



Arrangements for core inspections in secondary schools

September 2010

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

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community learning;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies; and
- ▲ offender learning.

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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Introduction

This guidance is intended to support secondary schools in preparing for inspection. The guidance refers to the role of the nominee, sets out expectations of providers, explains the notification and requirements for inspection and provides information about inspection that schools need to be aware of before, during and after inspections.

The guidance also provides information for schools on producing a self-evaluation report, which inspectors will use in preparing for the inspection.

The role of the nominee

Schools are invited to select a senior member of teaching staff as a nominee to work with the inspection team. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the school and the inspection team but need not necessarily be the leader of the school.

Nominees should access the online training package provided by Estyn in the Virtual Inspection Room before their inspection. They must successfully complete the training package and print off a certificate at the end in order to act as a nominee on the inspection. The certificate will be signed by the nominee and reporting inspector on the first day of the inspection. It is good practice for potential nominees to read Estyn's nominee handbook for schools and PRUs early in the year in which a school expects to be inspected. To access the nominee handbook visit: www.estyn.gov.uk.

Expectations of providers

To make inspection constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold Estyn's Code of Conduct (see the Inspection Guidance at www.estyn.gov.uk), but we also expect schools to:

- be courteous and professional;
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors;
- enable inspectors to conduct their inspection in an open and honest way;
- enable inspectors to evaluate the school objectively against the Common Inspection Framework;
- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably;
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team;
- recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without being accompanied by a manager or senior leader;
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption and stress throughout the inspection; and
- have arrangements to ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises.

Notification of inspection

You will receive about four working weeks' written notice of inspection. Shortly after this notification, the inspectorate will contact you by telephone to set up the arrangements. The contact will usually be made by one of Estyn's inspection co-ordinators.

You should expect to:

- receive information about the inspection and be ready to discuss an outline programme for the inspection;
- receive instructions about how to use the Virtual Inspection Room, in particular how to upload documents, and where to access guidance and training videos about the Virtual Inspection Room;
- discuss the information required before the inspection and agree the arrangements for sending it in electronic form if possible;
- provide information about any issues or risks the team should be aware of and provide a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection;
- tell the inspectorate if the school wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee;
- agree arrangements for listening to learners, including the school council, and for selecting these and other groups to be interviewed;
- agree arrangements for completing learner and parent/carer questionnaires (to include how to select the sample of learners and conduct the survey);
- agree arrangements for setting up a meeting with parents/carers;
- arrange the availability of supporting evidence, including a sample of learners' work;
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the course of the inspection;
- arrange for a member of the governing body to meet inspectors during the inspection period;
- organise any domestic arrangements such as a base for the inspectors and parking;
- set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings;
- agree the arrangements for completing post-inspection questionnaires; and
- agree when you will receive confirmation of the arrangements in writing.

The inspectorate will send you some information it holds on the school and ask you to update it. You will also be asked to upload your self-evaluation report to the appropriate Virtual Inspection Room at vir.estyn.gov.uk 10 working days after notification of inspection. In addition, you will be asked to upload the following information:

- key background information on the school, for example the background and circumstances of the learners and any significant changes since the last inspection;
- a copy of the school's most recent improvement plan; and
- details of the school's timetables for the period of the inspection, including a list of members of staff and their main responsibilities.

You can find an optional template for the self-evaluation report on the Estyn website.

Producing a self-evaluation report

The starting point for inspections is the school's evaluation of its own performance, supported by relevant performance information. The reporting inspector will use the **self-evaluation report** and other information to identify hypotheses and lines of enquiry. The report will assist the inspection team to choose evidence to sample in order to verify the accuracy of the school's judgements.

Normally, as part of the cyclical process of self-evaluation, schools will use information from their programme of self-evaluation activities to update their **self-evaluation report**. The School Effectiveness Framework recommends that schools use Estyn's Common Inspection Framework for this annually updated self-evaluation report. This is then submitted as the school's self-evaluation report for inspection.

Estyn has published a template for a self-evaluation report, which is strongly recommended to schools. This template follows the format of the Common Inspection Framework. The template is available at www.estyn.gov.uk

A good self-evaluation report should:

- be evaluative and concise;
- make clear judgements on each quality indicator in Common Inspection Framework;
- cross-reference to sources of supporting evidence, using hyperlinks where appropriate;
- provide and comment on statistical data about recent outcomes, normally over the last three years;
- identify areas for improvement as well as strengths;
- refer to sector-leading practice where appropriate; and
- link clearly to an improvement plan and targets.

Self-evaluation reports should be succinct and normally around 20 to 40 pages long. Schools should make evaluative comments and ensure that their judgements match the evidence they make available to inspectors. There is no need to create hyperlinks to all supporting evidence in the self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report should include references to supporting evidence that inspectors can then consider in the school during the inspection.

The following table is an example of an extract from a topical self-evaluation report.

