Commission in England, working on behalf of Wales Audit Office. In some inspections, the team will be supported by a inspector from other inspectorates such as the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW).

Throughout this document, the term 'inspectors' refers to any persons who are engaged and deployed by Estyn as members of its local authority inspection teams.

A reporting inspector (RI) will lead the inspection team. Usually this will be the District Inspector for the authority.

The inspection schedule is agreed for each authority over the six-year inspection cycle. Therefore the RI will know:

- what major fields of responsibility the team will inspect each year in his/her local authority;

- the risk allocated to the inspection;

- who is on the inspection team;

- the dates set aside for each inspection; and

- any special factors the team need to take into account during the inspection.

Peer assessors

As a new initiative for this six-year inspection cycle, Estyn aims to develop the use of peer assessors as additional inspectors. A peer assessor is either an elected member or a senior officer in a local authority in Wales. Peer assessors will bring the perspective of current working practices in a local authority. Peer assessors will have been nominated by the authorities for which they work. The peer assessor will need to meet certain criteria and successfully complete a training programme.

The peer assessor is a full member of the team but will complete only those duties that can be completed during the on-site period of the inspection. Peer assessors, the local authority and Estyn will be required to sign a memorandum of understanding that sets out the terms and conditions under which they will work as additional inspectors. The memorandum will include terms and conditions governing their conduct in relation to the inspection before, during and after the on-site period. This development will be kept under review and may be subject to change during the inspection cycle.

The peer assessor should:

- have a good working knowledge of the Framework for the Inspection of LEA Services and the relevant Guidance for the Inspection of LEAs;

- gain an understanding of the LEA's self-evaluation report and any associated plan;

- liaise with the reporting inspector about administrative aspects of the inspection such as documentation and meetings;

- complete inspection documentation, including 'issues sheets';

- contribute to meetings of the inspection team;

- contribute to corporate judgements;

- where possible, attend any meeting held during the inspection week at which feedback is given to the LEA; and

- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of the inspection.

Nominees

Inspections will provide an opportunity to involve local authorities actively in the inspection process by enabling an officer from the authority to work with the inspection team – the nominee. This will ensure greater involvement by the authority and strengthen the partnership between the inspection team and authority staff. It will also enable the authority to gain a better insight into the inspection process as well as provide valuable opportunities for professional development. The scope of the nominee's role will be negotiated between the authority and Estyn. The local

authority, the nominee and Estyn will be required to sign a statement of agreement that specifies the role and duties of the nominee. It is not a requirement that the authority should put forward a nominee.

The nominee should:

- ensure that inspectors are fully informed about the context of the local authority's work;

- liaise with the reporting inspector about administrative aspects of the inspection;

- take part in team meetings;

- respond to team requests for additional information;

- help resolve any problems that arise;

- be involved in collecting evidence, where appropriate and agreed; and

- hear emerging findings.

Involvement of the local authority Relationship Manager

Estyn may involve the Relationship Manager for the local authority in the work of the inspection team to provide detailed knowledge of those corporate and service issues that are relevant to the scope of the inspection.

Inspection judgements

Each inspection team will make two key judgements. These are:

(i) How good is the local authority's performance?

The local authority's performance in discharging its responsibilities will be rated on a four-point scale as follows:

Grade 1 – good with outstanding features (***)

Grade 2 – good features and no important shortcomings (**)

Grade 3 – good features outweigh shortcomings (*)

Grade 4 – shortcomings in important areas

The local authority's performance will be evaluated in accordance with the relevant sections of inspection criteria included in Annex 1 of this framework. These are local authority self-evaluation criteria which have been developed, agreed and published jointly by Estyn, the Wales Audit Office and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW).

The criteria will be published in full on Estyn's website. Local authorities may wish to use these criteria in conjunction with the four key questions identified on page 12 to inform their self-evaluations of services.

(ii) Will the local authority's performance improve?

The prospects of improvement will be rated on a four-point scale:

Grade 1 – improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place

Grade 2 – improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers

Grade 3 – some good prospects, but barriers in important areas

Grade 4 – many important barriers to improvement

The prospects for improvement will be evaluated according to the extent to which the following features are in place in relation to the area of responsibility in question:

- leadership that has the capacity and capability to make improvements and implement plans;

- a successful track record in managing change;

- a sound partnership with stakeholders, particularly schools;

- appropriate priorities, with challenging targets for improvement;

- coherent and feasible plans to meet targets;

- resources that are deployed appropriately to meet priorities;

- elected members who are committed to the improvements and know what needs to be done to deliver them; and

- appropriate systems to review progress, identify weaknesses and take effective action to remedy them.

Where the scope of the inspection covers a range of major fields of responsibility, separate grades will be given for each field.

In order to reach conclusions about the two judgements, inspectors will gather evidence to answer four key questions.

The four key questions are:

1   How effective is the authority's strategic planning?

2   How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

3   How effective are leadership and strategic management?

4   How well do leaders and managers, at all levels, monitor, evaluate and improve services?

Part 4 of this document gives more detail about the two key judgements and four key questions.

In findings of inspections carried out under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and Section 51 of The Children Act 2004 may contribute to the Section 38 inspection grades. Similarly, these inspections may take account of the findings of inspections carried out under the Education Act 1997.

Each inspection during the six-year period will use the local authority's self-evaluation as its starting point.

During the course of the inspection cycle, Estyn will complete a profile for each local authority recording the judgements about both the overall performance of the authority and the authority's performance in the individual major fields of responsibility. Hence, by the end of the six-year inspection programme there will be, for each inspection and for the authority overall:

- ratings for the questions: 'how good is the local authority's performance?' and 'will the local authority's performance improve?'; and

- grades for performance in the major fields of responsibility.

The grades awarded at various stages of the six-year cycle will contribute to the overall profile that will be completed by the end of the cycle. This approach will ensure that all LEAs are treated equally in terms of judgements made and will not advantage or disadvantage authorities that have requested different approaches to the programming of inspections. In addition, the developing profile will provide a helpful tool for use in the annual WPI joint risk assessment involving the local authority and the regulators.

It is not envisaged that, as a rule, Estyn will conduct a re-inspection, for example of a service that is awarded a low grade. However, in certain circumstances, Estyn may agree to re-visit service areas or take account of robust, well-corroborated evidence of improvement over time in completing the final profile. In normal circumstances, any such activity must be achievable within the inspection resource allocated to the local authority at the start of the programme.

Part 3 of this document describes how the programme of LEA inspections will be developed and the way in which inspections will be conducted. Part 4 sets out the scope of the inspections and the general structure of the inspection reports on the quality and effectiveness of the local authority.

Reports and action plans

Each inspection led by Estyn will lead to the publication of a report and an action plan in accordance with the Education (Publication of Local Authority Inspection Reports) Regulations 1998.

The report will:

- provide the two key judgements, expressed as grades for each main service area inspected;

- provide an evaluation of the local authority in relation to the four key questions;

- identify good features and shortcomings in the local authority's work in the fields being inspected; and

- provide recommendations which will help the local authority to improve its performance.

Inspection reports will adhere to the following structure:

- Contents;

- Context;

- Summary;

- Recommendations;

- Findings (for each field inspected);

- The authority's response to the report findings;

- Grading profile; and

- Composition of the inspection team.

In accordance with section 39(4) of the Education Act 1997, HMCI has decided that all local authority reports of inspections will be published by Estyn and copies placed on Estyn's website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The Wales Audit Office and the Audit Commission in England may also make the report available on their website after it has been published. Estyn will advise the local authority and the National Assembly for Wales of the publication date at least five working days before the report is published. Estyn will send the local authority a copy of the report, by post and e-mail, to arrive at least 24 hours before it is published. Copies of the report will be sent to the National Assembly for Wales and the Wales Audit Office. The local authority has a duty to make copies available locally, as set out in the 1998 Regulations.

The local authority will must prepare and publish an action plan within 70 days of receipt of the report from Estyn, or 80 days if a translation of the action plan into or from Welsh is deemed by the local authority to be necessary. The plan will set out the action the local authority proposes to take to address the issues identified in the report.

The local authority's action plan in response to the inspection should build upon and inform the local authority's planning for improvement.

The use of Welsh

The inspections of local authorities will comply with Estyn's Welsh Language Scheme. Where a significant proportion of the life and work of the local authority takes place through the medium of Welsh, all documentation produced by the team for use by the local authority during the inspection will be made available in Welsh or bilingually. Where necessary, inspection teams will be capable of inspecting in both English and Welsh. Local authorities may provide documentation in Welsh and/or English. All local authority inspection reports will be published bilingually.

Where requested by the authority, Estyn will provide translation facilities for meetings.

Assuring the quality of inspections

In order to ensure the continuous improvement of inspections, Estyn and the Wales Audit Office are committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer assessors;

- maintaining regular dialogue with the LEA during the inspection and supporting and promoting the active role of the nominee;

- using criteria that comply with the Framework for the Inspection of local authority education services;

- careful review and analysis of evidence;

- comprehensive and unambiguous oral feedback;

- consistently clear, accurate and well-presented reports; and

- maintaining appropriate procedures for the quality management of inspections and reports.

