

An update to all schools and Pupil referral units from HMCI Owen Evans

Inspection arrangements from September 2024

Ahead of our new inspection cycle starting in September 2024, I wanted to send a note to thank you for your contributions to our development work over the past two years. We have worked closely with representatives from maintained schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) to ensure that your experiences and insights were incorporated into our new arrangements.

Our approach:

We have taken a collegiate approach to developing our proposed inspection arrangements and have worked with a wide range of stakeholders to develop our draft inspection arrangements.

A key principle driving our development is to ensure we are clear about our expectations around inspections and reducing any unnecessary workload. Earlier this year we launched our [Ready Already! Barod yn Barod!](#) campaign to clarify our messages and discourage over-preparation for inspection.

Since the summer of 2023 we have consulted on inspection arrangements across our sectors. The full analysis can be viewed [here](#). Overall, the proposed changes were well received.

From autumn 2023 we piloted our arrangements. Based on our consultation and pilots, an overview of the agreed arrangements for schools and PRUs can be found below.

Arrangements for maintained schools and pupil referral units:

As mentioned by Professor Donaldson in his report [A learning inspectorate: listening, learning and changing together | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#), we have explored ways our inspection work supports and complements self-evaluation and securing improvement within the system. We have also explored ways to engage more frequently with schools and PRUs, and to do so in a way which adds value and supports improvement.

This will be achieved by undertaking a core inspection and an interim visit to every school and PRU within the next 6-year cycle, 2024 - 2030.

We will continue to evolve our inspection arrangements and build on recent changes such as the increased focus on professional dialogue and strengthening our nominee model.

We are not changing our decision on gradings – we will continue to inspect without making summative gradings but there will still be one overall judgement on whether the school or PRU requires follow-up. We are discontinuing the use of Estyn Review

and will now only carry out our work with the two statutory categories of follow up – significant improvement and special measures.

The biggest change will be the introduction of our interim visits which will add value, and support improvement. From September 2024, we will undertake interim visits which will last between a day or two days and will involve between one and four inspectors visiting, depending on the size of the school or PRU. These visits will normally reflect on the recommendations made during the previous core inspection or current school or PRU improvement or development plan.

Schools and PRUs do not need to prepare for an interim visit and will normally be given around 5 days' notice ahead of time.

We may request a small number of documents including the school or PRUs' latest school improvement plan and information about leadership roles and responsibilities. The reporting inspector will contact the school or PRU ahead of the interim visit to agree its focus and to explain what you can expect. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions.

Following an interim visit, we will provide feedback to the headteacher and publish a short report letter on our website.

We are pleased to be able to share our updated guidance. Copies of the 'What we inspect' and 'How we inspect' documents can be found [here](#).

The guidance will allow our inspectors to have the flexibility to use the draft framework so they can report on the main strengths and areas for development for the individual provider, considering the provider's unique context.

Next steps:

In preparation for the new inspection arrangements we have also been looking at ways of improving the inspection experience and other ways of driving improvement in the system.

We have reviewed our pre-inspection questionnaires making them more focussed and using plainer language. We will continue to publish a parent / carer version of our inspection reports and we are exploring ways of presenting and disseminating the reports in different ways.

We will launch our new website to coincide with the start of the inspection cycle. A key focus of the new website will be to improve the user experience for our stakeholders for example:

- improved navigation and search tool to help share good and best practice
- presenting useful resources to drive improvement in a more intuitive way
- a search function which yields more relevant results for practitioners
- means of finding inspection reports with greater ease, especially for parents and carers

We are in the process of running a programme of training sessions for our external inspectors ahead of us rolling out our arrangements ready for September 2024.

Enquiries

Should you have any questions relating to our plans for the inspection from September 2024, please contact communications@estyn.gov.wales in the first instance.

I look forward to meeting some of you on my visits over the coming months and as always, I am keen to hear your feedback and experience of our work.

Owen Evans