Key Question 3 - How good are leadership and management?		
Evaluation		Evidence
3.1.1 Strategic direction and the impact of leadership	The school improvement plan (SIP) is developed appropriately from subject leader action plans and lesson evaluations. It also includes local and national initiatives. All staff and governors draft the SIP and it is discussed and agreed with the School Council. Teacher and governor responsibilities for school improvement are clearly identified on the SIP and progress is evaluated systematically and thoroughly, at least, termly.	SIPs Subject leaders' action plans Staff, Governing Body and School Council minutes

On the basis of this section, inspectors would probably want to analyse current and previous improvement plans, samples of action plans produced by staff with leadership responsibilities, and minutes of meetings. In addition, they might interview a sample of staff and the chair of governors about their roles and responsibilities in school improvement planning.

If schools choose not to use the template provided by Estyn, they should nevertheless make certain that the report focuses on standards, the quality of provision and the quality of leadership. The report should take account of the features of a good self-evaluation report identified above.

Before inspection

You should inform other partners and stakeholders about the inspection. The inspectorate will provide information about the procedures for gaining the views of learners and stakeholders.

You should familiarise yourself with the Virtual Inspection Room (VIR) for the inspection. There are guides and training videos available to help you to use the VIR and Estyn's inspection co-ordinator can provide further help, if required.

You will need to inform parents/carers about arrangements for a meeting with inspectors and the arrangements for taking part in the online parents'/carers' questionnaire. There will also be the opportunity for parents to complete and return hard copies of the questionnaire, if required. You will receive questionnaires which you should arrange to send to parents/carers. The inspectorate will collate and analyse the results of the questionnaires.

You will also need to organise an on-line survey of learners' views. You will be given guidance on how to access this and you can find examples of the questionnaires at www.vir.estyn.gov.uk. These surveys form part of the pre-inspection evidence for inspectors. You should arrange for a random sample of learners to complete these questionnaires. In schools with 101 to 400 learners this should be 100 learners and in schools with over 400 learners it should be at least 25% of learners. Inspectors will also carry out oral surveys during the inspection with specific groups of learners, to follow identified lines of enquiry. Information about the views of learners and parents/carers will be published in an annex in the inspection report.

You should be aware of the main sources of evidence that inspectors will use during inspection. Details of these are included in Annex 2 of Estyn's inspection guidance for secondary schools.

You should arrange to provide samples of learners' work when inspectors are in the school. The inspectorate will provide guidance on how to choose the sample. These samples should be selected to demonstrate learners' communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Inspectors will particularly focus on learners' reading and writing skills. You will also need to provide evidence of Welsh language development. If the inspection is to take place early in the school year, you will need to make certain that inspectors can scrutinise samples of learners' work from the previous year.

You should be ready for inspectors to request evidence that you have referred to in your self-evaluation report. It will be helpful if staff have this evidence readily available for scrutiny. For example, inspectors may wish to examine evidence about how the SIP is developed.

A checklist of things to do before the inspection

- 1 Inform staff about the process of core inspections so that they understand what will happen.
- 2 Undertake the online nominee training and produce the required certificate at the end of it. Ensure availability of the evidence base that is referred to in the self-evaluation report.
- 3 Inform parents/carers about the arrangements for the inspection and the meeting with inspectors.
- 4 Send out information about the online parent/carers questionnaires.
- 5 Organise the on-line survey of learners' views.
- 6 Inform other partners and stakeholders about the date of the inspection so that they can provide their views for inspectors.
- 7 Arrange for the chair of governors to meet inspectors during the inspection week.
- 8 After discussion about requirements with the reporting inspector, arrange the samples of learners' work to be scrutinised from the current and, if appropriate, previous year.
- 9 Arrange for inspectors to receive lists of learners based on various categories as requested, such as those with additional learning needs, disadvantaged learners, Welsh speakers and more able and talented learners.
- 10 Arrange for the reporting inspector to receive agreed timetable information.
- 11 Have available the results of any initial screening tests and assessments of learners, particularly assessments that relate to communication, numeracy and ICT skills, such as reading assessments.
- 12 Arrange for inspectors to receive a health and safety briefing at the start of the pre-inspection team meeting on the first day of inspection.
- 13 Agree and organise domestic arrangements for inspectors.

During the inspection

Inspectors will hold a pre-inspection team meeting in the school the day before they begin to visit sessions and undertake interviews. The nominee should attend this meeting. It may be useful for the headteacher to give a brief outline of the work of the school at the start or end of this meeting. At this meeting, the school should also provide a health and safety briefing for inspectors. Inspectors will discuss the school's self-evaluation report, the pre-inspection commentary (PIC) prepared by the reporting inspector and the lines of enquiry identified within it. The school will have already received a copy of the PIC (usually no earlier than the Friday before the inspection). During this day, inspectors will normally need to:

- plan sessions to be observed during the inspection;
- agree interviews with various staff, including senior and middle managers and the chair of governors;
- conduct the parents'/carers' meeting; and
- begin the scrutiny of evidence.

On the second and subsequent days, inspectors will spend their time:

- observing sessions and scrutinising learners' work;
- listening to learners;
- holding interviews; and
- examining other evidence.