In order to secure feedback on the quality of inspections, Estyn will invite local authorities to complete a questionnaire after each inspection.

LEAs should raise any concerns about an inspection with the reporting inspector during the inspection. If the concerns cannot be settled in this way, then the LEA should write to HMCI asking for the matter to be considered further. A leaflet explaining complaints and appeals procedures in full is available from Estyn. It can be downloaded from the Estyn website.

How inspectors will behave

The LEA Inspection Framework requires inspectors to adhere to a code of conduct designed to secure the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected.

Inspectors will carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity

In doing so, inspectors should:

- carry out inspections effectively and efficiently;

- be fully prepared;

- treat all staff, elected members and service users with courtesy, respect and sensitivity;

- minimise disruption and stress; and

- ensure positive working relations throughout the inspection.

Inspectors will evaluate the work of the LEA objectively

In doing so, inspectors should:

- carry out their work with independence and objectivity;

- undertake inspections without bias or preconceptions;

- keep demands for information and other material to a realistic minimum;

- collect sound evidence from a range of sources and weigh it carefully; and

- evaluate against the criteria in the LEA Inspection Framework and the guidance provided here.

Inspectors will report honestly, fairly and impartially

In doing so, inspectors should:

- be impartial and be seen to be impartial;

- report their findings without fear or favour, identifying and reporting both good features and shortcomings;

- identify and report difficult issues that need resolution so that the authority can improve;

- make sure the published report is a fair and just representation of the work of the authority; and

- make sure that oral feedback is consistent with the final written report.

Inspectors will communicate clearly and openly

In doing so, inspectors should:

- be open and transparent in their dealings with those involved in the inspection;

- keep senior officers of the authority informed of emerging issues and findings;

- make sure that communication is effective throughout the inspection, and particularly during oral feedback; and

- make sure that complex information and judgements are as clear and accessible as possible.

Inspectors will act in the best interests of the safety and well-being of learners

In doing so, inspectors should:

- do nothing that might cause a learner, an officer or a member of the authority to experience distress or anxiety;

- do nothing that calls into question their relationship with an officer, member, service user or stakeholder of the authority;

- report immediately any concerns to the appropriate authority about the safety or well-being of a pupil or student or any other person; and

- refrain from intervening personally if they observe bad behaviour, unless someone's safety or welfare is in danger.

When visiting schools or other settings, inspectors will not discuss with the staff any conclusions or judgements reached about the local authority's work.

In addition, inspectors will:

- ensure, where appropriate, the confidentiality of all information received during the inspection;

- make sure that the findings of the inspection are confidential to the team and the authority until the final report is published; and

- not seek or try to obtain confidential staff appraisal information**.**

Inspections may include visits to schools and other settings where the impact of the local authority's work may be evident. The inspections may involve the evaluation of services that are provided on behalf of the local authority by private contractors or partner voluntary organisations. When visiting schools and other settings, inspectors will act in the best interests of all learners. All members of the inspection team who visit schools and other settings where there are children and vulnerable adults will have successfully cleared Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

Individuals, schools and other settings will not normally be named in the published report, unless the information is particularly relevant to the outcomes of the inspection, such as the identity of a newly built school, a special school meeting the specific needs of learners or a pupil referral unit. The inspection team will discuss schools or other settings with local authority officer and members, especially in inspection of the school improvement function. However, if any serious concerns emerge about the standards of achievement or quality of education, pupils' safety, wellbeing or spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the management of the school or setting, or its financial regulation and probity, inspectors will discuss the issues arising with the headteacher and governing body and notify HMCI, the local authority and, where appropriate, the Health and Safety Executive or the external auditor. Inspectors will notify the headteacher immediately of any matters that seriously affect the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils.

Inspectors will show due sensitivity throughout the inspection to the fact that local authority and school personnel have a job to do and are subject to demands other than inspection.

Child and vulnerable adult protection

If a member of the inspection team is aware of, or is alerted, directly or indirectly, to an allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, the inspector must take action in accordance with Estyn's child protection policy and procedures.

In the case of a multi-disciplinary inspection taking place where Estyn is the lead inspectorate, the reporting inspector will provide all team members with a copy of Estyn's child protection policy and procedures as part of their initial briefing before they join the team. Inspectors from other inspectorates are expected to work within these procedures.

Disclosure of information

Estyn is committed to making its business as open as possible. It responds to any requests for information made by the public unless there are clear legal reasons for not doing so or it can clearly be shown that it is not in the public interest. Individuals already have the statutory right of access to their personal information under the Data Protection Act 1998. Personal data includes any expression of opinion about an individual and any indication of the intentions of any person in respect of the individual. As far as inspections are concerned, this means that information about an officer or member of the authority is personal data even before his or her identity is established because it is likely that the inspection will produce other identifying information.

From January 2005, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 extends the right to allow access to all types of information held, whether personal or non-personal, by public authorities. Anyone, wherever in the world, can exercise their right to access information held by public authorities. The Act applies to public authorities and those providing services to them. The basic requirement under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is for the right of access to recorded information held by public authorities. As the original material obtained during inspection is the property of Estyn, it will deal with any requests under the Acts and decide what information should be disclosed. Subject to the exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Estyn must inform any person who makes a request for information whether the information is held, and if so, must supply that information.

Inspectors are aware that requests for information under the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 may be made for details contained in inspection evidence, letters and e-mails. Any comment made may become open to wider scrutiny if someone requests access to that information. Inspectors will therefore ensure that all information is documented in an objective manner and that all comments can be supported should they need to be disclosed.

Part 3: The inspection process

The stages of an individual inspection

The stages of an inspection will vary according to the different types of inspection. In summary, the process for each type of inspection is as follows:

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk
Full inspection	• Authority provides pre-inspection information • Pre-inspection briefing meeting for authority • Two five-day periods of inspection • Report produced after the inspection weeks • Minimum of six HMI, WAO inspector and peer assessor	• Authority provides pre-inspection information • Pre-inspection briefing meeting for authority • A five-day and a three-day period of inspection • Report produced after the inspection weeks • Minimum of five HMI, WAO inspector and peer assessor	• Authority provides pre-inspection • Pre-inspection briefing meeting for authority • A five-day period of inspection • Report produced at the end of the five-day inspection period • Minimum of five HMI, WAO inspector and peer assessor
Single or combined field inspections	• Authority provides pre-inspection information • Pre-inspection briefing meeting for authority • A five-day period of inspection • Report produced after the inspection week • Between four and six HMI depending on number of fields inspected • WAO inspector and peer assessor	• Authority provides pre-inspection information • Pre-inspection briefing meeting for authority • Inspection team has less time to prepare compared to a high risk inspection • A five-day period of inspection • Report produced after the inspection week • Between three and six HMI depending on number of fields inspected • WAO inspector and peer assessor	• A meeting with the authority before the inspection to discuss the organisational arrangements for the inspection • Briefing meeting with authority on first day of the on-site inspection period • A five-day period of inspection • Draft report produced at the end of the inspection week • Between two and four HMI depending on number of fields inspected • WAO inspector and peer assessor

Before the inspection

For all inspections, inspectors will need to make an **initial visit** to the authority to discuss the inspection and to make arrangements for collecting the information that the authority will provide. The visit will also be used to confirm whether the authority wishes to have a nominee.

For all inspections other than low-risk combined field or low-risk single field inspections, inspectors will then **review a range of information**, including that already collected and held by Estyn and/or the Wales Audit Office. They will also review any relevant inspection reports on the authority and on related activities such as such as those for Adult Community-based Learning, Youth Services, Young Peoples Partnership (YPP) and Youth Offending Team.

Inspectors will also review information provided by the local authority, such as:

- documents relating to the field and any associated self-evaluation and/or risk assessment;

- performance against national indicators and benchmark information;

- the results of consultation with service users and other stakeholders;

- the authority's main strategic plans relevant to the focus of the inspection;

- annual reports, accounts and management letters to members;

- the local authority's improvement plan, the auditor's report on the plan and other relevant plans relating to WPI;

- corporate guidance on self-evaluation and improvement;

- previous Estyn inspection reports and reports from other inspectorates and regulators; and

- reports of any external evaluations commissioned by the authority.

It should not normally be necessary for the local authority to produce documentation specifically for the inspection.

The authority's self-evaluation will form the starting point for the inspection. Inspectors will review the documentation and as a result they will:

- formulate hypotheses about the quality of the local authority's provision and performance; and

- identify what further information it needs to make the judgements in the report.

Inspectors will also plan carefully how to test their hypotheses and how best to collect the additional information. They will identify interviewees and plan a range of

inspection activities which will enable them to gather evidence, test hypotheses and make judgements as efficiently as possible.

For all inspections other than low-risk combined field or low-risk single field inspections, inspectors will then **meet the authority** to explain its initial impressions and proposals for the next stages of the inspection. The authority will be invited to question these initial impressions and the planned activities. The authority will then arrange interviews, visits, meetings and oral feedback. It will also brief any staff and elected members who are likely to be involved in the inspection. Though these inspection activities will be planned and agreed with the local authority, some additional activities may be arranged at short notice.

