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ISSUES



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Understanding inspections in schools

a guide for teachers
and governors

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BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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

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

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

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Why does Estyn inspect?

The Education Act 2005 requires that maintained schools are inspected by Estyn inspectors or by teams of independent inspectors working under contract to Estyn. The teams of independent inspectors are led by **registered inspectors**. This leaflet aims to inform teachers and governors about how inspections are carried out.

What are the main features of inspections?

Inspections are carried out in accordance with Estyn's **common inspection framework for education and training in Wales**, which is available on our website.

The features of inspections include:

- a focus on the experience and achievements of learners;
- self-evaluation as the starting point for inspections;
- different types of inspection based on the level of risk posed by the school;
- a period of notice of approximately one term;
- a current practitioner, a peer assessor (a full-time school teacher selected, trained and deployed by Estyn), working as a member of the inspection team; and
- the option of including a member of staff from the school in the inspection team as a nominee. (A nominee is member of the school's staff who takes part in the inspection and provides an important link between the school and the inspection team.)

Inspectors look at how well schools are doing in relation to seven identified 'key questions', which cover such issues as the quality of teaching and learning, guidance and support for pupils, links with the wider community, and the quality of leadership and management at the school.

There are three different **types of inspection** for primary and secondary schools.

- For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.
- For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.
- For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects. For primary schools one of these may be early years.
- For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects, which will include early years if there are nursery-age children at the school.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

What happens before the inspection?

Estyn:

- draws up a programme for inspections;
- decides which type of inspection the school will receive;
- seeks competitive tenders and awards contracts for inspections;
- tells the school the term in which it will be inspected;
- tells the school the name of the inspection contractor that has been awarded the contract; and
- gives guidance on how the inspection is to be carried out.

Once a contract has been awarded, the registered inspector:

- arranges a date for the inspection with the school;
- obtains from the school all the documents needed for the inspection;
- discusses the school's self-evaluation report with the school;
- invites the school to have a nominee;
- meets the governors;
- meets the parents;
- offers to meet the staff; and
- plans the inspection.

The governors¹:

- tell parents and, where appropriate, local employers of the date of the inspection;
- arrange the meeting between the registered inspector and parents;
- ensure that the documents sent to the team are suitable; and
- support the headteacher, nominee, members of staff and pupils in preparing for the inspection.

What happens during the inspection?

The registered inspector reports on the key questions, including:

- the standards achieved by pupils;
- the quality of education;
- pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- the contribution of the school to the wellbeing of pupils; and
- leadership and management.

The registered inspector is responsible for the conduct of the inspection. The school should discuss all matters relating to the inspection with the registered inspector.

Inspectors will have identity passes, and will have gained enhanced clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau.

¹ The Act states that this is done by the appropriate authority for the schools. For schools other than those without a delegated budget the appropriate authority is the governing body.

During the inspection, inspectors will observe lessons, examine school documents and pupils' work, and have discussions with members of staff and pupils.

In conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity;
- evaluate the work of the provider objectively;
- report honestly, fairly and impartially;
- communicate clearly and openly;
- act in the best interests of learners; and
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work.

Inspectors will ensure that their judgements are:

- **secure** - based on sufficient evidence;
- **first-hand** - based on direct observation of learners' and providers' work;
- **reliable** - based on the criteria in the inspection framework;
- **valid** - accurately reflecting what is achieved and provided;
- **free of bias** - valuing equality of opportunity and diversity;
- **comprehensive** - covering all parts of the framework; and
- **corporate** - reflecting the collective view of the inspection team.

What happens after the inspection?

The registered inspector will offer to give an **oral feedback** on the findings of the inspection to the staff and governors.

The registered inspector will produce the **report** seven weeks after the end of the inspection period. The school will have the opportunity to see a late draft of the report to check its factual accuracy and will prepare a written response for inclusion in the final report.

The registered inspector will provide, free of charge, enough copies of the full report and a summary for parents.

In schools where the standard of the pupils' work is generally acceptable but there are some important problems, the school may be described as being in need of **significant improvement**.

In rare cases where inspectors believe that the school does not give pupils an acceptable standard of education and does not have the capacity to improve without external support, the school may be placed in **special measures**.

Once the report has been published, the governors have to draw up an **action plan** within 45 working days of receiving the report.

All inspection results and grades are entered into Estyn's web-based information system, called Athene. Athene grades are analysed by Estyn in order to identify common factors and trends in inspections across Wales. Athene is a valuable tool in Estyn's work in providing advice and sharing best practice.

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

If you feel dissatisfied with some aspect of the inspection or have reason to complain, including a complaint about inspection findings, you should follow the Feedback and Complaints guidance set out on our website.

If there is a problem during an inspection, you should raise the issue with the registered inspector as soon as possible. If this is difficult, please ask the nominee or another person to raise it with the registered inspector. It is important that your concern is known before the end of the inspection or publication of the report, after which it becomes more difficult to investigate and to take any action that may be appropriate.

If you remain dissatisfied after trying to resolve matters informally you should immediately contact the Feedback and Complaints Manager at Estyn, or the contractor if your concern relates to the contracted-out inspection of a school.

There is more information about how inspections are carried out in the handbooks of guidance on the inspection of schools. The handbooks can be found on Estyn's website at www.estyn.gov.uk.

All enquiries about the process and conduct of inspections should be made to:

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