You should facilitate the arrangements for inspectors to gather evidence to support judgements, as described above. The purpose of observing lessons and sessions is mainly to check or validate the school's own overall judgements on standards and the quality of teaching and training. Inspectors will normally spend between 30% and 50% of their time observing teaching: this is likely to be between 25 and 35 lessons in a secondary school, depending on its size. Inspectors will aim to see enough sessions to come to an overall judgement on standards in lessons and the quality of teaching. Inspectors might not observe all teachers. It is important for schools to appreciate that the new style of inspections will not always lead to a comprehensive view of teaching over a whole lesson or session, as the observation may have a specific purpose in following a line of enquiry.

As far as practicable, staff can expect to have some brief professional dialogue with the inspector at the end of an observed session. It may be necessary, in some cases, to have a fuller discussion later. Schools should be aware that inspectors are not judging individual teachers. At this stage, inspectors' observations might be interim judgements on one or more aspects of the Common Inspection Framework. Any judgements may be amended, on reflection, after scrutiny of learners' work or talking to learners, or as the result of moderation within the team. Inspectors will normally spend no less than 30 minutes observing a learning activity. Inspection observation timetables will **not** normally be shared with staff in advance and may change during the course of the inspection.

You should facilitate the arrangements agreed for inspectors' meetings with members of staff. Schools should not expect all staff to have meetings with inspectors. The lines of enquiry will determine which members of staff the inspection team will need to interview.

You should have ready a range of evidence, such as the results of any initial screening tests and skills assessments, or samples of learners' work that have been requested by inspectors.

You should facilitate the arrangements agreed for inspectors' meetings with learners. You should be aware that these discussions provide an opportunity to explore learners' knowledge and understanding of their work, how well they feel they are being supported, and to what extent the school contributes to their wellbeing. Meetings with learners and with learner committees, such as the school council, also provide opportunities for inspectors to determine the part that learners play in the school and wider community, such as their involvement in making decisions about their life in the school. Meetings with groups of learners will usually occur during break or lunch times.

The team will also consider stakeholders' views on the school and test out the validity of those views with staff and learners during the inspection in order to inform judgements.

If the nominee is not the headteacher, the reporting inspector will hold a daily meeting with the headteacher to clarify inspection issues and discuss emerging findings.

Inspectors will provide oral feedback to leaders and managers at the end of the on-site part of the inspection. A representative from the local authority should be invited to attend the meeting. At this meeting, senior staff will have an opportunity to assimilate the judgements, discuss issues and clarify factual matters with inspectors. Schools should note that inspection judgements are not negotiable although inspectors will want to make sure they have had access to all the evidence that is relevant to their judgements. If inspectors do not feel they have confidence in the evidence to hand they may want to arrange a follow-up inspection to scrutinise more closely any aspect that has areas for development. If the evidence clearly indicates that there are significant areas for development then the school will be placed in a category of schools causing concern (See Annex 9 of the 'Guidance for the Inspection of Secondary Schools').

It is important that you raise any concerns about an inspection with the reporting inspector during the inspection. Every effort should be made by the inspection team and school to resolve issues informally. In the event that disagreements remain, then the school should write to the inspectorate's Feedback and Complaints Manager, or the contractor if their concerns relate to the contracted-out inspection of a school, asking for their complaint to be considered further. A leaflet explaining the inspectorate's feedback and complaints procedure is available from the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.uk.

After the inspection

Inspection reports will cover all key questions, quality indicators and aspects of the Common Inspection Framework.

You will have an opportunity to communicate your response to the inspection through the Post-Inspection Questionnaire (PIQ) that will be available to you in the Virtual Inspection Room. You can submit part 1 of the PIQ after the inspection week and part 2 after the publication of the report. You complete and submit the PIQ electronically through the VIR. Estyn analyses carefully the outcomes of PIQs as part of its quality assurance processes.

The inspection co-ordinator will send the school a late draft report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The school has five working days in which to consider the draft report. The reporting inspector will take account of comments offered and correct factual errors. Staff should be aware that all the judgements that are reported during an inspection are provisional and confidential until the report is published.

The recommendations arising from the inspection should give the school a clear and specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to address. You should amend the school's improvement plan to take account of these recommendations.

Follow-up activity

During all inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity.

There are five types of follow-up activity:

- 1 Excellent practice case study
- 2 Local authority monitoring
- 3 Estyn monitoring
- 4 Significant improvement
- 5 Special measures

The first follow-up activity involves action by the school to produce an excellent practice case study for dissemination by Estyn. The subsequent four types of follow-up activity involve increasing levels of intervention in proportion to need. The second follow-up activity involves a report to Estyn from the relevant local authority. The last three involve visits from Estyn inspectors. The last two follow-up activities are formal categories that apply to schools causing concern as defined by the Education Act 2005 and any associated circulars. The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Assembly officers will be informed when schools are placed in the last two categories and kept informed of subsequent progress following monitoring inspections by Estyn, as required by the legislation.