For **low risk single or combined field inspections**, inspectors will only meet the authority to provide an outline of the inspection arrangements and activities as all the inspection activities will take place during the on-site period of inspection. Inspectors will arrange with the authority for:

- appropriate documentation to made available from the first morning of the inspection week; and

- suitable interviews and feedback meetings to be set up.

The visit will also be used to confirm whether the authority plans to have a nominee.

During the inspection

In **high risk and medium risk full inspections**, there will be two separate periods of on-site inspection, with a review of evidence in between the two periods. The first period is of five days duration when inspectors will look at all aspects of the authority's work. This will be followed by a period when inspectors will review the evidence and establish further and more specific issues that need to be explored in more depth in the second period. The lead inspector will inform the authority about these issues and arrange for any interviews, visits and meetings that need to take place in the second
on-site period. Inspectors will provide informal oral feedback towards the end of the first on-site inspection period and formal feedback at the end of the second period. It is normally expected that both parts of the on-site inspection will take place within a three-week period.

In **all other inspections**, there will be a single five-day period of inspection. Formal oral feedback will be provided at the end of this period.

During the on-site inspection period in **all types of inspection**, inspectors will:

- interview key personnel and elected members;

- hold meetings with stakeholders;

- visit schools and/or other settings;

- review regularly whether sufficient evidence has been gathered; and

- provide regular feedback to the authority.

During this same period the authority will:

- receive and respond to regular feedback from inspectors; and

- if relevant, ensure that the nominee is given sufficient time to be an effective member of the inspection team

Inspectors will look at the service from the user's perspective. This stage provides an opportunity for inspectors to test hypotheses by carrying out various inspection activities in order to gather more evidence and information.

Towards the end of the on-site inspection period, inspectors will:

- present the oral feedback to the authority; and

- receive and respond to the initial reactions to the feedback.

Inspectors will give the local authority its judgements and indicate the evidence supporting these judgements. Senior managers and elected members should attend this meeting. Inspectors will welcome responses from the authority, including comment on the findings and confirmation of factual accuracy, where necessary. Inspectors will offer to consider any further evidence that the authority may wish to provide in response to the findings presented at the oral feedback. The authority should submit any additional evidence to inspectors as soon as possible, and not more than five working days after the oral feedback.

In the case of **low-risk single or low-risk combined inspections**, in addition to the oral feedback, a draft report will be produced by the end of on-site inspection period.

After the inspection

In all inspections, after considering any further evidence submitted by the local authority, inspectors will produce a draft report. The local authority will receive a late draft report, either electronically or in hard copy, to help with the checking of factual accuracy.   Local authorities are invited to submit a written response to the inspection findings for inclusion in the report. The response will be published by agreement with the reporting inspector. The local authority has five working days in which to consider the draft report and to produce its response.

If the local authority wishes to provide a written response for inclusion in the report, it should:

- use the response to give an early indication of how officers and members intend to tackle recommendations;

- make sure the response is brief and generally no more than one page;

- send the response to the reporting inspector within five days of receiving the draft report; and

- understand that it is the reporting inspector's right not to include the written response in the inspection report where circumstances warrant it.

Estyn will produce the final report, which the local authority will make available as set out on pages 14 and 15. Estyn will also send a copy of the report to the Wales Audit Office. Both Estyn and the Wales Audit Office may make the report available on the Internet after it has been published.

Section 39 of the Education Act 1997 enables HMCI to arrange for any report on an LEA to be published in such a manner as she considers appropriate. Estyn will send copies of the final report to the National Assembly for Wales and to the Chief Education Officer of the local authority, the elected member with main responsibility for education and the Chief Executive of the Unitary Authority.

When the report has been published, or is about to be published, the Reporting Inspector may, if invited to do so by the Council, present the report to the full Council or to a group of designated members and officers as determined by the Council.

Part 4: Inspection schedule

The inspection schedule sets out:

- the structure of the report

- the key judgements contained in the report

- the key questions which lead to those judgements; and

- the fields to be evaluated (using criteria based on existing LEA self-evaluation criteria where available)

The schedule must be used for Section 38 inspections of local authority services.

Structure of the report

All inspection reports will adhere to the following structure:

- Contents;

- Context;

- Summary;

- Recommendations;

- Findings (for each field inspected);

- The authority's response to the report findings;

- Grading profile; and

- Composition of the inspection team.

1 Context

The 'Context' section will be agreed with the authority. This section will include:

- a statement setting out the context of the inspection (e.g. the focus of the inspection, its relationship to WPI and its place within Estyn's cycle of inspections);

- a brief, factual statement of the scope of the major fields(s) of responsibility being inspected and the associated self-evaluation procedures;

- a concise, factual statement about the nature of the local authority, its community, and those features of the area which influence its work in the services being inspected; and

- a paragraph on finance that will be factual and very concise, including no more than a statement about how the authority's expenditure in education relates to its Indicator-Based Assessment for education (IBA), and explaining what factors make this expenditure high, low or otherwise.

The statements in this section will include, for example, information about the number and nature of schools, the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and the provision made for them, and a description of the composition of the area in terms of its ethnic, linguistic, social and economic background. The statement may refer briefly to any particular features which help to set the inspection in context, such as significant recent changes in the nature or structure of the authority. Additional information about the political composition and funding priorities of the authority may help set education in the context of the whole authority.

2 Summary

The 'Summary' section will include a concise summary of the main findings of the report, written in a style that is appropriate for a wide, non-professional audience.

For each field inspected, the summary will provide clear judgements as set out in the section on Inspection Judgements in Part 2 of the Framework for the inspection of local authority services.

The main judgements will be set out on a scoring chart.

The rest of the summary will set out the balance of main findings in relation to each of the two key inspection judgements. Positive findings will appear first.

3 Recommendations

This section will include clear, practical recommendations about the actions the authority should take to improve its performance.

The recommendations will be stated in such a way as to provide a clear basis for:

- the local authority to plan improvements in the quality of its service;

- inspectors to evaluate progress during follow-up work; and

- auditors to assess the extent to which the authority has responded to the inspection during their annual audit of the improvement plan.

The recommendations will arise from the findings and relate to the key questions. The emphasis will be on raising the standards that learners achieve and improving the quality of local authority services. Non-compliance with statutory requirements will be included. The recommendations will be listed in order of priority in relation to improving the quality of services. Where the inspection highlights issues already identified as priorities in the local authority's published plans, such as strategic plans, this section will make reference to the fact.

The recommendations will be numbered. i.e. R1, R2 etc.

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4 Findings

In this section, the judgements reported in the Summary section will be supported by evaluation, commentary and pertinent examples of evidence relating to the four key questions.

Key question 1: How effective is the authority's strategic planning?

Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on the extent to which the authority:

- has clearly stated and appropriate aims that:

  o   address relevant national and local priorities;

  o   take account of audits of need; and

  o   reflect the results of self-evaluation.

- consults and communicates effectively with service users, local people and key partners;

- has realistic and coherent strategies, policies and supporting plans for implementing activities which clearly set out how it is going to turn aims into action and what outcomes it is seeking;

- is effective in making decisions;

- strategically considers resources and matches these (staff, funding etc) to its priorities for service delivery; and

- contributes to, leads (where applicable) and gains the support of partnerships.

**Key question 2:   How effective are services and how does performance
compare, including value for money?**

Inspectors should evaluate, grade and report on the effectiveness and value for
money of:

Support for school improvement:

- Local authority support, monitoring, challenge and intervention;

- The authority's work in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum
  support;

- Meeting the needs of and raising standards of specific groups;

- Curriculum support and enhancement and broadening opportunities for learning;

- Support for school leadership and management including support to school
  governors; and

- Value for money.

Promoting social inclusion and well-being:

- The Council's work to meet its statutory duties in respect of:

  o looked-after children;

  o excluded pupils;

  o promoting race equality and combating racism;

  o preventing and tackling bullying; and

  o child protection and well-being.

- The Council's work in raising standards for specific groups of vulnerable children
  and young people;

- Support for attendance at schools;

- Support for behaviour in schools; and

- Value for money.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN):

- The Council's work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of children and
  young people with additional learning needs (ALN);

- The Council's work in raising standards for children and young people with ALN;

- The Council's provision for children and young people with ALN, including provision that is commissioned and /or provided by or with other agencies;

- The Council's work with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN; and

- Value for money.

Access and school organisation:

- The provision of an appropriate range and number of school places;

- Asset management planning and the education capital programme;

- Admissions to schools;

- Home-school transport;

- Co-ordination of early years (after Children Act 2004 has commenced); and

- Value for money.

Support services:

- Services to support schools;

- Corporate services for education, including schools;

- Property related services;

- School meals; and

- Value for money.

Key question 3: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on:

- the quality of the leadership provided by elected members;

- the quality of leadership provided by senior officers; and

- the quality and appropriateness of membership and actions in partnership working.

**Key question 4:   How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and
improve services?**

Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on the extent to which the authority:

- makes appropriate arrangements for securing continuous improvement with due
  regard for economy, effectiveness and efficiency;

- ensures elected members play an appropriate role in performance management;

- implements self-evaluation procedures effectively and has a good understanding
  of its strengths and areas for improvement; and

- has a good track record in securing improvements.

5 The authority's response to the report findings

The local authority is invited to submit a written response to the inspection findings
for inclusion in the report. The response will be published by agreement with the
reporting inspector. The response is not the place for LEA to express a view about
the quality of an inspection. LEAs are able to comment on the process of inspection
by completing a questionnaire at the end of the inspection and returning it to Estyn.

The LEA should:

- provide a written response to the main inspection findings;

- use this response to give an early indication of how officers and members intend
  to tackle the recommendations;

- make sure the response is brief;

- send the response to the reporting inspector within five days of receiving the
  draft report; and

- understand that it is the reporting inspector's right not to include the written
  response in the inspection report where the circumstances warrant it.

6 Profile of inspection grades

The grades given for each inspection will contribute to a cumulative grade profile for
the LEA.

The fields to be evaluated using criteria based on the Section 38 Local Education
Authority Inspection and Self-evaluation Criteria and Inspection Grade Profile
produced by Estyn, ADEW and WAO are:

- Strategic management;

- Support for school improvement;

- Promoting social inclusion;

- Additional learning needs;

- Access and school places; and

- Support services.

There are two ways that Estyn will inspect 'strategic management':

- Where an LEA chooses to have a full inspection of all its major fields of responsibility, Estyn will inspect and report on strategic management as well as the other major fields of responsibility; and

- Where an LEA chooses to have inspections of single fields of major responsibility or a combination of single fields of responsibility, then strategic management will not feature as a separate focus for inspection. This is because inspecting the other major fields of responsibility will provide an evaluation of a significant aspect of strategic management. After each inspection of a single field or a combination of single fields, Estyn will enter the relevant grades for strategic management in the LEA Inspection Profile. However, these will be interim grades that need to be updated after every inspection and finalised at the end of the inspection cycle.

As 'support services' is a smaller field than the others, this will only be inspected as part of a full inspection or in combination with one or more of the other fields.

The following table shows the grade profile for an LEA.

	Question	SM*	Support for school improvement	Promoting social inclusion	ALN	Access & school organisation	Support services
1. How effective is the authority's strategic planning?							
1.1	has clearly stated and appropriate **aims** that: ➢ address relevant national and local priorities ➢ take account of audits of need, and ➢ reflect the results of self-evaluation						
1.2	**consults and communicates** effectively with service users, local people and key partners						
1.3	has realistic and coherent **strategies**, and supporting **plans** for implementing activities which clearly set out how it is going to turn aims into action and what outcomes it is seeking						
1.4	is effective in making **decisions**						
1.5	strategically considers **resources** and matches these (staff, funding etc) to its priorities for service delivery						
1.6	contributes to, leads (where applicable) and gains the support of **partnerships**						

Question	SM*	Support for school improvement		Promoting social inclusion		ALN		Access & school organisation		Support services	
2 How effective are the authority's services?											
see text for individual services		Local authority support, monitoring, challenge and intervention		The Council's work to meet its statutory duties in respect of: • looked after children • excluded pupils • promoting race equality and combating racism; • preventing and tackling bullying; • child protection and well being		The Council's work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of children and young people with ALN		The provision of an appropriate range and number of school places		Services to support schools	
see text for individual services		The authority's work in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum support		The Council's work in raising standards for specific groups of vulnerable children and young people		The Council's work in raising standards for children and young people with ALN		Asset management planning & the education capital programme		Corporate services for education & schools	
see text for individual services		Meeting the needs of and raising standards of specific groups		Support for attendance at school		The Council's provision for children and young people with ALN		Admissions to schools		Property related services	
see text for individual services		Curriculum support and enhancement and broadening opportunities for learning		Support for behaviour in schools		The Council's work with parents & carers of children and young people with ALN		Home-school transport		School meals	
see text for individual services		Support for school leadership and management		Value for money		Value for money		Co-ordination of early years		Value for money	
see text for individual services		Value for money						Value for money			

Question	SM*	Support for school improvement	Promoting social inclusion	ALN	Access & school organisation	Support services
3 How effective are leadership and management?						
3.1 The quality of the leadership by elected members						
3.2 The quality of leadership provided by senior officers						
3.3 The quality and appropriateness of membership and actions in partnership working						
4 How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and improve services?						
4.1 makes appropriate arrangements for securing continuous improvement						
4.2 ensures elected members play an appropriate role in performance management						
4.3 implements self-evaluation procedures effectively and has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement						
4.4 has a good track record in securing improvements						
How good is the authority's performance?						

Question	SM*	Support for school improvement	Promoting social inclusion	ALN	Access & school organisation	Support services
Will the authority's performance improve?						

* SM stands for 'strategic management

7 Composition of the inspection team

This section identifies the inspectors, nominee and, where applicable, peer assessor who formed the inspection team.

Annex: Inspection criteria

Annex: Inspection criteria

Question 1a: How effective is the authority's strategic planning?
(in relation to the authority as a whole)

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on the extent to which the authority:	Demonstrating typical good features:
1.1	has clearly stated and appropriate **aims** that: • address relevant national and local priorities • take account of audits of need, and • reflect the results of self-evaluation	The authority's Improvement Plan and key strategy documents[3] set out the authority's strategic aims and priorities. They comply with the requirements of relevant Assembly Government guidance. Recommendations by the authority's external auditor are few in number and identify no risks that are not already included within the council's stated aims and priorities. The key educational priorities as identified by the Council have been accepted by all partners and the local communities themselves, and are reflected in the Community Strategy, Policy Agreements reflect the educational priorities and objectives shared between the authority and the Welsh Assembly Government. Departments of the council all understand the priority given to education in corporate plans and policies and know how their work in liaison with the education service contributes to achieving that priority.
1.2	**consults and communicates** effectively with service users, local people and key partners	Senior officers, elected members and school managers including governors have a clear understanding of the authority's priorities and strategic direction. Decisions affecting the education service are significantly informed and influenced by good consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders are well informed about the outcomes and reasons for decisions. The Council is effective in maximising acceptance of, and engagement in, its priorities, policies and plans by schools, local people and other stakeholders.

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[3] Until 2008, the key strategy document for education will be the Single Education Plan. From 2008, it will be the Children and Young People's Plan.

		There are effective arrangements for consulting pupils. Consultation and communication take appropriate account of linguistic and other diversity in the community.
1.3	has realistic and coherent **strategies, policies** and supporting **plans** for implementing activities which clearly set out how it is going to turn aims into action and what outcomes it is seeking	The Council has effective corporate policies for meeting statutory requirements that impact on its education services, including: • race equality and promoting racial harmony; • equal opportunities and diversity (including workforce); • safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people • corporate parenting; • <mark>arrangements for health and safety;</mark> • disability discrimination legislation. There are coherent strategic plans[4] supported by appropriate risk assessments and effective operational plans which include: • specific objectives; • measurable and achievable targets; • responsibilities allocated to teams or individuals; • timescales which are realistic, and include clearly defined milestones; • resource implications that indicate how much the work will cost and the source of funding. Plans are clearly informed by audit, data analysis and evaluations. There is an effective corporate planning cycle in which all directorates are actively involved and which is co-ordinated with the financial planning cycle. Corporate and other strategic plans are consistent with each other, clear, well sequenced, affordable and achievable. Strategic planning within the education service both reflects and influences corporate planning. Where appropriate, the Policy Agreements and other strategic plans are clearly reflected in schools' development planning. There is coherence but not duplication between the various layers of plans, Policy Agreements and other initiatives.

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[4] Until 2008, the key strategy document for education will be the Single Education Plan. From 2008, it will be the Children and Young People's Plan.

		Stakeholders, including schools, are aware of and committed to achieving the targets.
1.4	is effective in making **decisions**	Decision-making, including that relating to the budget, is transparent. There is an informative and analytical record of all discussions, formal and informal, that lead to significant decisions affecting the education service. Decision-making processes are clearly articulated and are used well to improve the education service. Lines of communication, responsibility and accountability are clear. There are effective procedures for defining and co-ordinating the work of the different departments.
1.5	strategically considers **resources** and matches these (staff, funding etc) to its priorities for service delivery	Resources are clearly linked to priorities. Activities are costed and feasible. Strategy is accompanied by sound financial planning which makes proposed developments feasible. The authority is proactive in seeking and effectively using external funding to address its priorities.
1.6	contributes to, leads (where applicable) and gains the support of **partnerships**	Active and effective partnerships exist, at all levels, for example with schools; the business community; Health Service and police. Clear, appropriate strategic objectives are set for partnerships, and partners are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. Planning effectively links the major services provided for learners by the authority and other key partners. The Education service contributes effectively to other services'/ stakeholders' major plans and initiatives. The service has a clear understanding of the relative costs and benefits of the various partnerships to which it contributes. ==Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation on Children and Young People: Rights to Action Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes, there may be additions to this section==

Question 1b: How effective is the authority's strategic planning? (for each field being inspected)

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on the extent to which the authority:	Demonstrating typical good features:
1.1	has clearly stated and appropriate **aims** that: • address relevant national and local priorities • take account of audits of need, and • reflect the results of self-evaluation	The authority's Improvement Plan and key strategy documents[5] set out the authority's strategic aims and priorities for the field(s). They comply with the requirements of relevant Assembly guidance. The key priorities for the field(s) of responsibility, as identified by the Council, have been accepted by all partners and the local communities themselves. Where applicable, Policy Agreements reflect the educational priorities and objectives shared between the authority and the Welsh Assembly Government. The departments of the council all understand the priority given to the field(s) of responsibility in corporate plans and policies, and know how their work in liaison with the education service contributes to achieving that priority.
1.2	**consults and communicates** effectively with service users, local people and key partners	Senior officers, elected members, governing bodies and school senior management teams have a clear understanding of the authority's priorities and strategic direction for the field(s). Decisions relating to the field(s) are significantly informed and influenced by good consultation with stakeholders, including learners. Stakeholders are well informed about the outcomes and reasons for decisions. The Council is effective in maximising acceptance of, and engagement in, its priorities, policies and plans by schools, local people and other stakeholders. There are effective arrangements for consulting pupils Consultation and communication take appropriate account of linguistic and other diversity in the community.

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[5] Until 2008, the key strategy document for education will be the Single Education Plan. From 2008, it will be the Children and Young People's Plan.

| 1.3 | has realistic and coherent **strategies, policies** and supporting **plans** for implementing activities which clearly set out how it is going to turn aims into action and what outcomes it is seeking | In the field(s), appropriate account is taken of the authority's practices and strategies for:

• race equality and promoting racial harmony;
• equal opportunities and diversity (including workforce);
• safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
• corporate parenting;
• <mark>arrangements for health and safety;</mark>
• disability discrimination legislation.

There are coherent strategic plans[6] supported by appropriate risk assessments and effective operational plans which include:

• specific objectives
• measurable and achievable targets
• responsibilities allocated to teams or individuals
• timescales which are realistic, and include clearly defined milestones
• resource implications that indicate how much the work will cost and the source of funding

Plans are clearly informed by audit, data analysis and evaluations.

There is an effective corporate planning cycle in which all directorates are actively involved and which is co-ordinated with the financial planning cycle.

Corporate and other strategic plans are consistent with each other, clear, well sequenced, affordable and achievable.

Strategic planning within the education service both reflects and influences corporate planning.

Where appropriate, the Policy Agreements and other strategic plans are clearly reflected in schools' development planning.

There is coherence, between the planned activities in the various layers of plans, Policy Agreements and other initiatives.

Stakeholders, including schools, elected members and officers, are aware of and committed to achieving the targets for the field(s). |

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[6] Until 2008, the key strategy document for education will be the Single Education Plan. From 2008, it will be the Children and Young People's Plan.

1.4	is effective in making **decisions**	Decision-making, including that relating to the budget, is transparent. There is an informative and analytical record of all discussions, formal and informal, that lead to significant decisions affecting the education service. Decision-making processes are clearly articulated and are used well to improve the education service. Lines of communication, responsibility and accountability are clear. There are effective procedures for defining and co-ordinating the work of the different departments.
1.5	strategically considers **resources** and matches these (staff, funding etc) to its priorities for service delivery	Resources are clearly linked to priorities. Activities are costed and feasible . Strategy is accompanied by sound financial planning which makes proposed developments feasible. The authority is proactive in seeking and effectively using external funding to address its priorities.
1.6	contributes to, leads (where applicable) and gains the support of **partnerships**	Active and effective partnerships exist, at all levels, for example with schools; the business community; Health Service; police; and providers of further education and work-based learning. Clear, appropriate strategic objectives are set for partnerships, and partners are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. Planning effectively links the major services provided for learners by the authority and other key partners. The Education Department contributes effectively to other departments'/ stakeholders' major plans and initiatives, relevant to this field. The service has a clear understanding of the relative costs and benefits of the various partnerships to which it contributes. Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation on Children and Young People: Rights to Action Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes, there may be additions to this section

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money? (overview)

Inspectors should evaluate, grade and report on the effectiveness and value for money of:				
2.1 Support for school improvement	**2.2 Promoting social inclusion and well-being**	**2.3 Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**	**2.4 Access and school organisation**	**2.5 Support services**
2.1.1 Local authority support, monitoring, challenge and intervention	2.2.1 The Council's work to meet its statutory duties in respect of: • looked-after children; • excluded pupils; • promoting race equality and combating racism; • preventing and tackling bullying; & • child protection and well-being.	2.3.1 The Council's work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN).	2.4.1 The provision of an appropriate range and number of school places	2.5.1Services to support schools
2.1.2 The authority's work in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum support	2.2.2 The Council's work in raising standards for specific groups of vulnerable children and young people	2.3.2 The Council's work in raising standards for children and young people with ALN	2.4.2 Asset management planning and the education capital programme	2.5.2 Corporate services for education, including schools
2.1.3 Meeting the needs of and raising standards of specific groups,	2.2.3 Support for attendance at schools	2.3.3 The Council's provision for children and young people with ALN, including provision that is commissioned and /or provided by or with other agencies	2.4.3 Admissions to schools	2.5.3 Property related services
2.1.4 Curriculum	2.2.4 Support for behaviour in schools	2.3.4 The Council's work	2.4.4 Home-school	2.5.4 School meals

support and enhancement and broadening opportunities for learning		with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN.	transport	
2.1.5 Support for school leadership and management including support to school governors	2.2.5 Value for money	2.3.5 Value for money	2.4.5 Co-ordination of early years (after Children Act 2004 has commenced)	2.5.5 Value for money
2.1.6 Value for money			2.4.6 Value for money	

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

2.1 Support for school improvement

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on:	Demonstrating typical good features:
2.1.1	Local authority support, monitoring, challenge and intervention	The Council has clear and appropriately differentiated procedures for monitoring, challenge and intervention with a focus on under performing schools, low performing schools and schools operating in challenging circumstances. Schools have been fully consulted on the procedures. There is clear distinction between the services that the Council provides to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, services that the Council offers for schools to purchase from their delegated budgets and services that the Council can broker from other providers if schools ask them to do so. Schools understand this pattern of service delivery and their responsibilities for school improvement. The Council is effective in ensuring that schools have access to a cost-effective range of services to support school improvement, and schools know how to purchase services relevant to their needs. The Council supports schools well in developing effective procedures for self-evaluation. These are linked to school

development planning. The procedures identify clearly and precisely areas where improvement and support are needed.

Monitoring visits by officers and/or advisers lead to clearly written reports that contain unambiguous judgements and recommendations. Governors and head teachers use the reports to plan for improvement.

Council support for setting targets has resulted in schools having robust, challenging but realistic targets. Schools respond well to challenges set by the Council and secure significant improvements in outcomes over time.

Data

The Council provides schools with a good and appropriate range of performance, benchmarking and comparative data. This is readily accessible and easily understood. Data contains information about the local performance of different pupil groups.

Data are distributed effectively at appropriate times to enable schools to use them well. The transfer of data is effective at points when pupils change schools.

The Council effectively supports schools in the use of data to secure improvement in the short-term and to inform longer-term planning.

The Council collects, and analyses well, an appropriate spread of data covering the full range of its functions. This includes data on school/pupil performance (including data for different pupil groups such as boys and girls, minority ethnic pupils and looked-after children), attendance, exclusions, ALN, and financial management. The Council uses this data to monitor performance and plan for improvement.

Schools causing concern

Monitoring is effective in identifying shortcomings at an early stage. Under-performing schools and schools which show few signs of improvement are identified by the Council. Difficulties in schools causing concern are always tackled promptly and incisively.

The Council's allocation of its centrally-retained school improvement resources is targeted to those schools most in need. Criteria for differentiated and clearly defined-levels of intervention are explicit and have been agreed with schools.

Council support and intervention in under-performing schools is directed through a clear action plan, agreed between the

		Council and the school. The action plan includes procedures to ensure a suitable, graduated reduction in the level of Council support. The Council monitors progress closely in under-performing schools. Reports to the head and governing body are regular and help to bring about improvement. The progress of schools causing concern is regularly reviewed by Council senior management and regularly reported to elected members. The Council uses the full range of its legal powers when schools do not make sufficient progress. Estyn removes schools in 'causing concern' categories from those categories in under two years.
2.1.2	The authority's work in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum support	The Council's strategy for raising standards in priority areas (e.g. literacy, numeracy, ICT and KS3) is clear, coherent and well understood by schools. The strategy meets the aims set out in the relevant frameworks for Wales. Strategies encompass the vision and rationale of the relevant Welsh Assembly Government initiatives. The strategy takes good account of the need to: • raise standards of literacy in both Welsh and English, and to develop pupils' bilingual competence in line with WAG guidance; • provide effective support for all children in the early years; • raising standards in pupils' basic and key skills; • address differences in achievement between boys and girls; • plan for effective transition between providers and key stages; • ensure assessment is accurate, consistent and informs learning; and • identify and target accurately those schools with particular needs. Schools have been well consulted about the nature and timing of support. They know what level of support to expect as a result of the Council's identification of their particular needs and the subsequent targeting of schools. The Council secures sufficient high quality training in both Welsh and English, where required, for priority initiatives. The Council promotes well-being (and supports schools in doing so) through pro-active work in:

		• PSE and health education • Sport and physical health • Recreation and Out of School Hours Learning • experiences and activities to support the relevant strands of 14-19 Learning Pathways Good links are formed with other related initiatives and projects in priority areas. Council initiatives are delivered by credible experts. Staff delivering the strategy are well managed and appropriately informed.
2.1.3	Meeting the needs of and raising standards of specific groups	The Council's policies on equal opportunities, bilingualism and combating racial harassment are well understood and used by schools. The policies are comprehensive, up to date and include effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation as well as specifying action for development. The Council monitors the attainment, attendance, exclusions, mobility and admissions of vulnerable groups. It has a clear view of the extent and reasons for any weaknesses and takes appropriate action where necessary to secure improvements in outcomes. Funding under the ethnic minority achievement grant and the traveller education grants has been well-utilised in schools according to criteria that identify needs. The use of the grant is rigorously and effectively monitored and its links to school improvement are well established. The Council disseminates good practice with regard to minority ethnic, travellers and asylum seeker children achievement. It provides good advice and INSET targeted at weaknesses, and/or makes well judged brokerage arrangements. This has led to improvements in schools. The expertise of mainstream teachers to support ethnic minority, travellers and asylum seeker learners and provide a diverse curriculum, has been effectively developed There is viable and effective provision for Traveller children.
2.1.4	Curriculum support and	The Council has accurately identified the need to provide extra learning opportunities and support in areas such as:

		enhancement and broadening opportunities for learning	- music tuition; - Athrawon Bro; - Schools library service; - OSHL; and - PE and sport. - experiences and activities to support the non-formal and informal strands of 14-19 Learning Pathways. It actively supports the provision of an appropriate range of activities to meet needs in these areas in partnership with other services and providers.
2.1.5	Support for school leadership and management including support to school governors	The Council has identified the overall management development needs of governors and senior and middle managers in schools across the authority. There is a systematic programme of support and development for senior and middle managers including mentoring, consultancy, leadership programmes and the dissemination of good practice. The Council analyses well the overall strengths and weaknesses in governance across the authority and has an effective strategy for general improvement where this is needed. The Council has effective policies to manage governor recruitment including from minority groups. The policies result in low or decreasing rates of governor vacancies. The Council's relations with governors and school managers place due emphasis on school autonomy. The Council ensures governors are provided with relevant benchmarked information about the school's performance, including analysis of financial data and of pupils' performance. The Council ensures governors receive useful guidance on how they should use this data. Council support and training programmes are highly relevant and are responsive to the needs of individual governors, including those new to the role, and to needs of whole governing bodies. The quality of training is monitored and its impact evaluated. Attendance at training is carefully monitored. The Council is helpful and accessible; it responds rapidly and effectively to crises and emergencies.

2.1.6	Value for money	The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities.

The Council regularly reviews its services and related policies in order to secure continuous improvement with due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency. |

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

2.2 Promoting social inclusion and the well-being of learners

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on:	Demonstrating typical good features:
2.2.1	The Council's work to meet its statutory duties in respect of: • looked after children (LAC) • excluded pupils • promoting race equality and combating racism; • preventing and tackling bullying; and • child protection and well-being	The Council rigorously fulfils its duty as a corporate parent. It promotes the educational achievement as well as providing good pastoral support of children in its care.

The Children's Services Plan and the Children First Plan define a clear and coherent strategy that enable looked after children to make good progress.

The Council receives regular reports on the attainment of looked after children, sets meaningful targets for improvement and monitors educational progress. The Council monitors the quality of educational provision for looked after children who are placed out of county.

The Education Department and Social Services have agreed and effective procedures for working together and mutually sharing information about looked after children.

The Council promptly provides full-time education of a high standard for excluded pupils and young offenders. Most pupils participate fully, make good progress and are re-integrated successfully into mainstream provision.

The Council monitors the use of exclusion in schools including the rates and length of fixed-term exclusions, the rate of permanent exclusions and the number of exclusions overturned by independent appeal panels. It takes effective action to reduce exclusion rates.
The Council provides good leadership to schools by drafting and circulating clear policies and procedures |

		for tackling all forms of racism and promoting racial harmony.

The Council offers helpful advice and support to schools to promote the implementation of effective anti-bullying policies.

The Council has formally accepted the recommendations of the report of the committee of enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence and is implementing an action plan which responds to the recommendations of the report.

Procedures are developed to monitor incidents of racial harassment in the work place and in schools, and the Council takes firm action to support its policies.

The Council takes a lead role in co-ordinating partnerships, establishing Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and sharing budgets.

The Council promotes good working arrangements between schools and social workers and follows up with the social services department when schools report difficulties. |
| 2.2.2 | The Council's work in raising standards for specific groups of vulnerable children and young people, for example:

  • minority ethnic groups;
  • refugees/asylum seekers;
  • looked after children (LAC);
  • young parents and pregnant young women;
  • young offenders;
  • children of families in difficult circumstances;
  • young carers;
  • pupils at risk of | The Council fulfils the requirement of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that all children and young people, including vulnerable groups:

  • receive their equal entitlement to education;
  • enjoy learning and achieve high standards;
  • attend school regularly; and
  • participate fully in education.

The Council has effective procedures to identify pupils not in school and to ensure that no child or young person becomes lost to education and to identify pupils at risk of being lost to education if they move into the area.

The Council has effective referral systems that are well known to schools, social services and health professionals. There are good links with all partners at both strategic and operational levels, including clear protocols for the sharing of relevant information.

The systems are effective in promptly identifying pupils who are at risk of dropping out of school and/or |

| | | homophobic bullying;
 • pupils educated otherwise than at school; and
 • Gypsies and Travellers. | underachieving and, where possible, in preventing them from doing so.

 The Council has systems to identify children and young people whose well-being and achievement are at risk, according to local circumstances. It meets the children and young people's needs. The Council monitors and evaluates the impact of its strategy on the participation and achievement and takes timely action to address shortcomings.

 The Council provides suitable full-time education promptly for school age children and young people who are not in school. Most pupils attend regularly, make good progress and are re-integrated successfully into mainstream provision.

 There are effective procedures to monitor the education of children and young people educated outside school, including children educated at home by their parents The Council provides parents educating their children at home with helpful guidance when requested to do so.

 The Council provides good quality guidance and access to training for school staff to meet the respective needs of vulnerable groups. Where relevant, there is multi-agency input.
 The Council actively promotes the importance of training with schools.

 The Council has sponsored projects and initiatives to improve the well-being and attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils, and there is significant evidence of beneficial impact.

 Individual children, young people and communities are consulted and listened to when decisions are made about:

 • their own future;
 • local provision; and
 • the planning and management of new services. |
| 2.2.3 | Support for attendance at school | Attendance rates are high, and/or improving faster than nationally or in similar LEAs. |

			Unauthorised absence is reducing.
			The Council has a clear and well structured policy on attendance which is well understood by schools and helps parents to fulfil their statutory responsibilities under the 1996 Education Act.
			There is an effective strategy for promoting regular school attendance, which schools understand, and it is well integrated into all relevant key plans.
			There are effective arrangements for monitoring the attendance of 14-16 year old learners who may be receiving provision at a site other than the school.
			There is very effective liaison and co-ordination between relevant council services and good working relationships with schools and other agencies such as the local youth offending team, the police and courts. All statutory and legal responsibilities are fully met. There is consistent and appropriate use of legal powers.
			The Council addresses the attendance of specific and/or vulnerable groups, (e.g. children in public care and traveller children) and tackles specific causes of non-attendance (including bullying and harassment).
			Data on attendance are effectively monitored. Weaknesses are identified and addressed rapidly.
			The Council provides targeted support to schools to improve attendance based on a clear analysis of need and transparent criteria.
			The Council gives schools well thought out and comprehensive guidance on managing attendance and disseminates good practice effectively.
2.2.4	Support for behaviour in schools		Rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusion are reducing, or the incidence of exclusion is lower than in similar authorities. There are effective arrangements in place for young people making the transition back into school. Young people remain in school, attain satisfactory attendance rates and make good educational progress
			The Council has set clear and challenging targets for the decrease in the rate of permanent and fixed term exclusions. There are improvements by targeted schools and groups of pupils.

		The Council strategy and plans for meeting the targets are clear and based on needs audits.
		Progress in meeting the targets is regularly monitored and careful analysis of data leads to appropriate action.
		The Council provides schools with comprehensive guidance on good practice in managing behaviour. It provides access to good quality training.
		There is readily available and effective support for behaviour management for schools. The service has good working relationship with schools and other agencies based on clear procedures.
2.2.5	Value for money	The Council allocates support and/or delegated funding on the basis of clear criteria. Support and/or funding is well targeted according to need.
		Schools receive support and advice on the use of funding that is delegated. The Council monitors the impact of delegated funding on improving behaviour.
		The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities.
		The Council regularly reviews its services in order to secure continuous improvement with due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

2.3 Additional Learning Needs

The term ALN applies to children and young people whose learning needs are additional to the majority of their peers. Children and young people with ALN include those who:

- have SEN;
- are disabled;
- have medical needs;
- have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, including those who are school phobics and school refusers;
- are more able and talented; and
- are learning English as an additional language.

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade	Demonstrating typical good features:

		and report on:	
2.3.1	The Council's work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN).	The Council makes sure that all children and young people with additional learning needs aged 5 to 16 receive appropriate full-time education that meets their individual needs. The Council provides all children and young people with statements of SEN with the additional provision to which their statement entitles them. When statements of SEN require it, the Council makes full-time provision for children under the age of 5 and young people over the age of 16. The Council fulfils the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act 2001. In particular it ensures that: • statements of SEN are of good quality and produced speedily; • statutory reviews of progress are effectively planned, managed and coordinated; and • educational settings make reasonable adjustments to the buildings, curriculum and provision of information to provide access for people with disabilities. The Council fulfils the requirements of the Children Act 2004 and section 175 of the Education Act 2002. In particular it ensures that: • safeguarding policies and procedures effectively promote the safety and well-being of children and young people with ALN; and • it promotes the educational achievement of looked after children who have ALN.	
2.3.2	The Council's work in raising standards for children and young people with ALN	The Council provides effective training for staff in early years settings and in schools to enable them to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN. The Council develops the capacity of all educational settings to meet pupils' additional learning needs by helping schools to : • meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of pupils with ALN; • provide appropriate support and learning opportunities for pupils with ALN; • work effectively with partner agencies to obtain specialist support for individual pupils when necessary; and • monitor and evaluate outcomes for different groups of pupils as part of the process of school self-evaluation.	

		Outreach services, including any that are provided by special schools, have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people with ALN.

The Council monitors and evaluates the impact of its policies and provision on the achievements of children and young people with ALN, and takes timely action to address any under-performance. |
| 2.3.3 | The Council's provision for children and young people with ALN, including provision that is commissioned and /or provided by or with other agencies. | The work of the Council is effective in:

• helping children and young people with ALN to make make good educational progress in relation to their individual learning targets;
• preventing the exclusion of pupils with ALN; and
• achieving high standards of attendance by pupils with ALN.

Children with SEN are identified and their needs are assessed at a sufficiently early stage for their needs to be met.

There are clear protocols which are consistently applied across agencies for assessing the individual needs of children and young people, and for deciding on provision. Children and young people have access to an appropriate range of support to meet their needs.

The educational and training provision for children and young people with ALN meets their curriculum, staffing, equipment and transport needs and is effectively co-ordinated. Pupils with difficulties in physical or mental health who are unable to attend school receive as much education as possible, and maintain good links with their schools.

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

Statements of ALN are reducing in number as a result of earlier assessments and provision.

Children and young people with ALN are properly prepared and supported when they make transitions between different phases of education and different settings.

Children and young people with ALN receive impartial information, advice and guidance on educational training and employment opportunities post-16.

Pupils with ALN, particularly those with difficult behaviour or who are reluctant to attend school, receive targeted support |

		to improve their behaviour and attendance.
		Looked After Children who have ALN receive timely and effective support.
		Individual children and young people are consulted and listened to when key decisions are made about: • their own future; • local provision; and • the planning and management of new services.
2.3.4	The Council's work with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN	Where services provide direct support for parents and carers of pupils with ALN, this has a positive impact on the outcomes for children and young people. There is effective and co-ordinated advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with ALN, including SEN Parent Partnership and Mediation services. The Council provides clear information that enables parents and carers of children and young people with ALN to access the services that their children need. Services give clear information to parents/carers about their child's progress and achievements. Services support parents/carers and help them contribute to assessment of their child's needs. Parents and carers of children and young people with ALN are helped to obtain assessments of their own needs where appropriate. Parents and carers are consulted and listened to when key decisions are made about: • their child's future; • local provision; and • the planning and management of new services.
2.3.5	Value for money	The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities and can demonstrate that children and young people with ALN achieve good outcomes in relation to costs of the services that it provides. Where the Council commissions support for pupils with ALN from external agencies, it can show that outcomes are good and that it is achieving value for money. The Council's funding policies encourage early intervention to meet the needs of pupils with ALN.

		The Council regularly reviews its services in order to secure continuous improvement with due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

2.4 Access and School Places

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report:	Demonstrating typical good features:
2.4.1	The provision of an appropriate range and number of school places	There is sufficient capacity in both primary and secondary sectors, including Welsh-medium and special education, and no school is significantly overfilled or has significant surplus capacity without good reason. There are well-developed and accurate systems for forecasting and monitoring the requirements for places across all phases, including nursery, special and sixth form provision and for Welsh-medium education. This takes into account the impact of collaborative arrangements for learners aged 14-19. The Council has up to date knowledge of the capacity of schools. There are clear arrangements for regular, pro-active review of trends across the authority and in individual schools. There are clear arrangements for regular, pro-active review of standards of education across schools in the authority and this information is used in planning for school re-organisation. The authority is making good progress in: • reducing numbers at overfull schools; • removing significant numbers of surplus places; and • meeting the needs of the local community. Class sizes fully meet statutory requirements.

| 2.4.2 | Asset management planning and the education capital programme | The Council has accurate, up-to-date information about the condition, sufficiency and suitability of all school buildings.

It makes good use of information about local needs, liaising effectively across Council departments, such as housing, planning and social services

The Council has a clear idea of the capital resources available to it over the next three years, and has considered all the options.

Priorities for investment in school and other education buildings are transparent and have been agreed with schools.

Funds for repairs and maintenance in school budgets are clearly identified, and the Council ensures that schools undertake their responsibilities in relation to their premises.

The building programme is managed effectively. Projects are completed to time and budget with minimum disruption to schools.

Building design takes account of statutory requirements including building regulation, disabled access, energy efficiency and sustainability.

The Council has clearly defined policies for health and safety and school security and there is clear understanding of the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools themselves. It has established procedures for monitoring and dealing with areas of significant risk.

Emergency repairs are prompt and easily organised. Out-of-hours emergencies are attended promptly. There is good immediate and follow-up support to the headteacher following fires, floods and other major incidents.

Schools are well supported in developing their own health & safety policies.

Comprehensive information, guidance and training are available to schools. |
| 2.4.3 | Admissions to schools | Local admissions authorities consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements effectively.

There is an effective Admissions Forum.

The information (which should conform with the authority's Welsh Language Policy and may also be in community languages) provided to parents on school admissions is |

		transparent, adequate, clear and understandable and satisfies the Admissions Code of Practice
		Children coming to live in the authority during the school year, including looked-after children, and children returning from custody who are no longer on a school roll, are accommodated without delay in schools that meet their needs.
		Parents' preferences are met to the maximum extent that is reasonable.
		Appeals are dealt with quickly and equitably to enable all pupils to be inducted into their new schools during the summer term before taking up their places in September.
		Arrangements comply fully with legislation and guidance related to equal opportunities.
		Guidance in the Code of Practice on School Admissions is regularly reviewed and is actively responsive to individual need.
		There are effective arrangements for the re-integration of children who have been excluded from other schools.
		The Council has a whole-authority approach to the admission of pupils outside normal admission points, which all schools support.
2.4.4	Home-school transport	The Council's home-school transport eligibility policy meets statutory requirements, is unambiguous, easily accessible to parents and applied consistently.
		The policy ensures that pupils receiving free transport are not discouraged from attending after-school activities.
		The Council's policy takes account of other policies promoting community safety, sustainability and healthy living.
		The usual duration of a single journey to or from school is no longer than 45 minutes for primary school pupils and one hour for secondary school pupils, except where parents have chosen to send their children to schools requiring longer journeys.
		==The Council has arrangements to ensure that vehicles and associated equipment comply with safety legislation.== Drivers and escorts are recruited and trained in accordance with child protection requirements
		The Council has developed service standards to ensure safety, punctuality and reliability, and to minimise problems of bullying and vandalism on home-school transport.

		The authority has a code of practice on school transport which has been the subject of consultation with parents, pupils, schools, transport operators. Arrangements for dealing with unruly behaviour are clear and are consistently applied. Home-school transport arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure that routes are planned efficiently and that the methods of procurement strike the right balance between service quality and cost. The home-school transport budget is well managed and controlled.
2.4.5	Co-ordination of early years (after 2004 Children Act has commenced)	<mark>TO BE ADDED</mark>
2.4.6	Value for money	Links between the provision of school places, asset management planning, admissions to schools and home to school transport are regularly reviewed and strike a conscious balance between quality of education, supporting parental choice and cost. The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities. The Council regularly reviews its services in order to secure continuous improvement with due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?

2.5 Support services

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on:	Demonstrating typical good features:
2.5.1	Services to support schools	The services provided are free standing; schools purchasing one service do not have to purchase others. Details of the services offered or brokered by the Council are well presented. Services are easy to order, whether as an

			integrated package or as individual elements. Schools have all the information they need to exercise choice over the level, volume and amount spent on services. Information is provided in a way that schools can monitor the service that they receive. SLAs and/or contracts contain clear service standards and termination notice periods for the services provided or brokered by the Council. Council monitoring demonstrates that the service standards are met in most respects. Any failures or inefficiencies are tackled at an early stage. Prices of in-house services are competitive, and related to the costs of provision. Invoicing arrangements work smoothly in a normal commercial manner. Where a service that impinges on statutory provision is provided by an external supplier, the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to monitor provision. The Council supports schools wishing to procure services themselves by providing model specifications and offering high quality client support in managing contracts.
2.5.2	Corporate services for education, including schools	(a) **Finance** The Council's financial systems work reliably, and link effectively to schools' systems. Information is accurate and schools feel well supported. Reconciliation, where required, is electronic and works smoothly. Errors are resolved readily and immediately. Schools are supported to manage their own budgets and offered suitable software and training to model them. Guidance and training are available that encourage schools to base decisions on desired educational outcomes, and to take into account good employment practice. Schools have ready access to high-quality individual advice on budget setting and financial management. Education service managers feel well-supported in financial management and can predict and manage their budgets or trading accounts actively and effectively through the year. (b) **HR** The division of responsibilities for staff between Council and schools is clear and understood by members, officers,	

governing bodies and employees.

Education department administration is reliable, central staff records are accurate and regularly checked against school records.

The Council is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers and learning support staff

Recruitment is well supported. Contracts of employment are always issued within the statutory time period.

Personnel links with payroll are reliable and accurate. Any errors are rectified promptly and smoothly.

Schools have easy access to a range of up-to-date model policies covering issues such as recruitment, equalities, pay, discipline, grievance, capability, sickness and other absence, redundancy, retirement.

Casework is well-supported and advice is technically reliable. Industrial tribunals are few in number and the Council is successful in most cases. Capability cases are pursued with proper vigour.

The industrial relations climate is positive, with effective channels of communication with relevant unions.

Heads and governors are routinely offered training in employers' responsibilities. The take-up of training is monitored, with intervention where it is needed.

The Council monitors school performance in statutory employment practice and intervenes in inverse proportion to success.

The Council receives good advice on the strategic management of HR, including advance warning of statutory changes and their implications, recruitment and labour force issues and well-analysed information on the performance of schools in this area.

There is good support for service managers in dealing with individual employment issues, and cases that cannot be resolved preventively are dealt with consistently, fairly, firmly and promptly.

(c) **ICT**

There is an efficient, effective Council strategy in place for the management of pupil performance data and staff, premises and financial information.

There is effective, well-managed electronic communication

		between schools, and between schools and the Council. Council communications to schools are effectively prioritised and well-presented. The Council responds promptly to communications from schools.
		Schools are well-supported in purchasing and in technical support. There are common hardware and software platforms across the Council, but non standard items are not precluded other than where they would create problems authority-wide. Response times for delivering technical solutions and/or repairs are rapid and do not compromise administrative or educational service delivery in schools.
		Schools have effective written and on-screen guidance and effective telephone helpline support that extends beyond school hours. They can access effective training locally on all aspects of standard hardware and software systems, when they need it.
		The Council's website provides the public with useful information about education services such as school admissions, grants, transport and services for learners with special educational needs. Key public documents such as statutory education plans and the education budget statement can be easily accessed and are up-to-date. There are useful links, eg to inspection reports on the Council's education services and its schools.
		The public can access services through the website and processes are well-managed and effective. Email queries from members of the public are responded to within a reasonable period of time.
		There is a well-used Council intranet available to schools containing a full range of up-to-date administrative and policy reference documents.
		Links with curriculum ICT, particularly over pupil attainment data and its use, are effective and productive.
2.5.3	Property related services	The respective responsibilities of schools and the Council with regard to buildings work and maintenance are set out unambiguously. The compliance of both parties is monitored effectively.
		Schools have access to effective technical advice from qualified surveyors on priority, programming, contract letting, contract supervision and payments management. Schools are aware of how their priorities will be met and feel that their technical advice is informed by educational priorities and represents good value for money.
		Technical advisers encourage schools to manage their assets

		well and to link their own plans to the authority's asset management plans. Advisers will be proactive in brokering joint-funded schemes and providing advice on bidding for capital.

Maintenance contracts are available for schools to join, but they are not required to join. Contracts are well-adapted to schools' needs and provide them individually with good value for money and flexibility.

Building projects are managed effectively

Emergency repairs are prompt and easily organised. Out-of-hours emergencies are attended promptly; there is good immediate and follow-up support to the school following fires, floods and other major incidents. |
| 2.5.4 | School meals | Council statutory responsibilities, including arrangements for free school meals and the maintenance of kitchens and equipment, are performed well. Problems are rare and promptly dealt with.

Any central contract(s) available for schools are flexible to schools' wishes and provide good value-for-money. Pro-active client support is available to schools wishing to make their own arrangements. Problems are rare and promptly dealt with.

Good advice is readily available on nutrition and catering options.

The LEA has arrangements to monitoring schools to ensure that they meet their statutory duties for hygiene, nutritional standards and health and safety. Intervention, when required, is prompt and effective.

The quality of school meals is good and supports healthy living. |
| 2.5.5 | Value for money | The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities.

The Council regularly reviews its services in order to secure continuous improvement with due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency. |

Question 3: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

This question should be applied to the Council as a whole and to specific fields where appropriate.

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on:	Demonstrating typical good features:
3.1	The quality of the leadership provided by elected members	Elected members have a clear vision for the role of education (*or the field in question*). The vision is well expressed in published documentation, and is reflected in the community strategy, corporate plans and the strategic planning of education services. Members have a clear understanding of the Council's strategic role (*overall, and in relation to specific fields)* and statutory duties in the context of self-managing schools. Members successfully influence key partners in support of their priorities and strategies. The political leadership takes difficult decisions when necessary, following a rigorous and open process of examination and consultation that are consistent with strategic objectives.
3.2	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	The leadership of senior officers is effective and purposeful in securing: • provision that meets local needs; • provision that is learner focused; • school improvement; • children and young people's well being; • inclusion; and • departmental effectiveness and efficiency. Senior officers respond appropriately to new initiatives and lead developments in consultation with schools and other stakeholders. Relationships with schools are good; consultation, communications and intentions are clear, transparent and lead to a shared understanding. The authority is able to act as a 'critical friend'. There is a good sense of partnership with schools. Schools respect and trust senior officers who listen and take full account of their views and advice.

		Officers provide elected members with clear, succinct advice based on:
		- well-informed analysis of statutory requirements; - an objective, well-balanced selection of performance indicators; - a rigorous evaluation of the status quo and the impact of existing policy; and - consideration of the future implications of policy. Officers advise members in good time to enable the development of long-term policies.
3.3	The quality and appropriateness of membership and actions in partnership working	The Council has a clear understanding of the benefits and costs of partnership work. The Council makes a good contribution to ensuring that local partnerships work effectively and lead to shared priorities for education. Partnerships where the Council or its education department has a lead role are well-led, managed and effective. Partnerships bid successfully for additional funding and/or co-ordinate bids from individual members in order to further the aims of the partnership and to avoid duplication. The Council collaborates effectively with partners in relation to provision of 14-19 education and training, and activities for 11-25 year olds. Local or school-level partnership work has led to a significant beneficial impact on pupils' achievements where it was needed most. There are suitable structures to ensure sensible cycles of meetings which avoid duplication. There is effective cross-directorate working.

Question 4: How well do leaders and managers at all levels monitor, evaluate and improve services?

This question should be applied to the Council as a whole and to specific fields as appropriate.

	Inspectors will evaluate, grade and report on the extent to which the authority:	Demonstrating typical good features:
4.1	Makes appropriate arrangements for securing continuous improvement with due regard for economy, effectiveness and efficiency	Members and managers make effective, regular use of performance indicators, including financial information, to monitor progress in implementing plans. There are appropriate and timely arrangements for collecting performance indicators. Where necessary, monitoring leads to modifications in targets and strategies. The authority has a good record of improvement in relation to its educational targets and objectives. Regular reviews are carried out with rigorous challenge to purpose, comparison with others, competitiveness tests and consultation that is fit for purpose. Reviews include appropriate external challenge The Council responds promptly and effectively to complaints. There is an effective performance management system by which elected members and senior managers monitor progress against milestones regularly and take appropriate remedial action.
4.2	Ensures elected members play an appropriate role in performance management	Members have clear procedures for regularly scrutinising policy decisions and all key policies are subject to an effective, democratic scrutiny. Members monitor and evaluate the work of the education service systematically and openly. Members place particular focus on aspects in need of improvement. This has led to modifications of policy where appropriate.

4.3	Implements self-evaluation procedures effectively and has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement	Educational elements of any whole-authority analysis are rigorous and comprehensive. Leaders and managers establish self evaluation arrangements which are comprehensive, systematic and based on first –hand evidence. Service providers understand and are fully involved in the self-evaluation arrangements. Service users, partners and other stakeholders have been fully involved and consulted, and current performance has been assessed objectively against appropriate comparators. The Council's self-evaluation is accurate.
4.4	Has a good track record in securing improvements	Areas of the Council's work already targeted show clear signs of improvement